

# Periods of Accreditation Guide

In granting or reaffirming accreditation, the Commission grants time periods of six, eight, or ten years. This guide explains the factors that are taken into consideration by the Commission in determining the length of the accreditation cycle.

In general, a grant of initial accreditation or reaffirmation signals the Commission's acknowledgment of an institution's adherence to the Standards and commitment to continuous improvement. The length of accreditation reflects the Commission's confidence in the institution's ability to continue to meet the Standards and achieve a high level of institutional quality and effectiveness. In its assessment, the Commission considers the institution's history, compliance track record, capacity for quality assurance, and overall stability.

WSCUC actively monitors and addresses emerging trends, concerns, complaints, and developments that could potentially jeopardize an institution's compliance with the Standards, regardless of the granted affirmation period.

## Six Years

### Meaning of Six Years

A six-year length of accreditation reflects the Commission's acknowledgment that the institution is meeting the Standards and possesses a commitment and ability to improve. The timeframe of six years signifies the Commission's preference for a shorter period of oversight and monitoring and the necessity of follow-on requirements. By implementing these follow-on requirements, the Commission aims to ensure continuous compliance with the Standards.

### Initial Accreditation

Institutions seeking WSCUC accreditation for the first time receiving a six-year period of Initial Accreditation are considered to be in compliance with the Standards, on track to continue to demonstrate compliance, and equipped with promising but unproven processes to address challenges as their quality assurance procedures evolve. In the United States to receive a six-year accreditation, an institution must be authorized to operate as a higher education institution and to award higher education degrees by the appropriate state governmental organization or agency. International institutions must be authorized by their country's ministry of education or equivalent to offer higher education degrees to be granted six years. As part of monitoring the institution's improvement efforts, the Commission will have follow-on requirements within the six-year period, which may include a special visit, interim report, or progress report.

### Reaffirmation of Accreditation

In cases of reaffirmation where compliance with the Standards is acknowledged but questions arise regarding the institution's ability to fulfill its mission at the highest levels, the period of reaffirmation is

set at six years. Institutions that have resolved a sanction will generally be accredited for six years. Follow-on requirements, such as special visits, interim and progress reports, serve as checks for the Commission to ensure the institution's continued adherence to the Standards.

## Eight Years

### Meaning of Eight Years

The evidence presented demonstrates that the institution can maintain compliance with the Standards for an eight-year period. It serves as a testament to the institution's commitment and capacity to continuously improve and enhance educational quality throughout this duration.

### Initial Accreditation

Institutions granted an eight-year initial accreditation demonstrate compliance with the Standards and have a strong history of meeting educational quality criteria. In the United States, these institutions already hold authorization from the state governmental organization or agency to operate as higher education institutions and to award higher education degrees. In addition, these institutions typically have accreditation from a federally recognized accrediting organization. For International institutions to receive eight years accreditation, they must be certified by their country's ministry of education or equivalent authority to offer higher education degrees. They are also generally recognized by a national quality assurance agency or regulator. Institutions receiving Initial Accreditation with this Commission will likely have follow-on requirements, which may include a special visit, interim report, or progress report, as part of the Commission's monitoring process.

### Reaffirmation of Accreditation

An eight-year reaffirmation of accreditation signifies an institution's consistent compliance with the Standards and a commendable track record. These institutions demonstrate stability and possess the capacity to uphold educational quality. They have implemented effective processes for self-assessment, continuous improvement, and quality assurance. While maintaining a high level of quality overall, they may have specific areas that would benefit from focused attention and enhancement to further fulfill their mission. Institutions granted an eight-year reaffirmation will typically have follow-on requirements, which may include a special visit, interim report, or progress report, as part of the Commission's monitoring process.

## Ten Years

### Meaning of Ten Years

The significance of receiving a ten-year grant of accreditation lies in an institution's demonstrated ability to effectively anticipate, manage, and adapt to both internal changes and the evolving higher education landscape. Such institutions exhibit a strong commitment and capacity to continuously enhance and elevate the quality of education they provide. The evidence instills confidence in the Commission that the institution has the capacity to maintain compliance with the Standards and foster continued improvement over a ten-year period.

### Initial Accreditation

Institutions seeking initial accreditation may be eligible for ten years if they meet these criteria: In the United States, these institutions are authorized to operate as a higher education institution and to award

higher education degrees by the appropriate state governmental organization or agency and typically are accredited by a federally recognized accrediting organization. Additionally, these institutions have likely obtained the longest possible grant of accreditation in a prior review by a federally recognized accreditor. International institutions are certified to offer higher education degrees by the ministry of education or equivalent in their respective country and have an established history of recognition by a national quality assurance agency or regulator. Institutions granted ten years may be subject to additional requirements such as a special visits, interim reports, or progress reports.

## **Reaffirmation of Accreditation**

Institutions receiving reaffirmation for ten years must fulfill the criteria for an eight-year reaffirmation and also demonstrate a proven track record of effective leadership, financial strength and stability, and a history of producing successful student outcomes. As with other periods of accreditation, the institution may have follow-on requirements such as a special visit, interim report, or progress report.

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