

# How to Become Accredited

Procedures Manual for Eligibility, Pre-accreditation (Candidacy),  
and Initial Accreditation

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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 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.

Inquiries may be directed to

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Website: <http://www.wscuc.org>

## Overview

### Who May Apply for WSCUC Accreditation?

Postsecondary institutions for whom substantial portions of the institution's educational offerings are programs that lead to degrees and that offer one or more programs leading to the baccalaureate or higher degree may apply to the Commission for eligibility.<sup>1</sup> WSCUC can accredit qualified nationally located institutions, i.e. incorporated anywhere in the U.S. and qualified international institutions.<sup>2</sup>

An institution that will seek to obtain access to federal financial assistance upon attaining WSCUC accreditation must be able to demonstrate that it is domiciled, i.e. the primary locus of its governance and operational oversight activity is based, within the United States. 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 U.S. and at least one campus, with the authority to award degrees, operates entirely within the U.S. This stipulation does not pertain to international institutions that do not qualify for United States federal financial aid.

Institutions that are part of a larger system or organization 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 non-WSCUC-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 level at least sufficient for Candidacy. (WSCUC establishes the length of time allowed in Eligibility status.)
2. **Candidacy (Pre-accreditation):** a status of preliminary affiliation with the Commission, awarded for a maximum of five years following a procedure for institutional review that includes self-study, institutional report and on-site visitation. Candidacy indicates that the institution meets all the

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<sup>1</sup>WSCUC's historical region included 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.

<sup>2</sup>WSCUC transitioned from a regional to institutional accreditor and extended its reach nationally and internationally in 2019. WSCUC originally started accrediting international institutions in 2012, but, took a hiatus from that effort between 2014 and 2019.

Standards at least at a level sufficient for Candidacy. 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 “pre-accreditation” to describe the period between when the institution begins a formal relationship at Candidacy and Initial Accreditation is achieved and is the entity that establishes a maximum of five years in this status.)

3. **Initial Accreditation:** the status granted by the Commission when the institution is able to demonstrate it has met all the WASC Senior College and University Commission’s Standards at a level sufficient for Initial Accreditation. Initial accreditation is awarded for a period of six years before the next comprehensive review. Self-study, institutional report and 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 compliance with its four Standards of Accreditation, as explicated by 39 Criteria for Review (CFR).

After being granted Eligibility, Initial Accreditation will be granted once an institution demonstrates compliance with all of WSCUC’s Standards of Accreditation and related CFRs sufficient for Initial Accreditation. (See Appendix B).

- If an institution is able to demonstrate appropriate 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 compliance sufficient for Candidacy, the Commission will normally grant this pre-accreditation status.
- A de novo institution may need more time to achieve Eligibility (up to the five years possible) and require more visits in order to demonstrate compliance with WSCUC Standards sufficient for Initial Accreditation, and to demonstrate the necessary maturity to ensure financial and educational sustainability. Typically, such institutions are in the process of developing structures and procedures that require time to fully implement and evaluate.
- Institutions holding accreditation with another accrediting agency that is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and have been functioning for many years may be able to achieve Eligibility in a shorter period of time. These mature institutions may only need one visit to demonstrate compliance with the Standards of Accreditation sufficient for Initial 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 toward compliance sufficient for 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 demonstrate its 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 (Eligibility VP) who oversees the eligibility process to discuss the institution's interest in and readiness for the accreditation process.
- Attend a WSCUC-sponsored workshop offered by the Eligibility VP that describes the level of readiness expected of the institution to achieve Eligibility. This workshop is offered annually at the WSCUC Accreditation 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 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 Eligibility VP 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. Detailed information about submitting the application, including required forms and fees, and other resources are available on the WSCUC website.
2. The institution must designate an Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO), who will be the primary contact person with WSCUC on all accreditation matters.
3. The institution begins the process by submitting a one-page Notification of Intent to Apply form and application fee. (Available on the WSCUC website.)
4. Once these are received, the institution will be given access to a cloud-based file sharing and content management system through which the full Eligibility Application will be submitted.

The Eligibility Application, which will be uploaded through the 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 Application, which addresses each of the 16 Eligibility Criteria (see Appendix A).
- The Summary Data Form
- The Degree Programs and Locations at Eligibility form
- The 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.

5. Once the full application is received, WSCUC staff will select a two member 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. Infrequently, WSCUC staff may choose to consult with legal counsel to also help inform the ERC panel.
6. WSCUC staff will work with the ERC panel and institution to schedule a date for the two and one half to three-hour review, conducted by video conference or teleconference. Representatives from the institution will be invited to participate in one portion of the review. A WSCUC Vice President who will serve as the institution's staff liaison is assigned by the Eligibility VP in time to attend the review.
7. The Eligibility VP will manage the review. During the first hour of the review the ERC panel will spend time identifying commendable aspects of the application and surfacing potential lines of inquiry to discuss with the institution. Institutional representatives will be invited to join the review during the second hour to answer questions and provide clarification as needed. During the final phase of the review, the ERC panel will summarize their findings and render a decision. 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.

8. Directly after the ERC panel review, the Eligibility VP 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 the Eligibility Criteria. There are three possible outcomes following a review by the ERC i.e. approval, deferral, or denial:

**Approval:** If the application is approved, the institution is granted Eligibility for a period of five years. The institution is eligible to apply for Initial Accreditation and begin 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 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 including another application fee and Eligibility application.

**Denial:** Typically, an ERC panel will act to deny an application when 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 the date 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 outlined in the 2013 Handbook of Accreditation and the Institutional Appeals Policy (available on the WSCUC website) do not apply to Eligibility denials.

9. **Annual Report:** Following being granted Eligibility the institution will be required to participate in the WSCUC annual reporting at a time indicated in the WSCUC action letter. The purpose of the annual report is to provide critical information such as institutional type, key contact information, size, location(s), and programs offered, to as a baseline at the beginning of the 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 only begins when Candidacy and/or Initial Accreditation is granted.

## Representation of Eligibility Status

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 any kind of accreditation status. 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 with 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.wscuc.org](http://www.wscuc.org) or at 510-748-9001.”

No statement should be made about possible future accreditation status 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 may submit a formal Application for Initial Accreditation (available on the WSCUC website) within 60 days of the date of the ERC action letter. The application form should 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. (Additional visit-related expenses are invoiced at the time of each visit and paid by the institution.)

### Letter of Intent and Initial Accreditation Fee

After the institution has submitted an Application for Accreditation and the fee, the institution will work closely with its 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 programs or additional off-campus locations considered for initiation during Eligibility require prior approval by the institution's WSCUC staff liaison. 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 online file sharing/content management system 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 documents, 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 compliance with all WSCUC 2013 Standards of Accreditation and their associated CFRs sufficient for Initial Accreditation. Once the evaluation team finds the institution in compliance, they can recommend Initial Accreditation for the Commission's consideration. The Commission will make its own independent judgment taking into account the evaluation team's report and confidential recommendation and WSCUC staff input.

- If an institution is unable to demonstrate compliance with the Standards and CFRs sufficient for Initial Accreditation but is compliant sufficient for Candidacy after the first/a 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 only be on those Standards and CFRs that have been found to be in compliance sufficient for Candidacy or non-compliance and other identified issues of concern to the Commission.
- If an institution is able to demonstrate compliance with all of the Standards/CFRs sufficient for Initial Accreditation, Initial Accreditation may be granted following the first visit, and no formal pre-accreditation 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 the four federal compliance checklists. These documents and 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 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 Report 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 WSCUC staff input. The Commission is not bound by the team's or staff's recommendations.

### 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 level sufficient for Initial Accreditation.
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 compliance with the four Standards sufficient for Initial Accreditation, Initial Accreditation can be granted from the date of the Commission action and can include a required follow-on, i.e. Progress Report, Interim Report, or Special Visit. No pre-accreditation status is needed or recorded in the institution's Accreditation History for an institution approved for Initial Accreditation without achieving Candidacy first.

If the Commission grants Initial Accreditation it may allow the institution to apply Initial Accreditation retroactively to a specified date, no more than one year prior to the date of Initial Accreditation. The retroactive accreditation date is not automatic and must be intentionally stipulated by the Commission on a case-by-case basis. This is a Commission approved practice and is not an explicit, stand-alone policy.

If the Commission determines that the institution is not in compliance with all four WSCUC Standards but has the promise of achieving this goal in the near future, the following actions can be taken:

**Grant Candidacy:** If the institution is in compliance with all four Standards sufficient for Candidacy, the Commission can grant Candidacy (pre-accreditation) for five years. A second visit is normally scheduled within eighteen to twenty-four months focused only on the CFRs that failed to meet compliance sufficient for Initial Accreditation, and on other select areas identified by the Commission. Visits continue to take place until compliance sufficient for Initial Accreditation is achieved or the five-year Candidacy period expires. Institutions granted Candidacy must achieve

Initial Accreditation within five years with no possible extensions of time. If Initial Accreditation is not achieved within five years, the Commission will deny Initial Accreditation.

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.

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.

**Request Another Visit:** If the institution is not in compliance with all four Standards sufficient for Initial Accreditation but, has the potential to achieve such compliance by the end of the five-year Eligibility and/or Candidacy periods, the Commission can request another visit focused only on areas in which the team has found non-compliance or compliance with the four Standards sufficient for Candidacy. CFRs already determined to be in compliance sufficient for Initial Accreditation will not be the focus of any subsequent visit(s) unless circumstances change the level of compliance. At this visit if the team finds an Eligible institution at least in compliance with all four Standards at a level sufficient for Candidacy, the team can recommend 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 compliance sufficient for Initial Accreditation 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 Candidacy and Initial Accreditation. See details later in this Manual for reapplication. 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 Commission Action Letter (CAL) following the review process. It must wait at least one year from the date of the CAL 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 Candidacy, 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, 1001 Marina Village Parkway, Suite 402 Alameda, CA 94501, 510-748-9001. This status is a pre-accreditation affiliation with the Commission awarded for a five-year period from the date of the action to grant Candidacy. 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, 1001 Marina Village Parkway, Suite 402, 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 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 requiring prior approval per 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.

### 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.

**Application for Accreditation:** After an institution has been determined to be Eligible, it is required to file a fee at the time of its Application for 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 the Commission's work throughout the application and review process 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 orient the institution about the application and review processes and provide support throughout; establish and train visiting teams; assist teams with site visits; and follow up with feedback to the institution related to Commission actions. 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. Additionally, one WSCUC staff

liaison visit to the institution is provided, if requested, with staff travel expenses invoiced to 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

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

## 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 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 file sharing/content management system for review. Staff will provide instructions on submission procedures, including providing a username and password to use to upload the materials, upon receipt of the requisite application form and fees.

### Section One: Institutional Context

#### Institutional Context Statement (300 – 500 words)

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 a higher education 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. Temporary approval will not be accepted. For private institutions incorporated in the United States, the institution shall have completed the formal state approval process in the state(s) in which it operates.

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 United States and have their primary executive offices in the U.S., 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 that WSCUC 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, to be granted Initial Accreditation, 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 evidence of planning

### **Criterion 3. Public Information**

The institution publishes in its catalog, and/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, US institutions adhere to federal guidelines and all institutions are 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)

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 Equity and Inclusion Policy (available on the WSCUC website) and Public Good Resource Guide (available on the WSCUC website).

#### Criterion 6. Mission and Purpose

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 define its primary locus of its governance and operational oversight activity, including that the institution is a legally recognized organization that envisions a long and stable future<sup>3</sup>. This is particularly relevant if the institution will seek to obtain access to US federal financial assistance upon attaining WSCUC accreditation. Additionally, the institution is effectively independent of its owners or investors<sup>4</sup>. Institutions should refer to WSCUC's Governing Board Policy for WSCUC'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<sup>5</sup>.
- The institution has a chief executive officer who is appointed and evaluated by the governing board and whose responsibility is to the institution<sup>6</sup>.
- The institution has a chief financial officer and other 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<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup>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.

<sup>4</sup>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.

<sup>5</sup>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.

<sup>6</sup>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.

<sup>7</sup>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.

- 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)
- For private institutions: Articles of incorporation, describing the type of organizational structure (e.g., non-profit 501(c)(3), Limited Liability Corporation, Subchapter S), 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 CEO 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<sup>8</sup> 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 have 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<sup>9</sup> 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).

<sup>8</sup>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.

<sup>9</sup>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.



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
- 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 cycle

## **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<sup>10</sup>. 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 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

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<sup>10</sup>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.

## 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 oral and written communication, critical thinking, information literacy, quantitative reasoning, 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<sup>11</sup>. 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 institutionally 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<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup>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.

<sup>12</sup>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

- Demographic characteristics of students (gender, ethnicity, typical age, and 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 admissions application
- Articulation agreements
- Marketing or outreach plans and materials

### **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 consensus-building sessions during and at the conclusion of the site visit interviews. 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.

### Sufficiency for Candidacy:

- 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 level

### Sufficiency for Initial Accreditation

- 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 [From “Standards at a Glance”]	Rating			
		Insufficient Information	Does Not Meet Standard	Sufficient for Candidacy	Sufficient for Initial Accreditation
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Standard 1: Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives</b>					
Std.1	Overall Compliance with Standard 1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b><i>Institutional Purposes</i></b>					
1.1	Formally approved, appropriate statements of purpose that define values and character	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b><i>Integrity and Transparency</i></b>					
1.3	Academic freedom: policies and practices	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.4	Diversity: policies, programs, and practices	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.5	Education as primary purpose; autonomy from external entities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.6	Truthful representation to students and public; fair and equitable policies; timely completion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.7	Operational integrity; sound business practices; timely and fair responses to complaints; evaluation of institutional performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1.8	Honest, open communication with WASC including notification of material matters; implementation of WASC policies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Standard 2: Achieving Educational Objectives Through Core Functions</b>					
Std.2	Overall Compliance with Standard 2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Teaching and Learning</b>					
2.1	Programs appropriate in content, standards, degree level; sufficient qualified faculty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.2	Clearly defined degrees re: admission requirements and levels of achievement for graduation; processes to ensure meaning, quality and integrity of degrees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.2 a	Undergraduate degree requirements, including general education and core competencies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.2 b	Graduate degree requirements clearly stated and appropriate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.3	Student learning outcomes (SLOs) and expectations for student learning set at all levels; reflected in curricula, programs, policies, advising	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.4	Faculty's collective responsibility for setting SLOs and standards, assessing student learning, demonstrating achievement of standards	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.5	Students actively involved in learning and challenged; feedback on learning provided	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.6	Graduates achieve stated levels of attainment; SLOs embedded in faculty standards for assessing student work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.7	Program review includes SLOs, retention and graduation data, external evidence & evaluators	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Scholarship and Creative Activity</b>					
2.8	Scholarship, creative activity, and curricular and instructional innovation for both students and faculty valued and supported	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.9	Faculty evaluation links scholarship, teaching, student learning, and service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Student Learning and Success</b>					
2.10	Institution identifies and supports needs of students; tracks aggregated and disaggregated student achievement, satisfaction and campus climate; demonstrates students' timely progress	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.11	Co-curricular programs aligned with academic goals and regularly assessed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.12	Institution provides useful and complete program information and advising	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.13	Appropriate student support services planned, implemented, and evaluated	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.14	Appropriate information to, and treatment of, transfer students (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Standard 3: Developing and Applying Resources and Organizational Structures to Ensure Quality and Sustainability</b>					
Std.3	Appropriate information to, and treatment of, transfer students (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Faculty and Staff</b>					
3.1	Sufficient, qualified, and diverse faculty and staff to support programs and operations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.2	Faculty and staff policies, practices, and evaluation well developed and applied	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.3	Faculty and staff development planned, implemented, and evaluated	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

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 the following evidence will be required for the first visit.

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 publicly. 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 publicly 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 form: 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:

<https://www.wscuc.org/handbook/>

WASC Senior College and University Commission Policies:

<http://www.wscuc.org/resources>

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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