

# **INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION AND NON-TRADITIONAL STUDY**

Accreditation procedures for non-traditional programs should encourage innovative and imaginative approaches to providing quality education whether in new institutions or in those already accredited. The accrediting process generally should move toward assessment of the results of education rather than its processes, and developments in non-traditional studies provide opportunities to do so. At the same time, the Commission emphasizes that accreditation is concerned with institutional improvement and that attention to outcomes only, without considering the relations of these to the environment and educational processes, would be of little assistance to either traditional or non-traditional programs in raising questions and providing suggestions for improvement.

The Commission believes that the principles, policies, and procedures specified for accreditation must be flexible and leave room for innovation. As the nature of innovative developments becomes clear and experience is gained in working with them, accreditation policies and procedures may be adjusted to attain a uniform approach to the traditional and innovative.

## **GENERAL POLICIES**

Accreditation will be considered only when students have been granted or have qualified for a certificate or diploma. The Commission will consider accreditation of non-traditional institutions only when the institution can show that it has graduated students and provide data concerning the effectiveness of its programs of study.

Accreditation procedures and standards should be comprehensive, flexible and fair. Visiting teams should include persons who have experience in non-traditional programs and/or who are sufficiently conversant and understanding to review innovations completely.

An institution which, by the nature of its programs, abandons or renders non-functional traditional criteria and mechanisms of review and control aimed at assuring quality, must accept responsibility for indicating alternative ways in which quality will be assured.

## **GUIDELINES**

When certificates or diplomas based heavily on non-traditional patterns of study are offered, evidence will be required that awards are earned on the basis of definite criteria and demonstrated competency commensurate with the level and nature of the certificates or diplomas.

The appraisal, evaluation or examination procedures of an institution must be conducted with a high degree of objectivity, with due regard for maintenance of honesty and security and with explicit statements of criteria and standards for judging satisfactory performance. The learner's self-appraisal of the worth of an experience is a valuable, but not sufficient basis for awarding credit or a certificate.

Publicity statements to prospective students must be factual. For example, actual services provided must be consistent with publicity. This will require monitoring adjunct professors to assure that they fulfill their commitments.

To protect the integrity of the faculty/institution work relationship and avoid circumstances involving conflict of interest, policies regarding the amount of outside work for pay and safeguards surrounding the use of institutional resources and facilities for their intended purposes are required. The relationship of full-time faculty serving as adjunct faculty or program advisors and using the learning resources and facilities of their full-time employer for programs of study offered by other institutions (accredited or non-accredited) should conform to their institution's policies and standards on these matters.

The conditions and circumstances of subcontracts with adjunct faculty in the community with museums, art institutes, libraries, government agencies, foreign study institutions, and other diverse learning facilities should be made explicit and should be in conformity with the policies and standards of the institution on such matters. They should be accompanied by a description of the means to be used for documenting and evaluating the work done by the student in reference to the objectives of the programs of study.

The conditions and circumstances of subcontracts by non-accredited institutions with accredited institutions for use by students of their learning resources, facilities and degree-granting prerogatives should be made explicit. They should also be in conformity with the usual institutional policies and procedures safeguarding their intended use and with the Commission's guidelines on Contractual Relationships with Non-Regionally Accredited Organizations.

The concern here is both with placement of responsibility, the use and availability of resources, and the relation between tuition and fees, services rendered and benefits acquired.