How to Become Accredited

Procedures Manual for Eligibility, Preaccreditation (Candidacy), and Initial Accreditation

Approved by WASC Senior University and College Commission
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INTRODUCTION

The WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) is an institutional accrediting body that emphasizes academic quality and processes that ensure educational effectiveness throughout the institution. It accredits institutions rather than individual programs, including all institutional operations wherever located. In so doing, it reviews evidence of the institution’s capacity to achieve educational effectiveness—structures, processes, resources, procedures, and outcomes—as well as evidence of the academic quality of educational programs within the institution.

The WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) has approved this procedures manual for institutions that are interested in pursuing accreditation. The manual explains the steps involved in moving from Eligibility to Initial Accreditation.

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**OVERVIEW**

**Who May Apply For WSCUC Accreditation?**
Postsecondary institutions incorporated in the states of California and Hawaii, the territories of Guam and American Samoa, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Palau, the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, and the Pacific Island Trust Territories that offer one or more programs leading to the baccalaureate or higher degree may apply to the Commission for eligibility. The Commission has approved a limited number of International institutions but in June, 2014, while continuing to be supportive of further international work, placed a moratorium on new applications until those currently approved for eligibility complete the process of achieving initial accreditation so that further study can be given to future applications.

An institution that will seek to obtain access to federal financial assistance upon attaining WSCUC accreditation must be able to demonstrate that the primary locus of its governance and operational oversight activity is based within the WSCUC region. This is a matter of particular concern to institutions with operations that span the boundaries of more than one regional accrediting agency. The institution must establish that it is domiciled within the WSCUC region (California, Hawaii, or the Pacific Territories). Establishing domicile ordinarily requires that the institution’s enabling documents, such as articles of incorporation, be filed with the appropriate State or territorial authorities in the appropriate jurisdiction. It also ordinarily requires that the institution demonstrate that its executive leadership and appropriate support staff are based within the WSCUC region and at least one campus, with the authority to award degrees, operates entirely within the WSCUC region. This section does not pertain to international institutions not seeking United States federal financial aid.

Institutions within this region that are part of a larger system or organization that is headquartered outside the WSCUC region may be considered for Eligibility if the institution meets the WSCUC definition of a separately accreditable unit. (See Separately Accreditable Institutions Policy available on the WSCUC website.)

Because WSCUC accredits institutions, where an institution provides programs not commonly offered by accredited institutions of higher education, the institution bears the burden of demonstrating that the subject matter offered is appropriate to higher education, academic in quality and rigor, and can be reviewed by peers from accredited institutions.

**What is the Process?**
There are typically three stages to becoming accredited:

1. **Eligibility**: a status conferred on nonWSCUC-accredited institutions for five years after committee review; signifies the institution meets the 16 Eligibility Criteria (see Appendix A) and in the judgment of the committee has the potential to meet WSCUC Standards at a minimum level and thus progress to candidacy.

2. **Preaccreditation (Candidacy)**: a status of preliminary affiliation with the Senior College and University Commission, awarded for a maximum of five years following a procedure for institutional review that includes self-study and on-site visitation. Candidacy indicates that the institution meets all or nearly all the Standards at a minimum level. Candidacy is not accreditation and does not ensure eventual accreditation; it means that an institution is
progressing toward accreditation. (The U.S. Department of Education uses “preaccreditation” to describe the period between when the institution begins a formal relationship at Candidacy and Initial Accreditation is achieved and allows a maximum of five years in this status.)

3. **Initial Accreditation**: indicates that the institution has met the WASC Senior College and University Commission’s Standards at a *substantial* level. Initial accreditation is awarded for a period of six years before the next comprehensive review. When an institution is able to demonstrate *substantial* compliance, the Commission may grant Initial Accreditation. An onsite visit is required before the Commission will award an institution Initial Accreditation.

Each stage has specific criteria, processes, and timeframes. An institution starting the process should carefully consider the requirements for each stage to ensure its understanding of the process and be aware that the time frame for the entire process may take several years.

**How Many Years and Visits Will it Take to Become Accredited?**
WSCUC does not set a number of required visits or years to achieve Initial Accreditation. WSCUC places the emphasis on an institution coming into *substantial* compliance with its 4 Standards of Accreditation and accompanying 39 Criteria for Review.

- If an institution has been functioning for many years and already has accreditation from another regional or national accreditation agency, a short period of Eligibility and only one visit might be needed to demonstrate substantial compliance. However, given the differing cultures of each agency, a longer time might be required.

- For a new institution, the period for Eligibility might take up to five years, and more than one visit might be required with a preaccreditation period of no longer than five years allowed. However, a highly motivated and well-resourced new institution could accomplish accreditation on a much shorter time table depending on how quickly *substantial* compliance can be achieved.

After being granted Eligibility, Initial Accreditation will be granted once an institution demonstrates *substantial* compliance with all of WSCUC’s Standards of Accreditation and related Criteria for Review (CFR). (See *Guide for Determining Minimal or Substantial Compliance* in Appendix B).

- If an institution is able to demonstrate substantial compliance at the time of the first visit, the Commission may grant Initial Accreditation for six years.

- If the institution is only able to demonstrate minimal compliance, the Commission will normally grant preaccreditation status, defined by WSCUC as “Candidacy,” as outlined later in this Manual.

- An institution being developed as a de novo institution may require more visits in order to come into substantial compliance with WSCUC Standards and to demonstrate the necessary maturity to ensure financial and educational sustainability. The assumption is made that such institutions are in the process of developing structures and processes over time.
• Institutions holding accreditation with another institutional accrediting agency that is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education may seek Initial Accreditation from WSCUC by demonstrating substantial compliance with WSCUC Eligibility Criteria and Standards of Accreditation under the Initial Accreditation of Institutions Accredited by Another Agency Policy (available on the WSCUC website). Mature institutions in this category may only need one visit to demonstrate substantial compliance with the Standards of Accreditation, although more visits may be needed given the different cultures between accreditation agencies.

The emphasis of WSCUC is to provide formative input throughout the process with substantial compliance expected to achieve Initial Accreditation.
BECOMING ELIGIBLE

Applying for Eligibility
Institutions interested in obtaining WSCUC accreditation are first reviewed to determine if they are eligible to pursue accreditation. This process, guided by 16 Eligibility Criteria (see Appendix A) that anticipate the WSCUC Standards, screens the institution to determine whether it is ready to begin the formal process of data collection and institutional reflection required for an accreditation review. The screening process is conducted by the Eligibility Review Committee (ERC) – a group of peer educational evaluators trained for this role – which conducts its work through smaller panels of its members, selected with reference to the nature of the applicant.

Before Applying
Before beginning the application process, institutions are required to:

- Consult with the WSCUC Vice President who oversees the eligibility process to discuss the institution’s intention and readiness for the accreditation process.
- Attend a WSCUC-sponsored workshop that describes the level of readiness expected of the institution at each step as it moves through Eligibility to Initial Accreditation. This workshop is offered annually in connection with WSCUC’s Academic Resource Conference (ARC) (generally in April) and at other announced times as interest may require.

These steps provide important perspectives for the institution, helping it evaluate its own readiness and increasing the likelihood that an ERC panel will have sufficient information upon which to make an informed decision regarding its eligibility. WSCUC staff, through individual counsel and workshop presentations, can also help an institution prepare its application by:

- Providing additional information on the WSCUC values, policies and processes, Eligibility Criteria, and Standards of Accreditation, together with essential WSCUC documents and publications.
- Offering an explanation of the 16 Eligibility Criteria and an appraisal of the institution’s readiness to meet them, the eligibility application process, and (as needed) examples of other institution’s eligibility applications, typical timelines, and other resources.
- Reviewing the worksheet that the ERC panel will use in evaluating the application, thus guiding the institution’s preparation of its application.
- Arranging one visit by the WSCUC Vice President who oversees the eligibility process to the institution (with travel costs invoiced to the institution) to become familiar with the institutional setting and context, and to explain the WSCUC processes to others at the institution.
- Providing staff review of a draft of the Eligibility Application, giving formative feedback on the completeness of the application and, as needed, the suitability of the materials provided. (Such feedback does not guarantee that the ERC panel will accept the Eligibility Application, which may have further recommendations.)
- Requesting clarification of the application or identifying additional information for the institution to provide in anticipation of the ERC panel review.
The Application and Process for Achieving Eligibility

1. An institution begins the process by submitting a one-page Notification of Intent to Apply form and application fee. (Available on theWSCUC website.)

2. Once these are received, the institution will be given access to an online portal through which the full Eligibility Application will be submitted. The institution must designate an Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO), who will be the primary contact person with WSCUC on all accreditation matters. Detailed information about submitting the application, required forms, fees, and other resources are available on the WSCUC website.

The Eligibility Application, which will be uploaded through the web portal, consists of the following elements:

- A cover letter indicating the institution’s intent to pursue Eligibility, signed by the chief executive officer and the chair of the governing board.
- The Eligibility Report, which addresses each of the 16 Eligibility Criteria (see Appendix A).
- The Summary Data Form and Signed Stipulation (see Criterion 4 in Appendix A).

Following staff review of the application and further consultation with staff, the institution may elect to suspend consideration of its application for a period of up to six months to allow it time to address needed changes. The institution may withdraw formally from the Eligibility process without prejudice at any time prior to an ERC panel review and receive a refund of 50 percent of the Eligibility Application fee.

3. Once the full application is received, WSCUC staff will select and convene an ERC panel to review and act upon the application, generally within 30 to 60 days of receiving the application. Prior to the review, WSCUC may engage a financial expert to review Criterion 8, Financial Resources and Accountability, in order to provide input to the ERC panel. Institutional representatives will be invited to participate in one portion of this review, via conference call, to answer questions and provide clarification as needed. A WSCUC Vice President who will serve as staff liaison is assigned to the institution in time to participate on the conference call. The WSCUC Vice President who oversees the eligibility process will coordinate the call. Once Eligibility is granted, the WSCUC staff liaison will work with the institution during the subsequent stages of the review process, providing consultation and helping to appraise institutional readiness for each process stage.

4. Directly after the ERC panel review, the Vice President overseeing eligibility will prepare an action letter (the formal document WSCUC uses to communicate its actions), detailing the panel’s findings regarding the institution’s standing on each of the 16 Eligibility Criteria. There are three possible outcomes following a review by the ERC: approval, deferral, or denial.

**Approval:** If the application is approved, the institution is granted Eligibility for a period of five years. The institution is then eligible to apply for Initial Accreditation and begins this process by submitting the Application for Initial Accreditation and fee within 60 days of receipt of the action.

**Deferral:** If the application is deferred, the institution may re-apply within two years with a supplemental application, addressing only those Criteria that the ERC panel had
determined that the institution did not meet in the first application. The first and second readers of the original panel review the supplemental application. A supplemental fee (as listed on the current fee schedule) is due with the supplemental application. After two years, the institution must reapply for Eligibility and the application fee applies.

Denial: Typically, an ERC panel will act to deny an application indicating that the institution fails to meet a large number of Eligibility Criteria. An institution wishing to request reconsideration of an action to deny Eligibility by an ERC panel may do so by submitting a statement clearly setting forth the reasons why the institution disagrees with the panel’s findings as stated in the action letter. The institution’s statement, along with the action letter, is sent to the WSCUC President within 30 days of receipt of the action letter. These materials are then presented to the Executive Committee of the Commission for its review and final determination. The requesting institution pays any legal fees incurred by WSCUC in the review. The Commission’s review and appeal processes are outlined in the 2013 Handbook of Accreditation and the Institutional Appeals Policy (available on the WSCUC website) do not apply to Eligibility denials.

5. Annual Report: Following a granting of Eligibility, the institution will be required to begin regular submissions of an Annual Report at a time indicated in the WSCUC action letter. The purpose of submitting an annual report is to allow WSCUC to enter critical information into its database, such as the institutional type, key contact information, size, location(s), and programs being offered. Information from the annual report sets a baseline at the beginning of a relationship with WSCUC. It should not be interpreted as WSCUC exercising any jurisdiction over the institution in matters related to accreditation. Such a formal relationship with the Commission begins only upon granting of Candidacy or Initial Accreditation.

Representation of Eligibility Status
A determination of Eligibility is not a formal status with the Commission, but rather a preliminary review of an institution to determine that the institution is potentially accreditable. It is, therefore, important that the institution not represent Eligibility as other than it is. If an institution chooses to state publicly that it has been determined to be Eligible, it should make the following statement in its entirety:

“(Name of institution) has applied for Eligibility from the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC). WSCUC has reviewed the application and determined that (Name of institution) is eligible to proceed with an application for Initial Accreditation. A determination of Eligibility is not a formal status with WSCUC, nor does it ensure eventual accreditation; it is a preliminary finding that the institution is potentially accreditable and can proceed to be reviewed for Initial Accreditation with WSCUC. The first visit for achieving Initial Accreditation must take place within five years of being granted Eligibility. Questions about Eligibility may be directed to the institution or to WSCUC at www.wascsenior.org or at 510-748-9001.”

No statement should be made about possible future accreditation status or qualification not yet conferred by the Commission. Statements such as the following are not permissible: “(Name of Institution) has applied for Initial Accreditation with the WASC Senior College and University Commission”; or “It is anticipated that Initial Accreditation will be granted in the near future.” Such language will be viewed as a breach of institutional integrity.
APPLYING FOR INITIAL ACCREDITATION

When a determination has been made by the Eligibility Review Committee panel that an institution meets the Eligibility Criteria, the institution will then submit within 60 days a formal Application for Initial Accreditation (available on theWSCUC website). The application form is to be signed by the chief executive officer of the institution and the chair of the governing board and submitted with the Initial Accreditation application fee. The fee includes WSCUC staff support through the Initial Accreditation process. (Additional visit-related fees are invoiced at the time of each visit.)

Letter of Intent and Initial Accreditation Fee

After the institution has submitted an Application for Initial Accreditation and the fee, the institution will work closely with their WSCUC staff liaison to determine when the first visit should take place. Following that consultation, the institution will submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) six months prior to the anticipated date of the site visit to review the institution. Typically the first team site visit takes place no later than 24 months after Eligibility is granted.

The LOI should address the following:

1. A description of how the institution has addressed each of the areas of concern identified as requiring further development in the Eligibility Review Committee (ERC) action letter granting Eligibility.

2. A description of how the institution will prepare for the visit, including organizational structures and timelines, using a comprehensive approach that addresses each of the Standards of Accreditation and related Criteria for Review (CFRs). The letter should address how broad support for the review process will be generated and how key leaders and other stakeholders will be involved in preparing for the review.

3. A description of the intended outcomes that the institution wishes to achieve by means of the review process. Key institutional issues arising under the Standards, especially those related to learning results and organizational quality assurance, are expected to be directly addressed.

4. As needed, a description and explanation of any changes in the leadership, ownership, or governance structures of the organization that have transpired subsequent to the ERC review.

5. The institution’s most recent audited financial statement, with detailed explanations for any negative financial levels or trends and for any matters of concern identified by the auditors in the related Management Letter (which should be included if provided by the auditor).

6. A stipulation that the institution will be reviewed only for the degree levels and programs in operation, or explicitly planned and fully documented in all relevant areas of the Eligibility Application, at the time of the ERC review. Any new degree levels or programs, off-campus, or distance education programs considered for initiation in the time span between the designation of Eligibility and the awarding of Initial Accreditation require prior approval by the Eligibility Review Committee. If the institution does not attain Initial Accreditation after the first visit but is granted Candidacy, such changes will require approval by the Substantive Change Committee. See the Substantive Change Manual available on the WSCUC website.
While there are no page limits specified for the Letter of Intent, it should be concise. Typically, Letters of Intent are between five and ten pages (2,500 to 5,000 words) in length.

The Letter of Intent is submitted electronically via the reporting portal using the username and password provided upon application for Eligibility.

The Letter of Intent is reviewed by the assigned WSCUC staff liaison, who considers whether the letter provides all the required information and attachments, responds to concerns expressed by the Eligibility Review Committee panel, identifies key areas on which the institution will work during the review process, and sets forth a realistic and appropriate plan and timeline for the review. The staff liaison ordinarily reviews the Letter of Intent within a month after submission. Revisions to the Letter of Intent may be requested if the staff liaison finds the letter to be lacking any key elements or otherwise reveals a lack of the readiness for the institution to pursue Initial Accreditation.
ACHIEVING CANDIDACY AND INITIAL ACCREDITATION

Initial Accreditation is based on an institution demonstrating substantial compliance with all WSCUC 2013 Standards of Accreditation and their associated CFRs. Once an institution is found to be in substantial compliance, the visiting team can recommend Initial Accreditation for the Commission’s consideration. The Commission will make its own independent judgment taking into account the site visit team’s report and confidential recommendation and WSCUC staff input.

- If an institution is unable to demonstrate substantial compliance but at least minimal compliance with the Standards/CFRs after the first visit, the Commission may grant Candidacy for five years. At least one additional visit will be required. The focus of the second visit, and any subsequent visits, will be on only those Standards/CFRs that have been found to be in minimal compliance or non-compliance and other identified issues of concern to the Commission.

- If an institution is able to demonstrate substantial compliance with all of the Standards/CFRs, Initial Accreditation may be granted following the first visit, and no formal preaccreditation period (“Candidacy”) will be needed.

Candidacy status may be granted to institutions with students enrolled but without having graduated its first class. To be reviewed for Initial Accreditation, an institution must have graduated at least one class of students.

The Initial Accreditation Institutional Report and Site Visit

The institution’s institutional report for Initial Accreditation should follow the template available on the WSCUC website. All Initial Accreditation reviews follow a comprehensive approach for the institution’s reports, which address the institution’s evidence of compliance and engagement with each CFR. Institutions seeking to become accredited will not follow the full Institutional Review Process in the 2013 Handbook, but will address all 2013 Standards/CFRs found in the 2013 Handbook Quick Reference Guide (available on the WSCUC website). However, institutions seeking accreditation will also be asked to describe how they anticipate preparing for these areas of emphasis required for institutions seeking reaffirmation of accreditation:

- Degrees Programs: Meaning, Quality, and Integrity of Degrees
- Educational Quality: Core Competencies, and Standards of Performance at Graduation, and
- Sustainability: Preparing for the Changing Higher Education Environment.

The institutional report will include a response to any issues identified in the action letter granting Eligibility. This may be part of the body of the report or in an appendix. Institutional reports are typically no more than 75 to 100 pages and include attachments limited only to evidence relevant to a CFR. Teams and the Commission do not want to be overwhelmed by numerous attachments with thousands of pages of supporting material.

The institution is also expected to complete and submit the Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators (IEEI, available on the WSCUC website), and the four federal compliance checklists. These documents and the Guide for Determining Minimal or Substantial Compliance (see Appendix B) will be used by the site visit team to note the institution’s level of compliance with each CFR. The items on the
list of General Required Information (see Appendix C) of this manual will also be submitted as part of the institutional report. Recommendations for information that should be included on institution websites can be found in Appendix D.

WSCUC appoints the visiting team by taking into consideration team members’ areas of expertise, institutional types, and experience. The institution is given an opportunity to identify any potential conflict of interests that team members may have that would prevent their participation in the review.

After reading the institutional report, the visiting team spends three days at the institution’s campus or headquarters to consider evidence of the institution’s capacity for deep engagement with significant issues and evidence of substantial compliance with all Standards/CFRs. WSCUC relies on the professional judgments of the site team as they make a rigorous and professional holistic assessment about the institution’s readiness for initial accreditation and level of compliance.

**Team Reports and Institutional Review**

The visiting team will prepare a report documenting its observations, findings, commendations, and recommendations. The institution will be given a draft copy of the report for correction of facts and possible redaction of proprietary information. In reviewing the draft report, an institution cannot challenge the findings or conclusions of the team. Once the report is finalized, the chief executive officer of the institution is given the opportunity to prepare a formal response to the team report that is provided to the Commission. In addition, the CEO and other institutional representatives are invited to appear before the Commission panel before Commission action is taken.

Commission policy permits an institution to withdraw its request for Initial Accreditation at any time and without prejudice prior to final action by the Commission. No refund of fees is provided if a voluntary withdrawal is exercised following the team’s visit to the institution.

Per WSCUC’s Public Disclosure of Accreditation Documents and Commission Actions Policy (available on the WSCUC website), team reports and Commission action letters will be posted on the WSCUC website. See the policy for more specific information.
COMMISSION ACTIONS

The Commission will make its own independent judgment based on the team’s report and recommendation and staff recommendation. The Commission is not bound by the team’s or staff recommendation.

Achieving Initial Accreditation
An institution achieves Initial Accreditation by demonstrating that it has:

1. Reviewed itself in reference to the 2013 Standards of Accreditation and the Core Commitments to Student Learning and Success; Quality and Improvement; and Institutional Integrity, Sustainability, and Accountability.
2. Met all of the 2013 Standards/CFRs at a substantial level.
3. Successfully addressed the concerns identified in the letter granting Eligibility.
4. Created a robust system to analyze retention and graduation rates and identified strategies to make improvements.
5. Collected evidence of student learning and used the results for instructional improvement.
6. Developed resources to maintain long term financial sustainability.

Possible Commission Actions
The Commission can take one of several possible actions after the first visit.

Grant Initial Accreditation. If the Commission determines that the institution is in substantial compliance with The Core Commitments and all Standards/CFRs, Initial Accreditation can be granted from the date of the Commission action with possible required Progress or Interim Reports. No preaccreditation period would be needed or recorded in the institution’s Accreditation History for an institution approved for Initial Accreditation after one visit.

If the Commission determines that the institution is not in substantial compliance with all of The Core Commitments and Standards/CFRs but has the promise of achieving the goal of substantial compliance in the near future, the following actions can be taken:

Grant Candidacy: If the institution is in at least minimal compliance with all Standards/CFRs, the Commission can grant Candidacy (preaccreditation) for five years. A second visit would normally be scheduled within eighteen to twenty-four months focused only on areas in which the visiting team has found only minimal or non-compliance and on other select areas identified by the Commission. Visits would continue to take place until substantial compliance is achieved or the five-year Candidacy period expires, in which case the Commission would deny Initial Accreditation. Institutions granted Candidacy must remember that only five years are granted in the Candidacy stage during which time Initial Accreditation must be achieved with no possible extensions of time. If Initial Accreditation is not achieved within five years, the Commission will deny Initial Accreditation.
Request Another Visit: If the institution is not in *minimal* compliance with all Standards/CFRs but has the potential to achieve such compliance by the end of the five-year Eligibility period, the Commission can request another visit focused only on areas in which the team has found non-compliance or *minimal* compliance with the Standards/CFRs. CFRs already determined to be in *substantial* compliance will not be the focus of any subsequent visit(s) unless circumstances change the level of compliance. At the next visit if the team finds at least *minimal* compliance with all Standards/CFRs, a recommendation can be made to the Commission to grant Candidacy for five years with recognition that the Commission will make its own independent judgment taking into consideration the team’s report and confidential recommendation and WSCUC staff input. It is possible that the institution could demonstrate *substantial* compliance with all Standards/CFRs at the next visit and be granted Initial Accreditation for six years by the Commission.

Deny Initial Accreditation and Candidacy: If the Commission determines after any visit that the institution has no potential to achieve Candidacy within the five years of Eligibility or Initial Accreditation within five years after being granted Candidacy, the Commission can deny any further visits. See details later in this Manual for reapplication. A Commission decision to deny Candidacy or Initial Accreditation is subject to Commission review and WSCUC appeals processes (see the *Institutional Appeals Policy* available on the WSCUC website). An institution that is not granted Initial Accreditation within five years after being granted Candidacy may reapply only after it is prepared to demonstrate that it has corrected the deficiencies noted in the review process. It must wait at least one year before reapplying. The Commission’s *Reapplication after Denial of Candidacy or Initial Accreditation Policy* (available on the WSCUC website) guides the Commission in determining the steps the institution will need to take as it reapplies for Initial Accreditation under these circumstances.

Representation of Candidate Status in Institutional Publications
Once an institution has attained the status of Candidate for Accreditation, it should provide students with appropriate notice of its status, such as in the course catalog and on the institutional website. The institution must use the following statement whenever it describes that status publicly:

“[Name of institution] has been recognized as a Candidate for Accreditation by WASC Senior College and University Commission, 985 Atlantic Avenue, #100, Alameda, CA 94501, 510-748-9001. This status is a preliminary preaccreditation affiliation with the Commission awarded within the five year period allowed to achieve Initial Accreditation. Candidacy is an indication that the institution is progressing toward Initial Accreditation. Candidacy is not Accreditation and does not ensure eventual Accreditation.”

Representation of Initial Accreditation Status in Institutional Publications
Initial Accreditation is granted by the Commission for a term as defined at the time of Commission action. Institutions granted the status of Accreditation must use the following statement if they wish to describe the status publicly.

“[Name of institution] is accredited by the WASC Senior College and University Commission, 985 Atlantic Avenue, #100, Alameda, CA 94501, 510-748-9001.”

The phrase “fully accredited” is to be avoided, since no partial accreditation is possible. The accreditation granted by WSCUC has reference to the quality of the institution as a whole. Since
institutional accreditation does not imply specific accreditation of any particular program in the institution, statements such as “this program is accredited” or “this degree is accredited” are incorrect and misleading.
PROCEDURES, DEGREE LEVEL APPROVAL POLICIES, AND FEES

Procedures Required of Institutions Granted Candidacy
Following the granting of Candidacy, institutions:

1. Continue to submit an Annual Report in the format required by the Commission.
2. Keep the Commission informed of any significant changes or developments, especially those required to obtain prior approval by the Substantive Change Policy (available on the WSCUC website).
3. Pay annual dues according to the schedule posted on the WSCUC website, prorated from the date of the award of Candidacy.

Degree Level Approval upon Candidacy or Initial Accreditation
The Commission has designated three categories of institutional authority to initiate new degree programs, with related institutional responsibilities for applying for new degree approval through the WSCUC Substantive Change process. Once Initial Accreditation is granted, these categories are as follows:

- **General Approval (G)** - granted to institutions that have offered 10 or more degrees in at least five different disciplines for 10 or more years. These institutions may offer new degree programs without prior approval from the Substantive Change process.

- **Specified Approval (S)** - applies to institutions that have offered five or more degrees in a specified field for at least 10 years. These institutions may offer new programs in these disciplines at the same degree level(s) without obtaining prior approval through the Substantive Change process.

- **Individual Approval (I)** - all other institutions are considered as having Individual Approval (I), which means that the institution must apply in advance for approval to begin any new degree programs. (See the Degree Level Approval Policy available on the WSCUC website.)

Institutions that have been granted Candidacy and are pursuing Initial Accreditation are designated as having “I” approval classification. The Commission’s action letter granting Candidacy will specify the degrees that are being offered at the time. Any additional degree programs anticipated by Candidate institutions must be approved in advance through the Substantive Change process.

When an institution is evaluated for Initial Accreditation, the visiting team that makes the recommendation to the Commission to grant Initial Accreditation will also make a recommendation with respect to the institution’s degree-level classification. In making this recommendation, the team will take into account the institution’s degree program history and the Commission’s relevant decision criteria. The Commission’s action will be consistent with the Degree Level Approval Policy (available on the WSCUC website). The action letter granting Initial Accreditation will specify the institution’s degree authority classification and list the degrees being offered, and their instructional modality, at the time of the action.
**Dues & Fees**
Institutions granted Candidacy and/or Initial Accreditation will be assessed annual dues, prorated from the effective date of the Commission action. A dues and fee schedule for the Commission is prepared each year and is available on the WSCUC website. Annual dues are based on institutional enrollment.

In addition, fees and expenses are charged for the following activities, with fees due and payable upon submission of the application. Late payments for any invoices from the WSCUC office may jeopardize the institution’s accreditation.

**Eligibility Applications:** Fees are charged for the initial application and reapplications.

**Initial Accreditation Applications:** After an institution has been determined to be Eligible, it is required to file a fee at the time of its application for Initial Accreditation. As the institution is not invoiced for membership dues until Initial Accreditation or Candidacy is granted, the Initial Accreditation fee covers the partial costs of WSCUC staff support and Commission’s work throughout the application process up until Initial Accreditation. A WSCUC staff liaison is assigned to the institution at the time that the Eligibility Review panel convenes to review the application for Eligibility. Institutions are also invited to send representatives to the WSCUC workshops that provide support in preparation for the comprehensive review process.

The fee covers these activities:

1. Staff will establish and orient visiting teams; assist teams with site visits; and follow up with feedback to the institution related to Commission actions. Additionally, one WSCUC staff liaison visit to the institution is provided, if requested, with staff travel expenses invoiced to the institution. Staff will provide feedback on early drafts of the visiting team reports while preserving the integrity of the peer review process.
2. Staff will provide assistance to the Commission, as needed, before it takes formal action regarding the institution.
3. Staff will work with the institution in anticipation of its appearance before the Commission panel.

**Evaluation and Special Visits:** The institution is billed for the expenses of the visiting team, including team conference calls and staff travel, and the visit fee established for the type of visit. Expenses related to special visits made by the Commission are also paid by the institution.

**Additional Charges:** Additional charges will be assessed for unusually complex evaluations which require staff time or legal counsel beyond that normally expended. These include visits to out-of-region programs and to institutions requiring unusually large teams in relation to the size of the institution.
# Eligibility, Candidacy, and Initial Accreditation: A Comparative Flowchart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>WSCUC</th>
<th>Action or Outcome</th>
<th>Fees &amp; Charges</th>
<th>Notes and Documents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eligibility</td>
<td>Institution expresses interest in pursuing WSCUC accreditation</td>
<td>Provides consultation on requirements, options, timelines; urges to attend workshops</td>
<td>Institution name, contact information added to tracking list</td>
<td>Workshop fees as needed</td>
<td>How to Become Accredited Procedures Manual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Submits Notification of Intent to Apply, together with Application Fee</td>
<td>Provides password, template, and instructions for online submission</td>
<td></td>
<td>See Dues and Fees Schedule on WSCUC website</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Submits completed on-line Eligibility Application</td>
<td>Convenes Eligibility Review Committee panel</td>
<td>Determines if Eligible; WSCUC supplies action letter with needed areas of focus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Visit for Seeking Accreditation</td>
<td>Submits Application for Initial Accreditation and fee within 60 days of approval of Eligibility</td>
<td>WSCUC staff liaison visits campus for workshop, if requested; tentatively schedules first visit for Initial Accreditation</td>
<td></td>
<td>See Dues and Fees Schedule of WSCUC website; staff liaison travel costs for workshop</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Submits Letter of Intent 6 months prior to visit</td>
<td>VP/Staff Liaison reviews and approves Letter of Intent</td>
<td>VP/Staff Liaison confirms visit date; forms site team</td>
<td></td>
<td>Letter of Intent Outline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prepares for through self-study and preparation of Institutional Report, hosts first visit for Initial Accreditation</td>
<td>Site visit report received WSCUC staff and reviewed by Commission</td>
<td>Commission actions: a. If all CFRs found to be in substantial compliance, grant Initial Accreditation b. If not in substantial compliance but at least minimal compliance, grant Candidacy for 5 years with subsequent visits only focused on CFRs not in substantial compliance with time period between visits normally 18 months</td>
<td>Team costs</td>
<td>Institutional representatives encouraged to attend ARC and workshops related to self-study, visit preparations, assessment, etc., to prepare for visit(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prepare for subsequent visits by focusing on areas identified by visiting team and Commission as not being in substantial compliance; prepare Institutional Report following self-study</td>
<td>If Initial Accreditation granted, sets effective date of action; determines, and posts approved programs and locations; determines degree level approval</td>
<td>Posts team report and Commission action letter on WSCUC website; updates WSCUC database; If Initial Accreditation granted, invoices for dues</td>
<td>If Initial Accreditation granted, dues per enrollment and off-campus sites</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsequent Visit(s) for Seeking Accreditation</td>
<td>WSCUC Commission reviews Institutional Report and visiting team report</td>
<td>Site visit report received by WSCUC staff</td>
<td>VP/Staff liaison confirms visit date and visiting team</td>
<td>See Dues and Fees Schedule on WSCUC website; Team costs</td>
<td>How to Become Accredited Procedures Manual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If Initial Accreditation granted, sets effective date of action; determines, and posts approved programs and locations; determines degree level approval</td>
<td>Commission actions: c. If all CFRs found to be in substantial compliance, grant Initial Accreditation d. If not in substantial compliance, continue Candidacy for another visit unless maximum 5 years allowed will not allow time for another visit which would result in denial of Initial Accreditation</td>
<td>If Initial Accreditation granted, dues per enrollment and off-campus sites</td>
<td></td>
<td>WSCUC Fee Schedule</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# WSCUC Interactions: An Overview – 2013 Handbook of Accreditation

From Eligibility to Accreditation to Reaffirmation

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Interactions</th>
<th>Eligibility Review</th>
<th>First Seeking Accreditation Visit</th>
<th>Subsequent Seeking Accreditation Visit(s) (if needed)</th>
<th>Reaffirmation of Accreditation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</table>

**Focus:**
- Institutional Readiness
- Substantial Compliance with CFRs
- Substantial Compliance with CFRs
- Core Commitments and required elements
- On-site validation of report; follow-up on any OSR issues

**Documents(s) Submitted:**
- Narrative: how the 16 Criteria are being met
- Letter of Intent (6 months prior)
- Report: Meets all Standards and CFRs at a substantial level
- Report: Focusing only on CFRs not in substantial compliance on first or subsequent visits
- Institutional Report: Responsive to each of the elements of the Institutional Review Process (IRP) in the 2013 Handbook of Accreditation
- Supplemental materials as may be requested by the OSR team during its review

**Data Required:**
- Summary Data Form
- WSCUC staff will pull required data from Annual Report
- WSCUC staff will pull required data from Annual Report; others to support essays
- WSCUC staff will pull required data from Annual Report; others to support essays
- Additional only as may be required by the OSR team

**Report Preparation**
- Typically: Executive and Academic Leadership
- Broad campus and Board involvement in self-study; report prepared by designated staff coordinate by ALO
- Broad campus and Board involvement in self-study; report prepared by designated staff coordinate by ALO
- Self-Review Under the Standards; IEE; Faculty and administration analysis. Financial data sent in Annual Report. Retention and graduation data sent earlier.
- Additional documentation and analysis only as may be required by the OSR team

**Peer Site Visit?**
- No
- Yes
- Yes
- No; OSR takes place in WSCUC office.
- Yes

**Maximum Time Period:**
- N/A
- Up to 5 years after Eligibility granted
- Up to 5 years
- 1 semester interval between OSR and AV

**Commission or Staff Action**
- Eligibility Committee Review panel determines if 16 criteria; grants Eligibility
- Team reports to Commission to determine if substantial compliance with all CFRs achieved in order to grant Initial Accreditation (IA)
- Team reports to Commission to determine if substantial compliance with all CFRs achieved in order to grant Initial Accreditation (IA) (If IA not granted but Candidacy approved, subsequent visit(s) only focus on CFRs not in substantial compliance until IA is granted or denied if not completed within 5 years)
- Team reports to institution Commission action is not taken unless required by critical circumstances
- Team reports from OSR and AV to Commission, which reaffirms; may require monitoring or sanctions. Sets schedule for next review.
**WSCUC Interactions: An Overview – 2013 Handbook of Accreditation**

**Additional Accreditation Activities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interactions</th>
<th>Special Visits or Interim Reports</th>
<th>Substantive Change</th>
<th>Mid-Cycle Review</th>
<th>Annual Reporting</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preparation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus:</td>
<td>As specified in the Commission action letter</td>
<td>Institution-desired change</td>
<td>Mid-point compliance check in, focused on student achievement</td>
<td>Submission of required information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documents(s) Submitted:</td>
<td>Report: As specified by Commission action</td>
<td>Proposal: As per the Substantive Change Manual</td>
<td>Update of IEEI (submitted with Annual Report)</td>
<td>Annual Report (submitted online); in spring of each year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Required:</td>
<td>As specified in Commission Action Letter</td>
<td>As specified</td>
<td>Retention and graduation data pulled by WASC from IPEDS and Annual Report</td>
<td>Audited financials, Summary Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report Preparation</td>
<td>As specified</td>
<td>Typically: By related academic leadership</td>
<td>Typically: ALO, CAO</td>
<td>Typically: ALO; CFO; CEO; IR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Site Visit?</td>
<td>Special Visit: Yes</td>
<td>6 months after for new sites and for Distance Education</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum Time Period:</td>
<td>Per Commission action</td>
<td>As needed</td>
<td>Occurs at the mid-point of the institution’s accreditation cycle</td>
<td>Annually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commission or Staff Action</td>
<td>Special Visit Team: reports to Commission for action</td>
<td><strong>Sub Change Committee:</strong> Reviews, actions; recommends to Commission for ratification.</td>
<td><strong>Staff:</strong> Receive and review; follow-up as needed.</td>
<td><strong>Staff:</strong> Receive and review; follow-up as needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interim Report Committee: reviews Interim Report.</td>
<td>Structural Changes: by Commission action</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX A: ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The Eligibility Criteria are basic qualifications that an institution of higher education must meet to be considered for Initial Accreditation. The Criteria establish a basis for determining that the institution has purposes accreditable by the Commission and has developed sufficient planning and operational activities to provide a reasonable basis for believing that Initial Accreditation could be achieved within five years. A determination of Eligibility is not an official status with the Commission but only the outcome of a preliminary review that enables an institution to proceed with the planning, data collection, institutional self-reflection, and evaluation required for Initial Accreditation reviews. By granting Eligibility, no assurance is made that an institution will eventually be granted Initial Accreditation. These judgments will be made in light of additional institutional presentations and on-site reviews to assess the institution’s alignment with the WSCUC 2013 Standards of Accreditation.

Following is a list of the 16 Eligibility Criteria that grow out of the WSCUC 2013 Standards of Accreditation. The Eligibility Criteria do not attempt to cover all of the 39 Criteria for Review associated with the Standards, but focus on those most important to determine the potential of the institution to achieve substantial compliance with the Standards of Accreditation in order to achieve Initial Accreditation once Eligibility is approved.

Below the explanation of each Criterion is a list of related supporting documentation that institutions typically provide with their Eligibility Application. The list of documents is intended as a guideline for institutions preparing for the Eligibility Review process; either additional or similar documents may be provided in keeping with the focus of each Criterion. Providing all relevant information in an organized and succinct form will assist with the staff review and the Eligibility Review Committee (ERC) panel decision-making process. Narrative and documents are uploaded to an online portal for review. Staff will provide instructions on submission procedures, including providing a username and password, upon receipt of the requisite application form and fees.

SECTION ONE: INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Institutional Context Statement (300 – 500 words)
Please provide a narrative statement that includes a brief history of the institution and rationale for seeking accreditation at this time. If the institution is part of a larger system or organization, describe the relationship with the related entity. (See WSCUC’s Related Entities Policy available on the WSCUC website.)

Criterion 1. Authority
The institution is authorized to operate as an educational institution and to award degrees by the appropriate governmental organization or agency as required by each of the jurisdictions or regions in which it operates. For private institutions incorporated in California, the institution shall have completed formal state approval process through the Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education (BPPE); temporary approval will not be accepted. Because of the current backlog of approvals by BPPE, ERC panels can recommend Eligibility on condition that state approval is acquired prior to Initial Accreditation. For law schools in California, the institution shall also demonstrate that it is accredited by the California State Bar Association. Institutions offering online law degrees, which are not eligible for accreditation by the State Bar of California Committee of Bar Examiners, may be considered for eligibility provided they are deemed to have met all other WSCUC Eligibility Criteria.
Institutions operating entirely in an online modality, with students enrolled without regard to geographical location, are expected to be incorporated or otherwise legally constituted within the region and have their primary executive offices in the region, including operational functions (executive offices, student records, board minutes, support staff, etc.)

If the applicant is part of a larger system or organization, the entity thatWSCUC would accredit must meet these location requirements.

- Degree-granting approval statement or certificate from an appropriate governmental body

**Criterion 2. Operational Status**

It must be clear that institutional planning and resources are sufficiently mature to ensure that by the time of the first review for Initial Accreditation, the institution will be operational with students actively pursuing its degree program(s) and will have graduated its first class.

- Current or intended schedule of classes
- Enrollment history of the institution; if operational, for up to three years
- Other evidences of planning

**Criterion 3. Public Information**

The institution publishes in its catalog, or in other appropriate places, accurate and current information that describes its purposes and objectives, admission requirements and procedures, financial aid policies and procedures, rules and regulations directly affecting students, programs and courses, degrees offered and the degree requirements, costs and refund policies, formal and informal grievance procedures, academic credentials of faculty and administrators, and other items relative to students’ attending the institution or withdrawing from it.

**General Information must include at least the following:**

- Official name, address, telephone, website
- Educational mission
- Course, program, degree offerings
- Academic calendar and program length
- Available student financial aid
- Available learning resources (library, technology, and support services)
- Names and degrees of administrators and faculty
- Names of governing board members
- Admissions criteria and processes
- Student fees and other financial obligations
- All degrees, diplomas, and certificates currently offered
- Graduation and transfer policies

**Major policies affecting students:**

- Academic regulations including academic honesty
- Nondiscrimination policies and procedures
- Acceptance of transfer credits
- Grievance and complaint procedures
- Sexual harassment policies and procedures
- Refund of tuition and fees
- Location or publications where other policies may be found
Criterion 4. Relations with the Accrediting Commission
The governing board provides a formal statement as part of its Eligibility Application that the institution agrees to adhere to these Eligibility Criteria, describes itself in identical terms to all of its accrediting agencies, promptly communicates any changes in its status, and discloses any and all information required by the Commission to carry out its accrediting responsibilities. Such information includes actions taken by governmental bodies and other accrediting agencies, including investigations, reports, and legal actions taken by or against the institution. Further, the institution agrees that in pursuing Candidacy and Initial Accreditation, it is committed to abiding by the Standards, Policies, and Procedures established by WSCUC.

- Copy of policy formally adopted by the governing board ensuring compliance with WSCUC’s Standards, Policies, and Procedures
- List of other accreditations or approvals (if any) held by the institution
- Copies of the most recent actions taken by other accrediting agencies or approval bodies, including information about conditions or concerns raised by such bodies
- Copy of documents showing how the institution is represented by those accrediting agencies (may be copied from the agency’s website)
- Summary statement relating to investigations of the institution by any governmental entity and an update on the status of such investigation
- Reports concerning any pending legal actions by or against the institution, including a full explanation of the nature of the actions, parties involved, and status of the litigation

Criterion 5. Academic and Transfer Credit
The institution awards academic credits based on generally accepted practices in degree-granting institutions of higher education. In awarding credit, the institution adheres to federal guidelines consistent with WSCUC’s Credit Hour Policy (available on the WSCUC website).

If the institution accepts transfer students, it has established policies for the review and acceptance of transfer credits consistent with WSCUC’s Transfer of Credit Policy (available on the WSCUC website).

- Institutional policies on the award of credit specific to each mode of delivery offered by the institution
- Institutional policies on transfer of credit, including criteria for their acceptance, and maximum allowable number of transfer credits applicable to its degree programs
- Position description for person(s) making judgments about the appropriateness of transfers of credit, including required qualifications for persons holding this position

SECTION TWO: INSTITUTIONAL MISSION AND PLANNING

Institutional Context Statement (300 – 500 words)
Please provide a narrative statement that describes how the institution’s mission informs the institution’s purposes, educational objectives, and strategic planning. Include a description of institutional commitment to the core values of diversity and public good. See WSCUC’s Diversity Policy (available on the WSCUC website) and Public Good Resource Guide (available on the WSCUC website).

The institution’s purposes are clearly defined and appropriate for higher education. They are formally adopted by the governing board and published in key institutional documents. Published statements reflect the institution’s commitment to achieving student learning.
The institution offers academic programs and administrative support consistent with its purposes, and ensures a climate of openness and academic freedom.

- Copy of statement(s) of mission or institutional purposes as they appear in a published catalog, institutional website, or other public document
- Statements of Academic Freedom from official publications, such as a faculty handbook
- Diversity Statement

**Criterion 7. Governance and Administration**

An institution must demonstrate that the primary locus of its governance and operational oversight activity is based within the WSCUC region, including that the institution is a legally recognized organization that envisions a long and stable future. This is particularly relevant if the institution will seek to obtain access to federal financial assistance upon attaining WSCUC accreditation. Additionally, the institution is effectively independent of its owners or investors. Institutions should refer to WSCUC’s Independent Governing Board Policy for WASC’s expectations about governing board structures, characteristics and best practices (available on the WSCUC website). The following represent key aspects of the policy:

- Interactions with ownership and governance entities are free from interests that could compromise the institution’s mission.
- The institution has a chief executive officer who is appointed and evaluated by the governing board and whose full-time or primary responsibility is to the institution.
- The institution has a chief financial officer whose full-time or primary responsibility is to the institution, and sufficient staff with appropriate preparation and experience to provide the administrative services necessary to conduct and support its affairs and the achievement of its purposes.

- A current list of, and biographical information about (including affiliations), all governing board members
- A copy of the governing board bylaws and documents establishing committee structures and statements of board responsibilities (WSCUC may require legal review)

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1 The legal configuration of the entity that WSCUC will accredit, as defined by its bylaws and other founding documents, may need to be evaluated by WSCUC legal counsel. Because the structure of an organization may have many distinctive and sometimes novel aspects, a legal opinion that the entity conforms in all dimensions to WSCUC expectations may be essential early in the accreditation process. The applicant will be invoiced for related costs.

2 This is typically manifest by a formally constituted board, the bylaws of which specify how the board constitutes and succeeds itself, how it ensures against being dismissed in its entirety by the actions of an owner or investor, and how its specified functions ensure sufficient engagement with the institution to fulfill its fiduciary responsibilities.

3 If an applicant’s educational program operates as a unit within a larger organization which WSCUC does not accredit, such as a research or health care institution, a public school district or consortium, or a charter school organization, in which board oversight is exercised at the level of the parent organization, the applicant must document how oversight of the educational program is exercised within the context of the larger organization.

4 In some cases the applicant may be an educational program within a larger institution in which the chief executive officer is not the CEO of the parent entity but rather a person designated as head of the educational program. In these cases, the educational leader must be subject to the same concepts of appointment, review, and accountability as specified in Criterion 4. If the educational leader is appointed by a governing board that is comprised of publicly elected individuals, it must be evident that the leader will not be subject to arbitrary removal for political reasons. In any case, the executive leader of the educational program must hold an assignment of time and responsibility to these functions sufficient to ensure the educational program’s strength and sustainability.

5 This Criterion may be met if the financial and related administrative operations of an educational program are subsumed within those of a parent entity, provided that it is possible for evaluators to obtain information specific to the educational program sufficient to support judgments about the adequacy of its funding and of its administrative support personnel and services. One individual within such a financial unit must be designated to ensure financial oversight of the academic program and its adequate participation in the overall institutional budget process.
For private institutions: Articles of incorporation, describing the type of organizational structure (e.g., non-profit 501(c)(3), Limited Liability Corporation, Subchapter S, etc.), and identifying as appropriate the owners or investors, and designating whether the institution is owned or sponsored by a related entity which is not eligible for WSCUC accreditation. See WSCUC’s Related Entities Policy (available on the WSCUC website) and Institutions with Non-Educational Components Policy (available on the WSCUC website).

Certification that the board does not have a majority of persons with employment, family, or personal interest in the institution, signed by the chief executive officer and governing board chair

A copy of the board’s conflict of interest policy

Conflict of Interest statements for board members and/or owners

Signed Stipulation: Letter signed by the chair of the governing board and president that all information presented to the Commission is accurate, that the institution agrees to adhere to the requirements of Eligibility (if granted), and in pursuing Candidacy and Initial Accreditation agrees to abide by the Standards, policies, and procedures of WSCUC

Name, address, and biographical information or curriculum vitae of chief executive officer

Description of CEO’s primary responsibilities to the institution including, though not limited to, time spent on campus performing administrative duties and/or fulfilling teaching responsibilities

Organizational chart, including names of those in key positions; reporting lines and delegations of authority demonstrating that oversight by the governance structures is suitable to the successful operations of the educational programs. See Institutions with Non-Educational Components Policy (available on the WSCUC website).

Names and biographical information of key administrative staff

Position description of the chief financial officer

**Criterion 8. Financial Resources and Accountability**

The institution documents a viable funding base, financial resources, and plans for financial development adequate to support its purposes and educational programs and to ensure financial stability. It is expected that an operating institution not show a cumulative operating deficit for the current and preceding two years, or since its inception if less than two years old. If the institution shows a deficit, the institution must explain the reasons for the deficit, demonstrate that it has the resources to ensure its financial viability, and present a plan to restore a fiscally healthy state.

The institution annually undergoes and makes available an external financial audit by a certified public accountant or an audit by an appropriate public agency. The institution shall submit a copy of each of the two most recent audited financial statements and management letters (if any). The audit must (1) be prepared by an outside certified public accountant that has no other relationship to the institution; (2) be certified and any exceptions explained; and (3) specify whether any capital or operational funds have been provided by employees or Board members of the organization and describe any conditions related to such provisions.

Current and proposed budgets for the next three years

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6 If the applicant offers an academic program by a unit that is part of a larger entity, without being separately incorporated from that entity, documents must show that the allocation of resources from the parent entity and other sources is sufficient to sustain the development and growth of the academic program.

7 If financial and budget reports encompass a larger or parent entity of which the academic program is a component, evaluators must be able to review those dedicated portions of the reports that pertain to the academic program in order to make judgments about the viability and operational integrity of the academic unit. WSCUC evaluators must also be able to obtain sufficient financial information about the parent entity to be able to make judgments about its ability to sustain its educational program.
- Documentation of any external foundation or other funding support
- Description of available resources, including lines of credit, properties held, and other forms of capitalization, sufficient to sustain the institution’s operations during its pursuit of accreditation
- Certified independent audit, including management letter(s), for the two most recent years. It is recommended that the auditor employ the appropriate statements of accounting standards as follows:
  - State-supported institutions should use GASB Statements 34 and 35 and any other applicable GASB statements (available at http://www.gasb.org)
  - Not-for-profit institutions should use the Audit and Accounting Guide, “Not-for-Profit Organizations,” issued by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, which embodies FASB Statements 116 and 117 and other applicable FASB statements (available at http://asc.fasb.org).
  - For-profit entities should use regular corporate accounting standards. Publicly-traded entities should make available, upon request, documents such as SEC filings.
  - It is strongly recommended that institutions retain audit firms with considerable experience in higher education in view of increasingly specific state and federal expectations.

Criterion 9. Institutional Planning
The institution provides evidence of basic planning for the development of the institution, which identifies and integrates plans for academic personnel, learning resources, facilities, and financial development. The institution also has established procedures for program and/or unit review, including methods for assessing student learning and the attainment of educational goals, and for using the data obtained from institutional research to support planning for institutional improvement.

- Current educational, fiscal, facilities, and distance education plans that include proposed growth and changes for the next three years
- Documentation of approval of current plans and of formal adoption of a systematic planning process by the institution’s governing board
- Description of the institution’s planning process, including calendared cycles

SECTION THREE: EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND STUDENT SUCCESS

Institutional Context Statement (300 – 500 words)
Please provide a narrative statement that describes how the institution’s degree programs are congruent with its purposes and how the institution evaluates student learning.

Criterion 10. Degree Programs
Substantial portions of the institution’s educational offerings are programs that lead to degrees, and significant proportions of its students are enrolled in the degree programs. The institution’s degree programs are congruent with its purposes, are based on recognized higher education fields of study, are of sufficient content and length, and are conducted at levels of quality and rigor appropriate to the degrees offered. At least one degree program must lead to the baccalaureate degree or higher. Institutions seeking to offer graduate degrees must be able to demonstrate that they have an appropriate graduate-level academic culture or have plans to develop a graduate culture. Relevant factors

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8 This Criterion, especially when applied to educational programs being offered within a larger organization, requires that the institution be able to demonstrate that its educational function is fundamentally that of higher learning rather than of a career training program or an in-service credential program. This Criterion does not require that the parent entity define itself as an institution of higher learning.
include faculty qualifications and workload, research support, access to library and other research facilities, and explicitly stated thesis or dissertation requirements.

- List of degrees, together with course and credit requirements for each degree
- Catalog designation of college-level courses for which degree credit will be granted
- Enrollment projections or history for degree programs
- Data on retention, persistence, and numbers and disciplines of graduates, where available
- Catalog (or intended copy) describing program(s) being offered and graduation requirements
- Other marketing materials as relevant

**Criterion 11. Educational Objectives and Assessment of Student Learning**

The institution clearly defines and publishes educational objectives for each program, including expected student learning outcomes, and identifies how these objectives and outcomes will be addressed within the curriculum. Strategies for assessing students’ achievement of these educational objectives, including direct assessment of student learning, are also established.

The institution actively engages in, or has a plan in place to systematically engage in, the evaluation of how well and in what ways it is accomplishing its purposes related to student learning and educational effectiveness.

- Published statements that describe educational objectives and learning outcomes for each program
- Curriculum maps illustrating the integration of program learning outcomes with course learning outcomes
- Outcomes assessment methodology, with criteria and framework for program and/or unit reviews, created with significant faculty involvement
- At least two sample syllabi, including statements of how learning outcomes will be assessed for the courses submitted
- Description of the institution’s plans for systematic institutional effectiveness review and quality assurance processes
- Criteria for program and/or unit review
- Institutional plans for and/or activities undertaken to assess aggregate student achievement and to conduct program and/or unit reviews, including faculty engagement with evidence of student achievement

**Criterion 12. General Education**

The institution defines and incorporates into all of its undergraduate degree programs a substantial component of general education, including for baccalaureate degrees both lower- and upper-division offerings, designed to ensure basic collegiate skills, breadth of knowledge, and the structures of intellectual inquiry. Educational objectives for the general education program, which include student learning outcomes, are periodically reviewed and revised with faculty involvement, and include demonstrated competence in writing, critical thinking, scientific literacy, computational skills, and an introduction to the broad domains of knowledge. Degree credit for general education programs should be consistent with levels of quality and rigor appropriate to higher education. Institutions implementing a baccalaureate degree-completion model, inverted curriculum (in which career-related courses are completed first, with general education courses being taken in the final years), or other curricular format that relies on students transferring significant portions of general education from other institutions, must describe the criteria or overall philosophy of general education by which it determines which general education credits it will accept from other institutions toward its baccalaureate degrees.

- Rationale for the design of the general education program
List of general education courses, including catalog descriptions, or descriptions of the general education core competencies and how they will be assessed within the curriculum

Two general education course syllabi, or the designated elements of those courses with indications of portions dedicated to the core competencies

**Criterion 13. Faculty**
The institution has a substantial core of qualified faculty, sufficient in size, background, and experience to support all of the institution’s educational program offerings, including a core of faculty whose primary responsibility is to the institution. A clear statement of faculty responsibilities must exist, which include the development and review of the curriculum, and assessment of student learning at multiple levels.

- Full-time and part-time faculty roster, including degrees earned (with names of regionally accredited institutions where earned) and relevant prior experience
- Statement of faculty responsibilities
- Criteria used for designating full- or part-time
- Current curriculum vitae for full-time faculty members (where this number is large, a sample of vitae is sufficient)
- Description of the structure and processes used for faculty governance, involvement in curriculum development and review, setting academic standards, and participation (if any) in the institution’s governance

**Criterion 14. Student Success**
The institution has a clearly articulated commitment to the success of its students. Student services are aligned with that commitment and demonstrated by data on student learning, persistence, and development.

- Demographic characteristics of students (gender, ethnicity, typical age, or other relevant characteristics)
- Intended methodology and data available (or intended) from reviews of student services units
- Data on retention and graduation rates if the institution has been operating for five years
- Description of student services and how they are aligned with institutional purposes
- Description of qualifications of the key personnel designated to provide these services
- Sample existing or proposed student transcript with relevant notations and information

**Criterion 15. Admissions**
The institution has adopted and adheres to admission policies consistent with its purposes that specify the qualifications of students that are appropriate to the degree levels offered.

- Copy of admissions policy from a published statement, including criteria for admission
- Copy of enrollment application
- Articulation agreements
- Marketing or outreach plans and materials

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9 Academic programs that rely on professional staff from within a parent organization, such as researchers or academic administrators, to serve as faculty must specify the roles, responsibilities, and time allocations related to their roles as faculty members of the academic program.

10 In institutions that regard students as research assistants or comparable categories, the applicant must demonstrate that its student support staff is able to understand and respond to the needs of students in their roles as students and to provide appropriate forms of support.
Criterion 16. Information and Learning Resources
The institution holds or otherwise provides long-term access to sufficient information and learning resources to support its purposes and all of its educational programs. To supplement resources beyond the core library of the institution, there may be specific long-term written arrangements for student access to off-campus or electronic resources. Programs are in place to train students in the use of library and other information resources, and to develop information literacy skills. The institution must demonstrate that library and learning resource use is a fundamental part of all its curricula, and that the faculty is involved in ensuring such use.

- Profile of holdings and resources, including descriptions of computing facilities availability and usage
- Copies of agreements for access to external resources, for both print and electronic sources
- Description of information literacy expectations for institutional and external library and computing facilities
- Plan for library and computer development
APPENDIX B: COMPLIANCE WITH WSCUC STANDARDS FOR INSTITUTIONS SEEKING CANDIDACY AND INITIAL ACCREDITATION GUIDE

This guide is not a formula or analog by which a team will arrive at a mathematically precise determination. It is a tool to narrow the ambiguity inherent in making a complex, holistic judgment. Evaluators should complete the Guide individually then share their appraisal in a consensus-building session at the conclusion of the site visit. Teams should be able to recommend to the Commission whether, for each Standard, the institution has demonstrated that it has met the standards at a level sufficient for granting candidacy or at a level sufficient for granting Initial Accreditation. Non-compliance may also be indicated.

Sufficient for Candidacy (Minimal):
- Understanding of principles or intentions of each Standard at a sufficient level to support continued development
- Elementary or initial development and implementation of structures, processes, and forms that operationalize the CFRs
- Understanding of principles or intentions is held at multiple relevant organizational levels

Sufficient for Initial Accreditation (Substantial)
- The core principle or intention of the Standard is understood and articulated clearly as it applies to relevant operations
- Thorough and widespread implementation of structures, processes, and forms that operationalize the CFRs with evidence of sustainable commitment

### CFR Summary of CFR

| Standard 1: Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Std. 1 | Overall Compliance with Standard 1 | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| **Institutional Purposes** | | | | |
| 1.1 | Formally approved, appropriate statements of purpose that define values and character | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 1.2 | Clear educational objectives; indicators of student achievement at institution, program and course levels; retention/graduation data and evidence of student learning made public | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| **Integrity and Transparency** | | | | |
| 1.3 | Academic freedom: policies and practices | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 1.4 | Diversity: policies, programs, and practices | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 1.5 | Education as primary purpose; autonomy from external entities | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 1.6 | Truthful representation to students and public; fair and equitable policies; timely completion | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 1.7 | Operational integrity; sound business practices; timely and fair responses to complaints; evaluation of institutional performance | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 1.8 | Honest, open communication with WASC including notification of material matters; implementation of WASC policies | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

**Standard 2: Achieving Educational Objectives Through Core Functions**

| Std. 2 | Overall Compliance with Standard 2 | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

*Teaching and Learning*

| 2.1 | Programs appropriate in content, standards, degree level; sufficient qualified faculty | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 2.2 | Clearly defined degrees re: admission requirements and levels of achievement for graduation; processes to ensure meaning, quality and integrity of degrees | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 2.2 a | Undergraduate degree requirements, including general education and core competencies | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 2.2 b | Graduate degree requirements clearly stated and appropriate | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 2.3 | Student learning outcomes (SLOs) and expectations for student learning set at all levels; reflected in curricula, programs, policies, advising | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 2.4 | Faculty’s collective responsibility for setting SLOs and standards, assessing student learning, demonstrating achievement of standards | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 2.5 | Students actively involved in learning and challenged; feedback on learning provided | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 2.6 | Graduates achieve stated levels of attainment; SLOs embedded in faculty standards for assessing student work | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 2.7 | Program review includes SLOs, retention and graduation data, external evidence & evaluators | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

*Scholarship and Creative Activity*

| 2.8 | Scholarship, creative activity, and curricular and instructional innovation for both students and faculty valued and supported | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 2.9 | Faculty evaluation links scholarship, teaching, student learning, and service | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

*Student Learning and Success*

| 2.10 | Institution identifies and supports needs of students; tracks aggregated and disaggregated student achievement, satisfaction and campus climate; demonstrates students' timely progress | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 2.11 | Co-curricular programs aligned with academic goals and regularly assessed | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 2.12 | Institution provides useful and complete program information and advising | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 2.13 | Appropriate student support services planned, implemented, and evaluated | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 2.14 | Appropriate information to, and treatment of, transfer students (if applicable) | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

**Standard 3: Developing and Applying Resources and Organizational Structures to Ensure Quality and Sustainability**

| Std. 3 | Overall Compliance with Standard 3 | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

*Faculty and Staff*

<p>| 3.1 | Sufficient, qualified, and diverse faculty and staff to support programs and operations | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Faculty and staff policies, practices, and evaluation well developed and applied</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Faculty and staff development planned, implemented, and evaluated</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fiscal, Physical, and Information Resources</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Financial stability, clean audits, sufficient resources; realistic plans for any deficits; integrated budgeting; enrollment management; diversified revenue sources</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Facilities, services, information and technology resources sufficient and aligned with objectives</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational Structures and Decision-Making Processes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>Leadership operates with integrity, high performance, responsibility, and accountability</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>Clear, consistent decision-making structures and processes; priority to sustain institutional capacity and educational effectiveness</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Full-time CEO and full-time CFO; sufficient qualified administrators</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>Independent governing board with appropriate oversight, including hiring and evaluating CEO</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>Effective academic leadership by faculty</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Standard 4: Creating an Organization Committed to Quality Assurance, Institutional Learning, and Improvement</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Std. 4</td>
<td>Overall Compliance with Standard 4</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quality Assurance Processes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Quality-assurance processes in place to collect, analyze, and interpret data; track results over time; use comparative data; and make improvements</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Sufficient institutional research (IR) capacity; data disseminated and incorporated in planning and decision-making; IR effectiveness assessed</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institutional Learning and Improvement</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Commitment to improvement based on data and evidence; systematic assessment of teaching, learning, campus environment; utilization of results</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Ongoing inquiry into teaching and learning to improve curricula, pedagogy, and assessment</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Appropriate stakeholders involved in regular assessment of institutional effectiveness</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Reflection and planning with multiple constituents; strategic plans align with purposes; address key priorities and future directions; plans are monitored and revised as required</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>Anticipating and responding to a changing higher educational environment</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
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Institution: ________________________________

Date: ________________________________

Evaluator: ________________________________
APPENDIX C: GENERAL REQUIRED INFORMATION FOR CANDIDACY OR INITIAL ACCREDITATION

In order for the institution to demonstrate that essential policies, handbooks, procedures, and other key items of information common to all WSCUC accredited institutions have been developed, in addition to the required information in the *Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators* (IEEI) (available on the WSCUC website), the following evidence will be required for the first visit for Candidacy (Preaccreditation) or Initial Accreditation.

In order to achieve Initial Accreditation, all of the following general required information areas must be completed. If the required information is located in larger handbooks or policy manuals, please include only the applicable section as evidence.

- Diversity policies and procedures
- Tuition refund policy
- Disability accommodations policies and procedures
- Faculty complaint and grievance policies
- Staff complaint and grievance policies
- Employee handbook
- Curriculum and units required for graduation (if not in catalog)
- Student learning outcomes at course, program, and (as appropriate) institutional levels
- Faculty bylaws or policies demonstrating collective ownership of the curriculum
- Representative course syllabi for each degree offered
- Financial aid policies, manuals, and protocols
- Posted policies on receiving transfer credit
- List of institutions with articulation agreements
- Staff hiring and evaluation policies and procedures
- Faculty orientation policies and procedures
- Staff development policies
- Organization chart for key leadership positions
- CEO biographical information
- Minutes of board meetings for last two years
- Policy and procedures for Board evaluations
- Credit hour policy
APPENDIX D: REQUIREMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INFORMATION ON INSTITUTION WEBSITES

Requirements for Institutional Websites:
A Resource Guide for Institutions

WASC Senior College and University Commission’s Core Commitment to Institutional Integrity, Sustainability, and Accountability sets the expectation that institutions “demonstrate institutional integrity” and “operate in a transparent manner.” Certain WSCUC standards and policies, along with federal regulations, call for specific information to be made available publically. This resource is intended to assist institutions in knowing what is required to be easily accessible and posted on their websites.

This information* is required to be readily accessible on the website:

- Institutional mission
  - Standard 1.1 Guideline: The institution has a published mission statement.
- Credit hour policy
  - WSCUC policy: Institution’s policy needs to be easily accessible.
- Transfer credit policy, criteria, articulation agreements
  - Required in accordance with U.S. Department of Education regulation 668.43(a)(11): transfer policy needs to be publically disclosed; must include criteria regarding transfer of credit and a list of institutions with which it has established an articulation agreement.
- Student complaints/grievance policy or procedures
  - WSCUC Compliance with Federal Requirements Checklist: Institution’s policy needs to be easily accessible.
- Retention and graduation rates (however the institution wishes to present this information)
  - Standard 1.2: The institution regularly generates, evaluates, and makes public data about student achievement, including measures of retention and graduation, and evidence of student learning outcomes.
- Evidence of student learning outcomes (however the institution wishes to present this information)
  - Standard 1.2: The institution regularly generates, evaluates, and makes public data about student achievement, including measures of retention and graduation, and evidence of student learning outcomes.
- Net price calculator:
  - Required in accordance with Higher Education Opportunity Act Section 111: schools that receive Title IV funds publicly share a net price calculator to help current and prospective students estimate their individual net price at that school as well as other financial aid information.

*Important Note: Not all federal requirements for universities and colleges are on this list – please see Additional Resources below.

Additional Resources:
2013 WASC Senior College and University Commission Handbook of Accreditation:
http://www.wascsenior.org/resources/handbook-accreditation-2013
WSCUC recommends that the following information also be readily available on the institution’s website:

- Institutional mission
- Academic programs offered
- Degree requirements
- Faculty, their department affiliation and degrees (both full-time and part-time)
- Transfer credit policy
- Student complaints/grievance policy
- Student fees and refund policy
- Retention and graduation rates (however institution compiles and reports them)
- Student learning outcomes
- Evidence of student learning (however the institution wishes to present it)
- Total cost of education, availability of financial aid and typical length of study
- Expected student debt at graduation
- Directory of staff and faculty, with contact info
- Student default rate