

INITIAL OR DECENNIAL ACCREDITATION – THE PROCESS

The Commission publication, **Evaluation Procedures**, sets forth in detail the various stages of the accreditation process. Institutions seeking either initial accreditation or continued accreditation at the decennial cycle experience a chronological sequence of events that leads to the final decision of the Association’s Board of Trustees for initial accreditation or, in the case of continued accreditation, the final decision of the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions.

PRELIMINARY STAGE

When the Commission’s **Eligibility Requirements** have been met, an institution requests Commission publications to include **Standards of Membership**, the **Self-Study Manual**, and other evaluation materials from the Commission office.

An application and letter of intent to seek initial accreditation or continued accreditation is submitted to the Commission office by the chief administrative officer of the institution at least twelve months prior to the date requested for the on-site visit.

A Commission representative visits the campus to discuss evaluation procedures.

If appropriate, authorization and confirmation of the on-site visit will be acknowledged by the Commission office.

PREPARATION FOR THE VISIT

A steering committee is organized on campus.

Arrangements are made to have a Commission representative spend time on campus visiting with either the whole staff or a representative group to discuss institutional and Association responsibilities.

Using the **Self-Study Manual**, the professional staff and administration (through various subcommittees) prepare materials, which will allow the institution to assess the consistency of its educational policies and programs in terms of its procedures and outcomes and in relation to the **Standards of Membership**.

The Commission office nominates a visiting team including a chairperson and various team members. Subject to approval by the chief administrative officer, invitations are extended.

The chief administrative officer, upon finalization of the team’s membership, communicates with the visiting team chairperson to discuss housing and other arrangements for the team’s arrival.

The schedule of the visiting team is arranged in advance by the chairperson in consultation with the institution’s chief administrative officer.

The host institution is responsible for all lodging, meals, and out-of-pocket expenses.

No later than four weeks prior to the visitation date, the institution mails to visiting team members materials identified in the Commission publication, **Evaluation Procedures**.

One complete set of the same materials is also mailed to the Commission office.

THE VISIT

Typically, team members arrive at the institution on the afternoon of one day (usually Monday) and spend the next three days on campus.

On-campus evaluation activities are guided by explicit directions in the Commission publications, **Guide for Chairpersons** and **Instructions for Evaluators**.

The visiting team chairperson develops three documents: **Evaluation Report, Strengths, Concerns and Recommendations**, and the **confidential letter** containing the visiting team's accreditation action recommendation to the Commission.

The visiting team chairperson conducts an exit interview.

AFTER THE VISIT

The chairperson of the visiting team forwards both the **Evaluation Report** and the separate document identifying **Strengths, Concerns and Recommendations** to the institution for factual accuracy review.

Both the **Evaluation Report** and the **Strengths, Concerns and Recommendations** document, with accompanying recommendations and suggestions, are forwarded to the Commission office.

A separate single copy communication is forwarded to the Director of the Commission with a visiting team recommendation concerning accreditation.

THE REVIEW PROCESS

Upon receipt of the reports and other supporting documents, the institution's application for candidacy, initial accreditation or continued accreditation is usually placed on the next Commission agenda and documents are forwarded to the Commission members.

The visiting team chairperson is occasionally invited to attend the next scheduled Commission meeting to answer any questions concerning visiting team findings.

The Commission formulates a recommendation concerning initial accreditation to be forwarded to the Association's Board of Trustees for affirmation. The Commission is solely responsible for all decisions on continued accreditation.

In the case of initial accreditation, the institution is informed of any recommendation for that status and the proposed date for Board of Trustees' action. If the recommendation is of an adverse nature, the chief administrative officer will be notified in writing and an opportunity will be provided for officials (within a time period fixed by the Commission) to **show cause** why the proposed action should not be taken.

The Board of Trustees takes final action on the recommendation for candidacy or initial accreditation. The President of the Association then notifies the chief administrative officer of action taken.

In the case of initial accreditation, there are two letters of transmittal (the action and the reasons for the action, and the final Board of Trustees' vote) detailing accreditation decisions. In the case of continued accreditation, a letter of notification containing the action taken and the reasons for it is forwarded to the institution.