

COUNCIL FOR HIGHER EDUCATION ACCREDITATION

Statement

*Good Practices and Shared Responsibility in the Conduct of Specialized and Professional Accreditation Review **

The long tradition of quality assurance through peer review and self-examination continues to be valued throughout higher education, benefiting students, the public and the enterprise. This statement has been developed to further strengthen that tradition through encouraging ongoing, careful review of the relationship between institutions and specialized and professional accreditors.

Key issues addressed by the statement:

- *Clear and direct communication between specialized accreditors and institutional leaders,*
- *Enhanced understanding by specialized accreditors of the larger context of institutional needs and direction,*
- *Enhanced understanding by institutional leaders of the perspective and needs of specialized accreditors and*
- *Affirmation that the relationship between resources and accountability is grounded in meeting accreditation standards.*

The statement builds on the existing policies and procedures of specialized and professional accreditors, both reinforcing these policies and procedures and calling for additional action.

I. Institutions and Programs are Responsible for

1. Providing clear, accurate and complete information for an accrediting review.
2. Emphasizing the importance of having key faculty and administrators appropriately involved in the accrediting review.
3. Informing accrediting organizations of the desired purpose and expected results of the review in relation to institutional and program purpose and strategic direction.
4. Providing constructive information in a timely manner to accrediting organizations if there are concerns or difficulties that emerge during the accrediting review.
5. Understanding the standards, policies and procedures of the accrediting organizations with which institutions and programs are working.

II. Accreditors are Responsible for

1. Ensuring that the accreditation team is well-informed and prepared for the review.
2. Ensuring that standards, policies and procedures are consistently applied.
3. Pursuing only those data and information that are essential to judging whether accreditation standards are met.
4. Focusing on financial and other resources only to the extent that they affect compliance with accreditation standards.
5. Respecting the relationship of individual program needs to broader institutional objectives.
6. Keeping institutional executives appropriately informed at all stages of the review process.
7. Communicating consistent information at all stages of the review.
8. Providing opportunities for objective review and resolution of differences if they arise during the accreditation process.

III. Both are Responsible for

1. Providing for candid and useful evaluation of the accreditation review.
2. Ensuring open exchange if issues and concerns are identified by institutions, programs or accreditors.
3. Encouraging flexibility, openness and cooperation in considering experimental and creative variations of accreditation review.
4. Ensuring that resources are used efficiently through consistent monitoring of the costs of accreditation review (whether resulting from institutional decisions about self-study or accreditor decisions about reports, visits and presentations) in order that costs incurred are essential to a determination that standards are met.

*This statement is the work of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation Specialized and Professional Advisory Panel working with provosts from the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges' Council on Academic Affairs. Because this group is charged to address specialized and professional accreditation, the statement does not address institutional accreditation as conducted by either regional or national organizations. We believe, however, that many of the suggestions offered here are valuable for institutional accreditors.