

# STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION

## Preamble

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc., one of six regional accrediting bodies in the United States, is a voluntary, non-profit, self-governing organization having as its primary purpose the accreditation of educational institutions. Through its evaluation activities, carried out by five commissions, the Association provides public assurance about the educational quality of those schools and colleges that seek or wish to maintain membership, which is synonymous with accreditation.

Institutions of higher learning achieve accreditation from the New England Association through its Commission on Institutions of Higher Education by demonstrating they meet the Commission's Standards for Accreditation and comply with its policies. The Standards for Accreditation establish minimum criteria for institutional quality. In addition, the Commission adopts policies which elucidate the Standards and relate to their application. Moreover, the Commission expects affiliated institutions to work toward improving their quality, increasing their effectiveness, and continually striving toward excellence. Its evaluative processes are designed to encourage such improvement.

Each of the eleven Standards encompasses a principal area of institutional activity. In applying the Standards, the Commission assesses and makes a determination about the effectiveness of the institution as a whole. The institution which meets the Standards:

- has clearly defined purposes appropriate to an institution of higher learning;

- has assembled and organized those resources necessary to achieve its purposes;

- is achieving its purposes;

- has the ability to continue to achieve its purposes.

The Commission recognizes that some aspects of an institution are always stronger than others. Meeting the Standards does not guarantee the quality of individual programs, courses, or graduates, but serious weaknesses in a particular area may threaten the institution's accreditation.

The Commission deals with institutional differences in ways designed to protect both educational quality and individual philosophy and practice. The Standards are essentially qualitative criteria that measure the institution's current state of educational effectiveness. They allow the Commission to appraise a wide variety of collegiate institutions,

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differing in purpose, size, organization, scope of program, clientele served, support, and control. By design, the Standards do not preclude perceptive and imaginative experimentation aimed at increasing the effectiveness of higher education.

Institutions whose policies, practices, or resources differ significantly from those described in the Standards for Accreditation must present evidence that these are appropriate to higher education, consistent with institutional mission and purposes, and effective in meeting the intent of the Commission's Standards. The existence of collective bargaining agreements, in and of themselves, does not abrogate institutional or faculty obligations to comply with the standards for accreditation.

Institutions of higher learning desiring recognition by the New England Association are expected to abide by the Standards. Affiliated colleges and universities manifest their integrity through continued voluntary adherence to these criteria. Compliance is periodically reviewed through peer evaluations. These are preceded by self-studies directed toward demonstrating both adherence to the Standards and institutional improvement. The self-regulatory nature of accreditation assumes that institutions agree to participate in and to accept and profit by an honest and forthright assessment of institutional strengths and weaknesses.

The Standards for Accreditation were developed through a lengthy participatory process which involved each member institution as well as the public. Therefore, they represent the accrued wisdom of some 200 colleges and universities about the essential elements of institutional quality, and they offer a perspective which stresses the public purpose of higher education. The Commission continually evaluates the effectiveness of its Standards and its processes for applying them, and makes such changes as conditions warrant.

## **Standard One** **MISSION AND PURPOSES**

1.1 The institution has a mission and a set of purposes appropriate to higher education, consistent with its charter or other operating authority, and implemented in a manner that complies with the Standards of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education. The Commission recognizes that there is great variation in the mission and purposes of institutions of higher learning. The mission of the institution defines its distinctive character, addresses the needs of society and identifies the students it seeks to serve, and reflects both the institution's traditions and its vision for the future. The institution's purposes are concrete and realistic and, within the context of its resources, define its educational and other dimensions, including scholarship, research, and public service.

1.2 The institution's mission and purposes are set forth in a concise statement that accurately delineates its character to the public it seeks to serve and provides a basis for the evaluation of the institution against the Commission's Standards. This statement is formally adopted by the Board of Trustees and appears in appropriate institutional publications.

1.3 The mission and purposes of the institution are accepted and widely understood by its trustees, faculty, and administration. They provide direction to the curricula and other activities. Specific objectives, reflective of the institution's overall mission and purposes, are developed for the institution's individual units.

1.4 Drawing upon its ongoing efforts to assess its effectiveness, the institution periodically re-evaluates the content and pertinence of its statement of mission and purposes. The results are regularly used in planning and resource allocation to enhance its efforts to achieve institutional purposes.

## **Standards Two** **PLANNING AND EVALUATION**

2.1 The institution undertakes planning and evaluation appropriate to its needs to accomplish and improve the achievement of its mission and purposes.

2.2 Planning and evaluation are systematic, broad-based, interrelated, and appropriate to the institution's circumstances. They involve the participation of individuals and groups responsible for the achievement of institutional purposes. The institution allocates sufficient resources for its planning and evaluation efforts.

2.3 The institution undertakes both short- and long-term planning, including candid and realistic analyses of internal and external opportunities and constraints. It responds to financial and other contingencies, establishes feasible priorities, and develops a realistic course of action to achieve identified objectives. Institutional decision-making, particularly the allocation of resources, is consistent with planning priorities. The institution systematically collects and uses data necessary to support its planning efforts and to enhance institutional effectiveness.

2.4 The institution evaluates the achievement of its mission and purposes, giving primary focus to the realization of its educational objectives. Its evaluative procedures are appropriate and effective for addressing its unique circumstances. To the extent possible, evaluation enables the institution to demonstrate through verifiable means its attainment of purposes and objectives both inside and outside the classroom.

2.5 The institution systematically applies information obtained through its evaluation activities to inform institutional planning, thereby enhancing institutional effectiveness especially as it relates to student achievement.

2.6 The institution determines the effectiveness of its planning and evaluation activities on an ongoing basis. Results of these activities are used to revise and further enhance the institution's implementation of its purposes and objectives.

*See Commission Policy on Institutional Effectiveness*

### **Standard Three**

## **ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNANCE**

3.1 The institution has a system of governance that facilitates the successful accomplishment of its mission and purposes. Through its organizational design and governance structure, the institution creates and sustains an environment that encourages teaching, learning, scholarship, and where appropriate research, and it assures provision of support adequate for the appropriate functioning of each organizational component.

3.2 The authority, responsibilities, and relationships among the governing board, administration, staff, and faculty are clearly described in a constitution, by-laws, or equivalent document, and in a table of organization that displays the actual working order of the institution. The board, administration, staff, and faculty understand and fulfill their respective roles as set forth in the institution's official documents. The institution's system of governance involves the participation of all appropriate constituencies and includes regular communication among them.

3.3 The governing board is ultimately responsible for the institution's quality and integrity. It is the legally constituted body that holds the property and assets of the institution in trust. The board has the authority to achieve institutional purposes. Its membership includes representation reflecting the public interest. The board has a clear understanding of the distinctive mission and purposes of the institution and ensures that they are realized. The board sets and reviews institutional policies and assures the institution's fiscal solvency. It appoints and delegates to the chief executive officer responsibility for the implementation and management of these policies. Utilizing the institutional governance structure, the board establishes and maintains productive channels of communication among its members and with the institutional community. Its role and functions are effectively carried out through appropriate committees and meetings.

3.4 The institution has a chief executive officer whose full-time or major responsibility is to the institution. The board delegates to the chief executive officer and, as appropriate, other constituencies the requisite authority and autonomy to manage the institution effectively and to formulate and implement policies compatible with the board's intentions. These policies are developed in consultation with appropriate constituencies. The chief executive officer manages and allocates resources in keeping with institutional purposes and objectives and assesses the effectiveness of the institution. In accordance with established institutional mechanisms and procedures, the chief executive officer and the administration are appropriately responsive to the concerns, needs, and initiatives of faculty, students, other administrators, and staff.

3.5 In multi-campus systems, the division of responsibility and authority between the system office and the institution is clear; system policies and procedures are clearly defined and equitably administered.

3.6 Off-campus, continuing education, distance education, international, evening and week-end programs are clearly integrated and incorporated into the policy formation and management system of the institution.

3.7 Faculty have an important role in assuring the academic integrity of the institution's educational programs. Faculty have a substantive voice in matters of educational programs, faculty personnel, and other aspects of institutional policy that relate to its areas of responsibility and expertise.

3.8 The system of governance makes provisions for consideration of student views and judgments in those matters in which students have a direct and reasonable interest.

3.9 The institution periodically evaluates the effectiveness of its system of governance using the results for its improvement.

## **Standard Four**

### **PROGRAMS AND INSTRUCTION**

4.1 The institution's primary focus is the education of its students. The institution offers collegiate-level programs that lead to degrees in recognized fields of study and require at least one academic year to complete. The institution for which the associate's degree is the highest awarded offers at least one program in liberal studies or general studies. A program is defined as a curriculum of studies, however formulated, that leads to a degree or other form of academic recognition.

4.2 The institution's programs are consistent with and serve to fulfill its mission and purposes. Each educational program demonstrates consistency through its goals, structure, and content; policies and procedures for admission and retention; instructional methods and procedures; and the nature, quality, and extent of student learning and achievement. The institution provides sufficient resources to sustain and improve programs and instruction.

4.3 The institution clearly specifies and publishes degree objectives and requirements for each program. Such objectives include the knowledge, intellectual skills, and methods of inquiry to be acquired. In addition, if relevant to the program, objectives include creative abilities and values to be developed and specific career-preparation practices to be mastered. Programs have a coherent design and are characterized by appropriate breadth, depth, continuity, sequential progression, and synthesis of learning.

4.4 The institution undertakes academic planning and evaluation to achieve and, where possible, to enhance the achievement of program objectives. These activities are realistic and take into account stated goals and available resources. The institution allocates human, technological, financial, and physical resources on the basis of its academic plans, needs, and objectives. It recognizes and takes account of the increased demands on resources made by programs offered at a higher degree level.

4.5 As part of its overall planning and evaluation, the institution develops, approves, administers, and periodically reviews its degree programs under established, clearly defined, and effective institutional policies which are demonstrably implemented by designated bodies with clearly established channels of communication and control. Faculty have a substantive voice in the design and execution of the curriculum. The evaluation of existing programs includes an assessment of their effectiveness and continued need. Additions and deletions of programs or courses are consistent with available resources, faculty expertise, student needs, and academic planning. Curricular planning and evaluation take into account the role of the multiple resources required for the development and improvement of academic programs.

4.6 When programs are eliminated or program requirements are changed, the institution makes appropriate arrangements for enrolled students so that they may complete their education with a minimum of disruption.

4.7 Programs and courses are designed to ensure an opportunity for reflection and for analysis of the subject matter. The institution offering programs and courses for abbreviated or concentrated time periods or via different delivery modalities demonstrates that students completing these programs or courses acquire levels of knowledge, understanding, and competencies comparable to those expected in similar programs offered in more traditional time periods and modalities.

4.8 Courses and programs offered for credit off campus, through technologically mediated instruction, or through continuing education, evening or week-end divisions are consistent with the educational objectives of the institution. Such activities are integral parts of the institution and maintain the same academic standards as courses and programs offered on campus. They receive sufficient support for instructional and other needs. Students have ready access to appropriate learning resources. The institution maintains direct and sole responsibility for the academic quality of all aspects of all programs and assures adequate resources to maintain quality. On-campus faculty have a substantive role in the design and implementation of off-campus programs. In programs and/or courses that use special delivery systems (such as computers, newspapers, television, video or audiotape) appropriate opportunities are provided for students to question and discuss course content with faculty.

4.9 If the institution depends on resources outside its direct control (for example, classrooms, library resources, testing sites), provision is made for a clear, fixed understanding of that relationship which ensures the reasonable continued availability of those resources. Clear descriptions of the circumstances and procedures for the use of such resources are readily available to students who require them.

4.10 Conferences, institutes, workshops, or other instructional or enrichment activities that are sponsored by the institution or carry its name are compatible with its purposes and are administered within its organizational structure. The institution assumes responsibility for the appropriateness and integrity of such activities.

4.11 The institution has the responsibility for the academic elements of all instructional programs and courses for which it awards institutional credit. These responsibilities include course content and the delivery of the instructional program; selection and approval of faculty; admission, registration, and retention of students; evaluation of prior learning; and evaluation of student progress, including the awarding and recording of credit.

## *Undergraduate Degree Programs*

4.12 Undergraduate degree programs are designed to give students a substantial and coherent introduction to the broad areas of human knowledge, their theories and methods of inquiry, plus in-depth study in at least one disciplinary or interdisciplinary area. Programs have an appropriate rationale; their clarity and order are visible in stated requirements in official publications and in student records. Curricula are appropriate, within the context of collegiate education, to the abilities and scholastic preparation of the students admitted to the programs.

4.13 While these criteria apply to all undergraduate programs, specific expectations for associate's and bachelor's degree programs, as expressed through the Commission's accreditation processes, will reflect program degree level. Distinctions made in such expectations may concern such matters as the level, scope, and dimension of degree requirements, and expected outcomes.

4.14 Each undergraduate program includes a general education requirement and a major or concentration requirement. Curricula include requirements above the introductory level with appropriate prerequisites. Wherever possible, the institution also affords undergraduate students the opportunity to pursue knowledge and understanding through unrestricted electives. All undergraduate programs require the use of information resources in addition to course texts and formal instruction.

4.15 The general education requirement is coherent and substantive, and it embodies the institution's definition of an educated person. The requirement informs the design of all general education courses, and provides criteria for its evaluation.

4.16 The general education requirement in each undergraduate program - general, specialized, or professional - ensures adequate breadth for all degree-seeking students by showing a balanced regard for what are traditionally referred to as the arts and humanities; the sciences including mathematics; and the social sciences. General education requirements include offerings that focus on the subject matter and methodologies of these three primary domains of knowledge as well as on their relationships to one another.

4.17 The institution ensures that all undergraduate students complete one-third of their studies (or the equivalent of forty semester hours in a bachelor's degree program, or the equivalent of twenty semester hours in an associate's degree program) in general education. If the institution offers any program which does not include at least one-third of its requirements in general education, it is able to demonstrate that the program meets the goals expressed in Paragraph 4.19 of this Standard. In no case, however, does the general education component of an undergraduate program constitute less than one-quarter of its degree requirements (or the equivalent of thirty semester hours in a bachelor's degree program, or the equivalent of fifteen semester hours in an associate's degree program).

4.18 The major or area of concentration affords the student the opportunity to develop knowledge and skills in a specific disciplinary or interdisciplinary area above the introductory level, through properly sequenced course work. Requirements for the major or area of concentration are based upon clearly defined and articulated learning objectives, including a mastery of the knowledge, methods, and theories pertinent to a particular area of inquiry. Through the major or area of concentration, the student develops an understanding of the complex structure of knowledge germane to an area of inquiry and its interrelatedness to other areas of inquiry. For programs designed to provide professional training, an effective relationship exists between curricular content and current practice in the field of specialization. General studies associate's degree programs designed to provide the foundation for later specialization through transfer into baccalaureate programs are exempted from the requirements of this paragraph.

4.19 Graduates successfully completing an undergraduate program demonstrate competence in written and oral communication in English; the ability for scientific and quantitative reasoning, for critical analysis and logical thinking; and the capability for continuing learning. They also demonstrate knowledge and understanding of scientific, historical, and social phenomena, and a knowledge and appreciation of the aesthetic and ethical dimensions of humankind. In addition, graduates demonstrate an in-depth understanding of an area of knowledge or practice and of its interrelatedness with other areas.

### *Graduate Degree Programs*

4.20 Graduate degree programs are designed to give students a mastery of a complex field of study or professional area. Programs have an appropriate rationale; their clarity and order are visible in stated requirements, in relevant official publications, and in the demonstrated learning experiences of graduates. Program objectives reflect a high level of complexity, specialization, and generalization. The institution's graduate programs have cohesive curricula and require scholarly and professional activities designed to advance the student substantially beyond the educational accomplishments of a baccalaureate degree program. The demands made by the institution's graduate programs on students' intellectual and creative capacities are also significantly greater than those expected at the undergraduate level; graduate programs build upon and challenge students beyond the levels of knowledge and competence acquired at the undergraduate level. The institution offering both undergraduate and graduate degree programs assesses the relationship and interdependence of the two levels and utilizes the results for their individual and collective improvement.

4.21 Graduate programs are not offered unless resources and expectations exceed those required for an undergraduate program in a similar field. Institutions offering graduate degrees have an adequate staff of full-time faculty in areas appropriate to the degree offered. Faculty responsible for graduate programs are sufficient by

credentials, number, and time commitment for the successful accomplishment of program objectives and program improvement. Research-oriented graduate programs have a preponderance of active research scholars on their faculties. Professionally oriented programs include faculty who are experienced professionals contributing to the development of the field.

4.22 Degree requirements of the institution's graduate programs take into account specific program purposes. Research-oriented doctoral programs and disciplinary master's degree programs are designed to prepare students for scholarly careers; they emphasize the acquisition, organization, utilization, and dissemination of knowledge. Doctoral degree programs afford the student substantial mastery of the subject matter, theory, literature, and methodology of a significant field of study. They include a sequential development of research skills leading to the attainment of an independent research capacity. Students undertake original research which contributes to new knowledge in the chosen field of study. Disciplinary master's programs have many of the same objectives but require less sophisticated levels of mastery in the chosen field of study than does the research doctorate. While they need not require students to engage in original research, they do provide an understanding of research appropriate to the discipline and the manner in which it is conducted.

4.23 Professional or practice-oriented programs at the doctoral or master's degree levels are designed to prepare students for professional practice involving the application or transmission of existing knowledge. Such programs afford the student a broad conceptual mastery of the field of professional practice through an understanding of its subject matter, literature, theory, and methods. They seek to develop the capacity to interpret, organize, and communicate knowledge, and to develop those analytical and professional skills needed to practice in and advance the profession. Instruction in relevant research methodology is provided, directed toward the appropriate application of its results as a regular part of professional practice. Programs include the sequential development of professional skills which will result in competent practitioners. Where there is a hierarchy of degrees within an area of professional study, programs differ by level as reflected in the expected sophistication, knowledge, and capacity for leadership within the profession by graduates.

4.24 Programs encompassing both research activities and professional practice define their relative emphases in program objectives that are reflected in curricular, scholarly, and program requirements.

4.25 Students who successfully complete a graduate program demonstrate that they have acquired the knowledge and developed the skills that are identified as the program's objectives.

### *Scholarship and Research*

4.26 All faculty pursue scholarship, an activity fundamental to the achievement of institutional purposes. Scholarship includes the ongoing application, utilization, and dissemination of existing knowledge as well as creative activity both within and outside the classroom. Scholarship and instruction are integrated and mutually supportive.

4.27 Where compatible with the institution's purposes, research is undertaken. Research involves the creation, revision, or application of knowledge as undertaken by faculty and students. Physical and administrative resources together with academic services are adequate to support the institution's research commitment. Faculty workloads reflect the institution's research commitment. Policies and procedures related to research, including ethical considerations, are established and clearly communicated throughout the institution. Faculty play a substantive role in the development and administration of research policies and practices.

4.28 Scholarship and research receive encouragement and support appropriate to the institution's purposes and objectives. Faculty and students are accorded the academic freedom to pursue scholarship and research.

### *Instruction*

4.29 Instructional techniques and delivery systems are compatible with and serve to further the mission and purposes of the institution as well as the objectives of individual courses. Methods of instruction are appropriate to the students' capabilities and learning needs. Scholarly and creative achievement by students is encouraged and appropriately assessed. Students are taught by a variety of faculty in order to ensure experience in different methods of instruction and exposure to different viewpoints.

4.30 The institution endeavors to enhance the quality of teaching. It encourages experimentation with methods to improve instruction. The effectiveness of instruction is periodically and systematically assessed using adequate and reliable procedures; the results are used to improve instruction. Adequate support is provided to accomplish this task.

4.31 The institution provides support for faculty development opportunities directed toward enhancing the quality of teaching. Faculty take advantage of such opportunities and collectively and individually endeavor to fulfill their responsibility to improve instructional effectiveness.

4.32 The institution has in place an effective system of academic advising which meets student needs for information and advice and is compatible with its educational objectives. Faculty and other personnel responsible for academic advising are adequately informed and prepared to discharge their advising functions.

### *Admissions and Retention*

4.33 The institution has an orderly and ethical program of admission which complies with the requirements of legislation concerning equality of educational opportunity. Its admission and retention policies and procedures are clear, consistent with its mission and purposes, and available to all students and prospective students through appropriate publications. It endeavors to develop a student body which as a whole is broadly representative of the population the institution wishes to serve.

4.34 Standards for admission ensure that student qualifications and expectations are compatible with institutional objectives. Individuals admitted demonstrate through their intellectual and personal qualifications a reasonable potential for success in the programs to which they are admitted. If the institution recruits and admits individuals with identified needs that must be addressed to assure their likely academic success, it applies appropriate mechanisms to address those needs so as to provide reasonable opportunities for that success. Such mechanisms receive sufficient support and are adequate to the needs of those admitted. The institution endeavors to integrate specifically recruited populations into the larger student body and to assure that they have similar academic experiences.

4.35 The institution with a policy of open admissions for undergraduates utilizes appropriate methods of evaluation to identify deficiencies and offers appropriate developmental or remedial support where necessary to prepare students for collegiate study. Such testing and remediation receive sufficient support and are adequate to serve the needs of students admitted.

4.36 If the institution accepts undergraduate transfer credit from other institutions, it applies policies and procedures which provide adequate safeguards to ensure that credit accepted reflects appropriate levels of academic quality and is applicable to the student's program. The institution does not erect barriers to the acceptance of transfer credit that are unnecessary to protect its academic quality and integrity, and it seeks to establish articulation agreements with institutions from which and to which there is a significant pattern of student transfer. Such agreements are made available to those students who are affected by them.

4.37 The institution accepts graduate credit in transfer only on a strictly limited basis to preserve the integrity of the degree awarded.

4.38 The evaluation of student learning or achievement and the award of credit are based upon clearly stated criteria that reflect learning objectives and are consistently and effectively enforced. They are appropriate to the degree level at which they are applied.

4.39 There is demonstrable academic content for all experiences for which credit is awarded. Credit awards are consistent with the course content. No credit toward graduation is awarded for pre-collegiate

level or remedial work designed to prepare the student for collegiate study.

4.40 Credit for prior experiential or non-collegiate sponsored learning is awarded only at the undergraduate level. When credit is awarded on the basis of prior experiential or non-collegiate sponsored learning alone, student learning and achievement are demonstrated to be at least comparable in breadth, depth, and quality to the results of institutionally provided learning experiences. The policies and procedures for the award of credit for prior or experiential learning are clearly stated and available to affected students.

4.41 The institution specifies and publishes requirements for continuation in, termination from, or re-admission to its academic programs which are compatible with its educational purposes. Graduation requirements are clearly stated in appropriate publications and are consistently applied in the degree certification process. The degrees awarded accurately reflect student attainments.

## **Standard Five FACULTY**

5.1 Faculty qualifications, numbers, and performance are sufficient to accomplish the institution's mission and purposes. Faculty competently offer the institution's academic programs and fulfill those tasks appropriately assigned them.

5.2 The preparation and qualifications of all faculty are suited to the field and level of their assignments. Qualifications are measured by advanced degrees held, evidence of scholarship, advanced study, creative activities, and relevant professional experience, training, and credentials.

5.3 Faculty are sufficiently numerous to carry out duties in addition to instruction, which may include such functions as student advising and academic planning, and to participate appropriately in policy-making, course and curricular development, and institutional governance.

5.4 The institution employs an open and orderly process for recruiting and appointing its faculty. Faculty participate in the search process for new members of the instructional staff. The institution observes pertinent legal requirements related to equal employment opportunity and compatible with its mission and purposes, addresses its own goals for the achievement of diversity of race, gender, and ethnicity. Faculty selection reflects the effectiveness of this process and results in a variety of intellectual backgrounds and training. Each prospective faculty member is provided with a written contract that states explicitly the nature and term of the initial appointment and, when applicable, institutional considerations that might preclude or limit future appointments.

5.5 Similarly, the institution publishes, makes accessible, and explains upon appointment the explicit criteria and procedures for the appointment, evaluation, advancement, and termination of academic support staff who are not faculty but who have academic responsibilities. Such staff are appropriately qualified and are provided reasonable employment security. Salaries and benefits are consistent with the requirements of the positions. The institution provides appropriate opportunities for staff development.

5.6 Where graduate teaching assistants are employed, the institution carefully selects, trains, supervises and evaluates them.

5.7 Faculty are accorded reasonable contractual security for appropriate periods consistent with the institution's ability to fulfill its mission. The institution sets salaries and benefits at levels which ensure its continued ability to attract and maintain an appropriately qualified instructional staff of a quality consistent with the institution's mission and purposes.

5.8 Faculty assignments and workloads are consistent with the institution's mission and purposes. They are equitably determined to allow faculty adequate time to provide effective instruction, advise and evaluate students, continue professional growth, and participate in scholarship, research, and service compatible with the mission and purposes of the institution. Faculty workloads are reappraised periodically and adjusted as institutional conditions change.

5.9 Faculty categories (e.g., full-time, part-time, adjunct) are clearly defined by the institution as is the role of each category in fulfilling the institution's mission and purposes. Should part-time or adjunct faculty be utilized, the institution has in place policies governing their role compatible with its mission and purposes and the Standards of the Commission. There are an adequate number of faculty whose time commitment to the institution is sufficient to assure the accomplishment of classroom and out-of-classroom responsibilities essential for the fulfillment of institutional mission and purposes. It avoids undue dependence on part-time faculty, adjuncts, and graduate assistants to conduct classroom instruction.

5.10 In a faculty handbook or in other written documents that are current and readily available, the institution clearly defines the responsibilities of faculty and the criteria for their recruitment, appointment, evaluation, and promotion. Such policies are equitable and compatible with the mission and purposes of the institution; they provide for the fair redress of grievances, and they are consistently applied and periodically reviewed.

5.11 Faculty are demonstrably effective in carrying out their assigned responsibilities. The institution employs effective procedures for the regular evaluation of faculty appointments, performance, and retention. The evaluative criteria reflect the mission and purposes of the institution and the importance it attaches to the various responsibilities of faculty, e.g., teaching, scholarship, creative activities, research, and professional and community service. The institution has equitable and broad-based procedures for such evaluation, in which its expectations are stated clearly and weighted appropriately for use in the evaluative process.

5.12 The institution provides its faculty with substantial and equitable opportunities for continued professional development throughout their careers. Such opportunities are consistent with and enhance the achievement of the institution's mission and purposes. Faculty accept the obligation to take advantage of these opportunities and take the initiative in ensuring their continued competence and growth as teachers, scholars, and practitioners.

5.13 The institution protects and fosters academic freedom of all faculty regardless of rank or term of appointment.

5.14 The institution has mechanisms to ensure that faculty act responsibly and ethically, observe the established conditions of their employment, and otherwise function in a manner consistent with the mission and purposes of the institution.

## **Standard Six STUDENT SERVICES**

6.1 The institution provides an environment which fosters the intellectual and personal development of its students consistent with its mission and purposes and mode of educational delivery. It is sensitive to the non-academic needs of its students and recognizes that their educational experience consists of an academic component and interrelated developmental opportunities provided through a co-curricular program of student services. These services are guided by a philosophy, disseminated and reviewed on a regular basis, which is conducive to the development of a shared learning community and which prepares students to become responsible members of society.

6.2 In accordance with its mission and purposes, the institution in providing co-curricular services adheres to both the spirit and intent of equal opportunity and its own goals for diversity. It ensures that appropriate services, facilities, and technology are readily accessible to students in all programs in the institution, including members of historically under-represented, physically disabled, evening, part-time, distance learning, commuter, and off-campus populations.

6.3 The institution systematically identifies the characteristics and learning needs of its student population and then makes provision for responding to them. It assists students to resolve educational and technological problems and, where appropriate, personal and physical problems.

6.4 Student financial aid is provided through a well organized program. Awards are based on the equitable application of clear and publicized criteria. The program is subject to periodic audit.

6.5 The institution provides appropriate and effective orientation, academic advisement, career development and placement counseling, and, as appropriate, relevant health education and access to professional health care, including psychological health care.

6.6 The institution supports opportunities for student leadership and participation in campus organizations and governance.

6.7 If appropriate to its mission and purposes, the institution provides adequate opportunities and facilities for both female and male students' recreational and athletic needs. If the institution offers intercollegiate athletics, they are conducted in a manner consistent with sound educational policy, with standards of integrity, and with the institution's purposes. The administration and faculty of the institution have responsibility for the control of these programs, including their financial aspects. Educational programs and academic expectations are the same for student athletes as for other students.

6.8 The institution ensures that individuals responsible for co-curricular activities are qualified by formal training, work experience,

and personal qualities to represent the needs of students effectively. Facilities and funding are adequate to implement the institution's student service policies and procedures.

6.9 The institution has identified, published widely, and implemented an appropriate set of clearly stated ethical standards to guide student service activities. Policies on student rights and responsibilities, including grievance procedures, are clearly stated, well publicized and readily available, and fairly and consistently administered.

6.10 The institution has policies regarding the kinds of information that will be included in the permanent record of students as well as policies regarding the retention, safety and security, and disposal of records. Its information-release policies respect the rights of individual privacy, the confidentiality of records, and the best interests of students and the institution.

6.11 Through a program of regular and systematic evaluation, the institution determines whether the co-curricular goals and needs of the students are being met. Information obtained through this evaluation is used to revise these goals and improve their achievement.

**Standard Seven**  
**LIBRARY AND INFORMATION RESOURCES**

7.1 The institution makes available the library and information resources necessary for the fulfillment of its mission and purposes. These resources support the academic and research program and the intellectual and cultural development of students, faculty, and staff. Library and information resources may include the holdings and necessary services and equipment of libraries, media centers, computer centers, language laboratories, museums, and any other repositories of information or technological systems required for the support of institutional offerings. Clear and disseminated policies govern access, usage, and maintenance of the library, information resources, and services. The institution ensures that students use these resources as an integral part of their education.

7.2 Through the institution's ownership or guaranteed access, sufficient collections, information technology systems, and services are readily accessible to students wherever programs are located or however they are delivered. These collections, systems, and services are sufficient in quality, level, diversity, quantity, and currency to support and enrich the institution's academic offerings. The institution provides facilities adequate to house the collections and equipment so as to foster an atmosphere conducive to inquiry, study, and learning among students, faculty, and staff.

7.3 The institution provides sufficient and consistent financial support for the effective maintenance and improvement of the institution's library, information resources, and services. It makes provision for their proper maintenance, preservation, currency, and security. It allocates resources for scholarly support services compatible with its instructional and research programs and the needs of faculty and students.

7.4 Professionally qualified and numerically adequate staff administer the institution's library, information resources, and services. The institution provides appropriate orientation and training for use of these resources, as well as instruction in basic information literacy.

7.5 The institution participates in the exchange of resources and services with other institutions and within networks as necessary to support and supplement its educational programs. It provides appropriate support for distance learning students and faculty, such as on-line reference service and contractual access to relevant off-campus library resources.

7.6 The institution regularly and systematically evaluates the adequacy and utilization of its library, information resources, and services and uses the results of the data to improve and increase the effectiveness of these services.

## **Standard Eight** **PHYSICAL RESOURCES**

8.1 The institution has sufficient and appropriate physical resources, including laboratories, network infrastructure, materials, equipment, and buildings and grounds, whether owned or rented; these are designed, maintained, and managed at both on- and off-campus sites to serve institutional needs as defined by its mission and purposes. Classrooms and laboratories, real or virtual, and other facilities are appropriately equipped and adequate in capacity. Proper management, maintenance, and operation of all physical facilities and virtual environments, are accomplished by adequate and competent staffing.

8.2 Facilities are constructed and maintained in accordance with legal requirements to ensure access, safety, security, and a healthful environment with consideration for environmental and ecological concerns.

8.3 The institution undertakes physical resource planning which is linked to academic and student services and financial planning. It determines the adequacy of existing physical resources and identifies and plans the specified resolution of deferred maintenance needs. Space planning occurs on a regular basis as part of physical resource evaluation and planning, and is consistent with the mission and purposes of the institution.

## **Standard Nine** **FINANCIAL RESOURCES**

9.1 The institution is financially stable. Ostensible financial stability is not achieved at the expense of educational quality. The institution's financial resources are sufficient to sustain the achievement of its educational objectives and to further institutional improvement now and in the foreseeable future. The institution reallocates resources as necessary to achieve its purposes and objectives. All or substantially all of the institution's revenue is devoted to the support of its educational purposes and programs. The institution has the ability to respond to financial emergencies and unforeseen circumstances.

9.2 The institution controls its financial resources and allocates them in a way which reflects its mission and purposes. Its stability and viability are not unduly dependent upon vulnerable financial resources or an historically narrow base of support. If an institution depends for its financial support on an external agency (state, church, or other private or public agency), the institution's governing board retains appropriate autonomy in all budget and financial planning matters. The institution demonstrates through verifiable internal and external factors its financial capacity to graduate its entering class.

9.3 The institution establishes and implements its budget after appropriate consultation with relevant constituencies in accord with realistic overall planning that provides for the appropriate integration of academic, student service, fiscal, development, and physical resource priorities to advance its educational objectives. All fiscal policies, including those related to investments, insurance, risk management, contracts and grants, transfers and inter-fund borrowing, fund-raising, and other institutional advancement and development activities, are clearly stated in writing and consistently implemented in compliance with ethical and sound financial practices.

9.4 The institution ensures the integrity of its finances through prudent financial management and organization, a well-organized budget process, appropriate control mechanisms, and timely financial reporting, providing a basis for sound financial decision-making. The institution has and implements a realistic plan for addressing issues raised by the existence of any operating deficit.

9.5 The institution directs its fund-raising efforts toward the fulfillment of institutional purposes and conducts them in accordance with clear and complete policies that stipulate the conditions and terms under which gifts are solicited and accepted. The institution accurately represents itself and its capacities and needs to prospective donors and accurately portrays the impact that their gifts can reasonably be expected to have. Gifts are promptly directed toward donors' intentions.

9.6 The institution's financial records clearly relate to its educational activities. The financial resources and transactions of independent institutions are audited annually by an external auditor in accord with the generally accepted auditing standards for colleges and universities as adopted by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants. When public institutions are, by law, audited by a state agency, an independent audit is not required except for any funds not subject to governmental audit. In either case, the audit is appropriately reviewed by the institution's administration and the resulting recommendations or conclusions are addressed by the institution's financial planning. The institution also has in place appropriate internal mechanisms to evaluate its financial management.

## **Standard Ten PUBLIC DISCLOSURE**

10.1 In presenting itself to students and other members of the interested public, the institution provides information that is complete, accurate, and clear.

10.2 The institution has a current catalogue in which it describes itself consistent with its mission statement and sets forth the obligations and responsibilities of both students and the institution. While the catalogue is expected to include most or all of the authoritative information relative to admission and attendance, the institution may disclose some of that information through other official publications. All institutional publications, including tapes and film, web pages and other forms of electronic dissemination, and oral communications are consistent with catalogue content and fairly portray the conditions and opportunities available at the institution. The information provided is sufficient to allow students to make informed decisions about their education.

10.3 Appropriate publications, print or electronic, contain the institution's mission, objectives, and expected educational outcomes; requirements and procedures and policies related to admissions and the transfer of credit; student fees, charges and refund policies; rules and regulations for student conduct; other items related to attending or withdrawing from the institution; academic programs, courses currently offered, and other available educational opportunities; and academic policies and procedures and the requirements for degrees or other forms of academic recognition.

10.4 Relevant publications, print or electronic, also include a list of current faculty, indicating departmental or program affiliation, distinguishing between those who have full- and part-time status, showing degrees held and the institutions granting them. The names of administrative officers, with their positions, and the names of members of the governing board are also included.

10.5 The institution clearly indicates those programs, courses, services, and personnel not available during a given academic year. It does not list as current any courses not taught for two consecutive years which will not be taught during the third consecutive year.

10.6 It publishes and makes readily available a description of the size and characteristics of the student body, the campus setting, those institutional learning and physical resources from which a student can reasonably be expected to benefit, and the range of co-curricular and non-academic opportunities available to students.

10.7 The institution has readily available valid documentation for any statements and promises regarding such matters as program excellence, learning outcomes, success in placement, and achievements of graduates or faculty.

10.8 The institution assures notice and ready availability on request of all its publications. It is also responsive to reasonable requests for information about itself. The institution provides notice as to the availability upon request of the institution's most recent audited financial statement or a fair summary thereof.

10.9 The institution's statements about its current accredited status are accurately and explicitly worded. An institution placed on probation by the New England Association discloses this status in its catalogue and recruitment materials as well as the availability of additional information on its probationary status.

10.10 Through a systematic process of periodic review, the institution ensures that its publications are accurate and current.

## **Standard Eleven** **INTEGRITY**

11.1 The institution subscribes to, exemplifies, and advocates high ethical standards in the management of its affairs and in all of its dealings with students, faculty, staff, external agencies and organizations, and the general public.

11.2 Truthfulness, clarity, and fairness characterize the institution's relations with all internal and external constituencies. Adequate provision is made to ensure academic honesty, privacy rights, and fairness in dealing with students, faculty, and staff. Appropriate policies and procedures related to intellectual property rights are in place. The institution's educational policies and procedures are applicable and equitably applied to all its students.

11.3 The institution is committed to the free pursuit and dissemination of knowledge. It assures faculty and students the freedom to teach and study a given field, to examine all pertinent data, to question assumptions, and to be guided by the evidence of scholarly research.

11.4 The institution observes the spirit as well as the letter of applicable legal requirements. It has a charter and/or other formal authority from the appropriate governmental agency authorizing it to grant all degrees it awards; it has the necessary operating authority for each jurisdiction in which it conducts activities; and it operates within this authority.

11.5 The institution adheres to non-discriminatory policies and practices in recruitment, admissions, employment, evaluation, and advancement. It fosters an atmosphere within the institutional community that respects and supports people of diverse characteristics and backgrounds.

11.6 The institution manages its administrative operations with honesty and integrity.

11.7 The institution has established and publicizes clear policies ensuring institutional integrity. Included among them are appropriate policies and procedures for the fair resolution of grievances brought by faculty, staff, or students.

11.8 In its relationships with the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, the institution demonstrates honesty and integrity, and it complies with the Commission's Standards, policies, and requests.

11.9 In addition to the considerations stated in this Standard, the institution adheres to those requirements related to institutional integrity embodied in all other Commission Standards.

11.10 The institution periodically assesses the effectiveness of its ethical policies and procedures and demonstrates that mechanisms exist for the effective implementation of its principles.

*January 22, 1992*  
*Revised, 2001*