

STANDARDS REVIEW POLICY

The Commission shall conduct, in a consultative manner, a systematic and critical review of its standards at least every five years in order to ensure that the standards are adequate to evaluate the quality of education provided by the institutions it accredits and relevant to the educational or training needs of students. This comprehensive review shall examine each of the standards, as well as the standards as a whole, and it shall involve, in an appropriate manner, the Commission's constituencies, including, but not limited to, its accredited institutions, graduates of those institutions, employers of the institutions' graduates, state licensing and/or regulatory agencies, on-site evaluators, and other accrediting agencies.

The Commission uses a combination of methodologies to conduct its systematic review of its standards. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Surveys of Institutions and On-site Evaluators after Site Visits

After each site visit, the Commission surveys institutions about their perceptions of the adequacy and relevance of the standards. In a similar fashion, the Commission surveys on-site evaluators to gain any insights they might have about the standards, their effectiveness in evaluating educational quality, and their relevance to the education and training needs of students.

While the information obtained from these activities is used by the Commission during its five-year review of standards, it is also compiled annually so that the Commission can take appropriate action if any significant problems are noted with the standards.

2. Review of Student Outcomes

An important measure of the effectiveness of the standards, both individually and as a whole, is the achievement of students. The Commission uses as tools to measure student outcomes the retention rates, job placement rates, and pass rates on state licensing examinations (as appropriate) of students who are enrolled in vocational programs at accredited institutions, as reported by institutions on their Annual Report Form.

3. Formal Review of the Standards by Institutions and Other Constituencies

Every five years, the Commission conducts a comprehensive survey of its accredited institutions regarding the standards. Following a review of the results of the survey, the Commission implements changes, as necessary, to ensure that its standards, both individually and as a whole, are both adequate to measure quality and effectiveness and relevant to the educational needs of students.

In a similar fashion, every five years the Commission surveys, or uses other methods to obtain information from, other relevant constituencies such as federal and state agencies, graduates of accredited institutions, employers of graduates, other accrediting agencies, etc., regarding the standards.

After the survey results have been compiled, the Commission conducts a review of its standards one by one. Usually, when a particular standard is being reviewed, there is a general discussion at the outset by members of the Commission about what issues are important to consider in evaluating quality in that area. This is followed by a detailed examination of the standard to determine if it adequately addresses all of the issues identified. If it does not, then proposals are developed to modify or, if necessary, replace the standard.

In a similar manner, the Commission examines the standards as a whole in light of the survey results and, if necessary, modifies one or more standards and/or adds additional standards to ensure that the standards are adequate to evaluate quality and relevant to the educational or training needs of students.

If the standards review process indicates a need to make changes to one or more standards, the Commission will initiate action within six months to make the changes. The draft of the changes will be available for review and comment by member institutions and field testing 12 months after initiating the change process. The new or revised standard will be acted upon by the Commission at its first meeting following the completion of the review and comment process.

4. Other Reviews of Standards

The Commission occasionally holds meetings with various constituencies to address issues of particular interest. After a general discussion of the issues, participants and/or Commissioners review the relevant standards and assess their viability as measures of quality related to the issue. Similarly, the Commission occasionally surveys various constituencies about issues. The Commission takes appropriate action if the discussion or survey results suggest that a revision of the standards is needed.