



**WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES  
ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR SENIOR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES**

# **The Institutional Review Process**

Revised July 2008

# THE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW PROCESS

This section of the *Handbook* is designed to give guidance to institutions and teams about the purposes, structure, and format of the institution's presentation for each stage of the review process. Further information and support is available on the Commission website ([www.wascsenior.org](http://www.wascsenior.org)), through workshops offered during the year, and at the annual WASC Academic Resource Conference.

## Introduction

---

The heart of accreditation lies in the institutional self-review. To be done effectively and with integrity, the review requires the public commitment of the institution's leadership to openness, candor, and serious engagement, and an evident intention to use the results of the self-review to improve institutional capacity and educational effectiveness. The WASC accreditation process does not review all aspects of institutional functions in a compliance mode. Instead, it reviews and validates effective ongoing internal systems of quality review and improvement. External evaluation under this approach can only be successful when built on an effective internal institutional process of evaluation, reflection, recommendations, and plans for action.

## Overview of the Accreditation Review Cycle

---

The accreditation review process consists of three stages: the Institutional Proposal, the Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR), and the Educational Effectiveness Review (EER). This three-stage process applies to all institutions, regardless of where they are in the accreditation process. In the case of institutions being considered for candidacy or initial accreditation, and for institutions with a recent history of sanctions, the primary focus of the review is on institutional compliance with the Standards of Accreditation. Other institutions may choose to focus on selected themes and address the Standards in the context of those themes.

As described below, the Institutional Proposal is intended to define and organize how the institution will address Commission Standards through self-review. It focuses on several major issues that will improve institutional performance, especially with respect to educational effectiveness. The CPR and EER are intentionally designed to be aligned and sequential, to enable the institution to engage in a staged, developmental process that leads beyond minimum compliance to significant improvement of both institutional capacity and educational effectiveness. The maximum time period between Capacity and Preparatory Reviews is ten years, though the Commission often places institutions on shorter cycles of review.

In order to obtain accreditation or remain accredited, each institution is required to demonstrate, through the three-stage process, that it fulfills the two Core Commitments of the Accrediting Commission:

- I. **Commitment to Institutional Capacity:** The institution functions with clear purposes, high levels of institutional integrity, fiscal stability, and appropriate organizational structures to fulfill its purposes.
- II. **Commitment to Educational Effectiveness:** The institution evidences clear and appropriate educational objectives and design at the institutional and program level, and employs processes of review, including the collection and use of data, that assure delivery of programs and learner accomplishments at a level of performance appropriate for the degree or certificate awarded.

The role of WASC evaluation teams at each stage of the review process is to work with the institution's evidence and exhibits to determine if they accurately and fairly represent the institution within the context of Commission Standards, and to determine if the institution has effectively addressed the Core Commitments and will be able to sustain and improve its capacity and effectiveness for the period of accreditation granted by the Commission.

## Outcomes of the Accreditation Review Process

---

The Commission has identified the following outcomes for the accreditation review process.

For the institution:

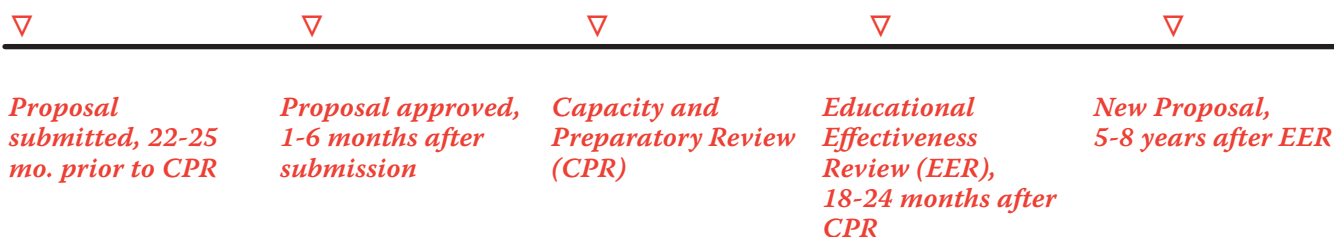
- ▷ The development and more effective use of indicators of institutional performance and educational effectiveness to support institutional planning and decision making;
- ▷ Greater clarity about the institution's educational objectives and criteria for defining and evaluating those objectives;
- ▷ Improvement of the institution's capacity for self-review and its systems of quality assurance, data collection and analysis;
- ▷ A deeper understanding of student learning, the development of more varied and effective methods of assessing learning, evaluation of whether levels of performance are appropriate to the degree and program, and the use of assessment results to improve program and institutional practices;
- ▷ Systematic engagement of the faculty on issues of assessing and improving teaching and learning processes within the institution and on aligning support systems for the faculty more effectively toward this end.

To fulfill the purposes of accreditation:

- ▷ Validation of the institution's presentation of evidence, both to assess compliance with accreditation Standards and to provide a basis for institutional improvement;
- ▷ Demonstration of the institution's fulfillment of the Core Commitments to Institutional Capacity and Educational Effectiveness.

Institutions that have successfully completed the three-stage process find that the process can lead to significant institutional engagement and improvement on important issues, especially assessment, student learning outcomes, and educational effectiveness.

## WASC Institutional Review Cycle



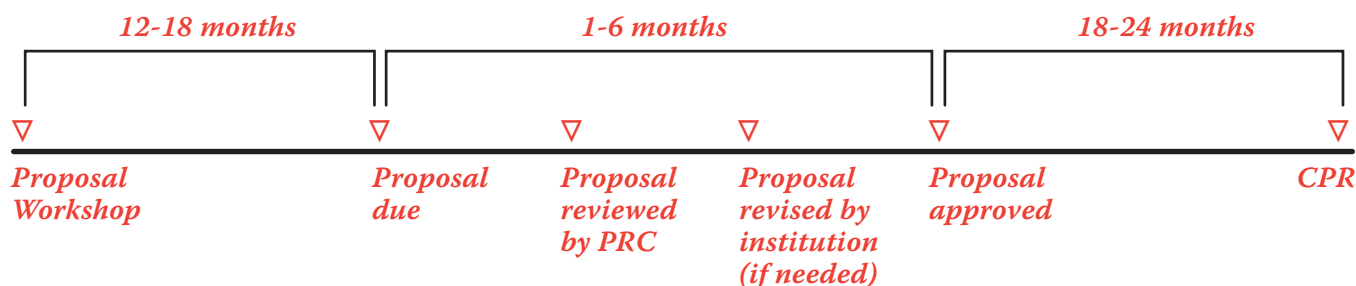
### STAGE 1: THE INSTITUTIONAL PROPOSAL

**Purposes:** The Institutional Proposal is the first stage in the accreditation review cycle and guides the entire accreditation review process. It establishes a framework for connecting each institution's context and priorities with the Standards of Accreditation for the accreditation review. Once accepted, the proposal serves as the primary basis for both institutional self-review and team evaluation, and is given to each evaluation team and the Commission, along with the Accreditation Standards, as the basis upon which the evaluation of the institution should occur.

The proposal plays a key role in the accreditation process by calling upon the institution to:

1. Establish the context for its accreditation review;
2. Conduct a preliminary evaluation of itself under the Standards of Accreditation to identify areas in need of improvement;
3. Link its self-review under the Standards with defined outcomes for the accreditation review;
4. Identify the key issues of institutional capacity to be addressed in the Capacity and Preparatory Review;
5. Develop strategies for assessing and improving student and organizational learning in the Educational Effectiveness Review;
6. Identify for each of the stages of review such necessary components as researchable questions, key indicators of performance, evidence to be collected and used, committees or groups to be involved, and the resources needed as components of a work plan for the review;
7. Evaluate the effectiveness of its data gathering and analysis systems;
8. Develop a portfolio of data tables and institutional evidence that serves the institution throughout the review and beyond.

**Timing:** Proposals are submitted approximately two years prior to the CPR visit, on a date set by the Commission. This timing allows for review by the Proposal Review Committee and revision by the institution, if necessary. Institutional representatives are required to attend a Proposal Workshop in order to prepare the proposal under this timetable. The proposal should be approved by the Proposal Review Committee no later than eighteen months prior to the CPR visit.



**Format and Required Elements:** The proposal represents a plan of work that should be framed as a single, interconnected process. Considerable thought should be given to what the institution intends to accomplish through the entire review process and how different institutional constituencies will be engaged in developing and approving the proposal, and implementing it through the CPR and EER visits.

The proposal process is designed to enable institutions to adapt the accreditation review to their own context and accreditation history with WASC, and demonstrate how they meet the Core Commitments and Standards of Accreditation. The process also allows an institution to align activities undertaken for its accreditation review with its strategic plan and to focus on key areas of improvement. In the design of the proposal, institutions are encouraged to be creative, build on processes already in place, focus on a limited number of issues that can be addressed in depth, increase attention to student learning and success, and improve the analysis and use of evidence throughout the institution.

The Proposal Workshop provides opportunities for teams to learn the latest approaches to the review process, interact with other institutions, and build a foundation for the proposal. In addition, Commission staff has developed a set of materials to support the proposal process. These materials are occasionally updated or revised. Check the Commission website for the latest version of these materials.

The proposal should be organized into four (4) sections and is to include several specific elements, as defined below:

#### A. Setting the Institution's Context and Relating the Proposal to the Standards.

1. **Institutional Context Statement.** This key section of the proposal lays the foundation for why a particular set of issues and approaches is being proposed by the institution for its accreditation review. Drawing upon institutional data, especially that provided in the data tables on financial capacity, diversity, retention, and graduation rates, this section should briefly describe: i) the institution's background, ii) strengths and challenges, and iii) approaches used to identify and assess student learning outcomes across the institution. Two Commission documents, the *Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators* and the *Inventory of Concurrent Accreditation*, are designed to be used developmentally across the CPR and the EER and must be included. In addition, the institution should identify how the proposal responds to issues raised by the most recent Commission action letter and, where relevant, issues identified by the Substantive Change or Interim Report Committees.
2. **Preliminary Self-Review Under the Standards of Accreditation.** Using the WASC *Worksheet for Preliminary Self-Review Under the Standards* and the *What Really Matters on Your Campus?* exercise, or through other means, the institution should identify key issues arising under the Standards. Particular attention should be paid to retention and graduation rates, student learning assessment results, and organizational learning/quality assurance systems that will be embedded within institutional practice beyond the accreditation review process. [The self-review worksheet may be submitted as an appendix and is optional.]
3. **Process for Proposal Development and Leadership Involvement.** In this section, the institution should describe how it developed the proposal and generated broad institutional support for it. Key institutional leaders, especially the chief executive officer, chief academic officer, and

faculty leadership, should be significantly involved in the design and implementation of the proposal and be demonstrably committed to its implementation and success.

**B. Framing the Review Process to Align the Capacity and Educational Effectiveness Reviews.** Institutions may wish to refer to the Commission support document *Expectations for Two Reviews* for assistance in developing this section. (See [www.wascsenior.org](http://www.wascsenior.org) for the latest version of this document, and other related materials.)

1. **Overview and Goals for the Accreditation Review Process.** The institution should describe in this overview section a coherent vision and specific outcomes for the entire accreditation review as a single connected process, specifying what it intends to accomplish and how the CPR and EER are connected and aligned to achieve these outcomes. As with all outcomes, these should be framed as results, not activities to be undertaken. These overarching outcomes should be supported by the outcomes identified for each stage of the review. Of particular interest is how the accrediting review process will improve student learning and success at the institution. In addition, the institution should consider the outcomes articulated for the accreditation review process in the Introduction to the *Handbook*.
2. **Approach to the Capacity and Preparatory Review.** This section should describe how the institution intends to address the Core Commitment to Institutional Capacity, by discussing three key foci:
  - a. The institution's self-assessment of its capacity (resources, structures and processes), especially under Standards 1, 3 and 4. The institution should identify key issues and strategic themes that it intends to address in the CPR, and the intended outcomes for this review. For each issue and/or theme, the institution should identify what key indicators will be developed or relied on, who will be involved, and how specific activities will be organized to achieve the outcomes identified. This section should reference, where appropriate, the institution's self-review under the Standards and key Standards and Criteria for Review (CFRs) that will be emphasized in the CPR.
  - b. The institution's infrastructure to support educational effectiveness, especially retention and graduation, the assessment of student learning, and program review under Standard 2, and its organizational learning and use of evidence under Standard 4.
  - c. The institution's level of preparation for, and progress toward, the EER at the time of the CPR. The institution may wish to use the Commission document *Educational Effectiveness Framework* as a guide to evaluate its progress.
3. **Approach to the Educational Effectiveness Review.** This section should describe how the institution intends to address the Core Commitment to Educational Effectiveness by discussing:
  - a. The institution's specific intended outcomes for this stage of review. As with the CPR, these outcomes may be related to key issues and/or strategic themes. For each issue/theme, the institution should indicate specific research questions, methods of inquiry, key indicators, and the specific groups that will be involved in the review process. Areas where institutional systems of quality assurance are to be reviewed and improved (e.g., program review processes, capstone courses, portfolio reviews) should also be identified and incorporated into the proposal. The institution should explain why it has proposed this particular approach to the EER. This rationale should flow from the institution's self-review under the Standards and analysis of the current state of its student learning outcomes assessment. This section should additionally reference, where appropriate, the institution's self-review under the Standards and key Standards and Criteria for Review (CFRs) that will be emphasized in the EER.

- b. The institution's specific plans for how it will review and improve student and organizational learning across the institution. The institution should also identify how it will review and evaluate actual student work and learning.

### C. Demonstrating a Feasible Plan of Work and Engagement of Key Constituencies.

1. **Workplan and Milestones.** Either in this section or as part of one of the sections above, the proposal should indicate for each stage how the work will be conducted, which organizational structures and processes will be used, and what key indicators are likely to be included in the Institutional Presentation. Milestones and a statement of what will be accomplished by the time of the CPR and the EER should be provided. It is expected that the workplan for the EER will be implemented simultaneously with the preparation for the CPR, rather than sequentially. This will allow for evidence, especially student learning results, student portfolios and other work, to be reviewed, analyzed, discussed, and acted upon by the institution.
2. **Effectiveness of Data Gathering and Analysis Systems.** This section should review the effectiveness of the institution's data gathering and analysis systems for both undergraduate and graduate programs, especially those systems related to the collection, dissemination and use of disaggregated retention and graduation data, student learning assessment results, licensure examination results, job placement rates, graduate school acceptance rates, and other key outcomes data. The institution should indicate how these data gathering and analysis systems will be used and, as necessary, improved to support internal institutional dialogue and a culture of evidence throughout the accreditation review and beyond.
3. **Commitment of Resources to Support the Accreditation Review.** This section should describe how the institution will organize, oversee, and support the review during its several stages. What human, technological and physical resources will be relied upon to support the accreditation review? What is the budget for the review? To what extent will the review be linked to ongoing institutional structures and priorities to increase value and reduce unnecessary work? What are the plans to sustain the institution's improvements beyond the review?

### D. Presenting Appendices Related to the Proposal.

1. **Data Exhibits.** As an appendix to the proposal, the institution should submit the set of data exhibits and the *Summary Data Form* for the proposal, which are available on the Commission website ([www.wascsenior.org](http://www.wascsenior.org)). Data should be presented in the form of five-year historical trends. References to the institution's analysis of these data, especially the *Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators* and other appendices, should be made throughout the proposal, as appropriate.
2. **Off-Campus and Distance Education Degree Programs.** Distance education and off-campus programs must be evaluated as part of the review. The institution should provide a list of all degree programs where 50 percent or more of the program is offered off-site or by distance learning, and a description of how the evaluation of these programs will be incorporated into the review process. The proposal should explain how these programs will be included in the institution's self-review.
3. **Institutional Stipulations.** An Institutional Stipulation Statement should be submitted, signed by the Chief Executive Officer, that establishes:
  - a. That the institution will use the review process to demonstrate its fulfillment of the two Core Commitments, that it will engage in the process with seriousness and candor, that accurate data will be presented, and that the Institutional Presentation will fairly present the institution.
  - b. That the institution has published and publicly available policies as identified by the

Commission (see Appendix 1). Such policies will be available for review on request throughout the period of accreditation.

- c. That the institution will abide by procedures adopted by the Commission to meet United States Department of Education (USDE) procedural requirements. (See “Federally Mandated Policies” on the Commission website.)
- d. That the institution will submit, in a timely fashion, all regularly required data and any additional data specifically requested by the Commission during the period of accreditation or candidacy.
- e. That the institution has reviewed its off-campus programs and distance education programs to ensure that they have been approved as required by WASC Substantive Change policies.

**Length of Proposal:** Exclusive of data exhibits and stipulations, the Institutional Proposal should not exceed fifteen (15) pages in length.

**Proposal Review Process:** Following submission, the Institutional Proposal is reviewed by a panel of the Proposal Review Committee (PRC), a peer review committee comprised of institutional and Commission representatives. The PRC is authorized to accept proposals that it believes will result in a review that will effectively demonstrate that an institution fulfills the two Core Commitments of accreditation. In cases where the PRC is not assured that the proposal will result in such a review, the Committee may request further information from the institution and/or may require revision and re-submission of the proposal. At the conclusion of the PRC review, Commission staff will inform the institution of the action of the panel. Once approved, the final version of the proposal is distributed to evaluation teams and the Commission. The current fees for the first and any subsequent proposal submissions are found on the Commission website.

**Changes After Acceptance:** Once accepted, the proposal may be further refined or modified during the accreditation review by mutual consent, or by the Commission. Such modification can occur, for example, once the institution has begun implementation of the proposal, or upon the recommendation of the evaluation team following the CPR.

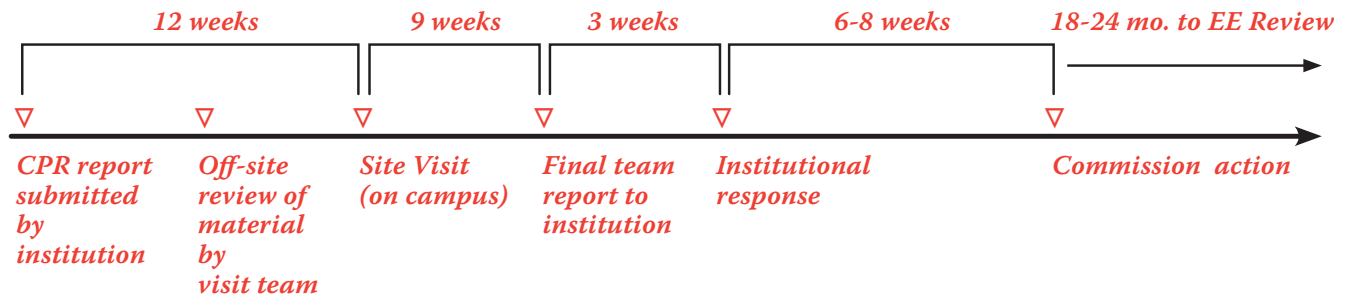
## **STAGE 2: THE CAPACITY AND PREPARATORY REVIEW**

**Purposes:** The Capacity and Preparatory Review is designed to enable the Commission to determine whether an institution fulfills the Core Commitment to Institutional Capacity: “The institution functions with clear purposes, high levels of institutional integrity, fiscal stability, and organizational structures and processes to fulfill its purposes.” In keeping with the goals of the accreditation process, the Capacity and Preparatory Review is intended to be a focused review which includes a site visit with clearly defined purposes and procedures. The purposes of the CPR are to:

1. Review and verify the information provided in the Institutional Presentation (CPR report and data portfolio), and assure that the institution’s data fairly and accurately portray the state of the institution at the time of review.
2. Evaluate key institutional resources, structures, and processes in light of the Commission’s Standards, to assure that the institution operates at or above threshold levels acceptable for accreditation (or candidacy) and, where appropriate, to identify any capacity-related issues that need to be reconsidered during the Educational Effectiveness Review.
3. Evaluate the institution’s infrastructure to support educational effectiveness, especially in regard to retention and graduation, the assessment of student learning, and program review under Standard 2, and organizational learning and use of evidence under Standard 4.

4. Assess the institution's preparedness to undertake the Educational Effectiveness Review as identified in the proposal, and assist the institution in refining its focus and plan for that review.

**Timing:** The Capacity and Preparatory Review occurs on dates established by the Commission.



**Who Is Involved in Preparation:** Key institutional constituencies, including faculty leadership, should be involved in the design of the CPR report and the data portfolio, the selection of indicators, and the drafting and review of the analytical essays. The evidentiary portion of the CPR report is designed to be prepared largely from existing evidence. The entire presentation should be reviewed by various constituencies of the institution, including faculty and staff leadership and governing bodies.

**The Capacity and Preparatory Review Report and Data Portfolio:** To support the Capacity and Preparatory Review, each institution is responsible for developing a Capacity and Preparatory Review report. The report is intended to be evidence-based, balanced, candid in presenting strengths and areas in need of improvement, and be supported by a set of exhibits (the data portfolio) that support the institution's claim that it meets the Core Commitment to Institutional Capacity.

All Capacity and Preparatory Review reports should include the following elements:

1. **An Introduction** that describes the contents of the CPR report and data portfolio as a whole, together with any changes in context that may have arisen since WASC's approval of the proposal.
2. **Reflective Essays** that use one of the two approaches below (Comprehensive or Thematic). These essays should analyze key areas of capacity, discuss the implications of the data portfolio with specific reference to key documents (see 6 b., below), and identify recommendations for improvement.
3. **An Update** on the progress being made in addressing the issues identified in the proposal for the Educational Effectiveness Review.
4. **A Concluding or Integrative Essay** that summarizes the institution's major findings, provides a reflective view of its strengths and weaknesses in relation to the Commission's Standards and/or the themes selected by the institution, and proposes appropriate recommendations and follow-up steps. A timeline for follow up should also be included.
5. **An Appendix** that documents the institution's response to concerns that were identified by the Commission in its last action letter and the major recommendations of the last visiting team.
6. **An Analytical Data Portfolio**, which includes:
  - a. Updated versions of data exhibits, including the *Summary Data Form*, the *Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators*, and the *Inventory of Concurrent Accreditation* that were originally submitted with the proposal.
  - b. A set of prescribed exhibits and data displays, including lists of institutional policies

required by the Commission [stipulated by the CEO and subject to audit on site (see Appendix 1)], together with more detailed breakdowns of:

- i. student body characteristics;
  - ii. enrollments and degrees granted for the institution's academic programs;
  - iii. graduation and retention rates (disaggregated by student type and, if possible, by program or major);
  - iv. more detailed data on faculty and staff, and on fiscal, physical, and information resources;
  - v. a table listing current assessment activities;
  - vi. a set of standard statistics on educational operations.
- c. Institutions whose default rate for Title IV programs requires a default reduction plan should also provide a copy of their plan for review.
7. A set of exhibits chosen by the institution as evidence of its commitment to capacity. These exhibits may include examples of policies and procedures, additional data, or examples of how particular activities are undertaken, as suggested by particular Commission Standards or Criteria for Review. Institutions with off-campus and distance education programs should include relevant data and analyses about these offerings.

To the extent possible, the exhibits included in the data portfolio should be drawn from existing documents and data rather than being prepared especially for the review team. The portfolio is also intended to be maintained, updated, and used in succeeding reviews to avoid duplication of effort and additional institutional costs. To the extent possible, it is hoped the data portfolio will also be useful to the institution beyond the review cycle.

The Capacity and Preparatory report should reflect the following important principles that are relevant to all four Standards. These include:

- ▷ Establishment of clear outcomes;
- ▷ Reliance on indicators and metrics of achievement, and/or specific bodies of evidence that can help the institution to determine the degree to which outcomes are being achieved; and
- ▷ A commitment to take action on the basis of evidence in order to improve performance.

These three principles should guide an institution's self-review, selection of exhibits for the data portfolio, and the content of Reflective Essays.

**Two Approaches to the Capacity and Preparatory Report Essays:** Most institutions have chosen one of two basic approaches to the Capacity and Preparatory Review and report. Institutions are encouraged to develop an approach that fits their needs and context.

1. **Comprehensive/Standards-Based.** The Comprehensive approach to the CPR follows the Standards and Criteria for Review (especially those that fall under Standards 1, 3, and 4) to document the institution's assessment of its capacity with regard to resources, structures, systems, and processes. In reflective essays, the institution should analyze the data exhibits in its portfolio through the context of the Commission Standards. In addition, the institution should also address its capacity and infrastructure to support student and organizational learning under Standards 2 and 4, including its approach to student learning outcomes assessment and program review. Many institutions have found the Comprehensive approach to be a valuable means of organizing the review, giving emphasis to specific CFRs that correspond to areas in which the institution wishes to improve.

Eligible and candidate institutions are required to use the Comprehensive approach. Institutions on sanction must also use this approach, focusing on the Standards and Criteria for Review that the Commission and the evaluation team identified as the basis for sanction.

- 2. Thematic.** The Thematic approach focuses the CPR report primarily on themes that the institution selects to facilitate improvement and wide engagement in the review process. Institutions should analyze the data portfolio exhibits in reflective essays based on the selected themes. Themes may be developed to improve institutional capacity in such areas as enrollment management, governance, strategic planning, or other areas that relate most directly to issues arising under Standards 1, 3 and 4. Institutions for which capacity concerns have not been cited may select one set of themes for both reviews, with the CPR report focusing on the capacity and infrastructure elements and the Educational Effectiveness Review focusing on evidence of results -- how well the capacity and infrastructure function to improve the institution. Examples of such themes include revising and implementing program review to focus on student learning outcomes, assessing and improving writing and critical thinking, improving institutional research capacity and function, and building comprehensive enrollment or student success systems.

The Thematic approach to the CPR is typically used by institutions with 10-year accreditation terms, no major issues cited in the previous review, and for whom focused attention on several select issues across both reviews will yield the most value and impact.

Regardless of approach, the institution is expected to include in its CPR report a study and analysis of student success, drawing from, but not limited to, its data on retention and graduation rates, disaggregated by student type and by program. To the extent possible, the study should include comparisons with similar institutions and, where appropriate, recommendations for improvement.

In selecting an approach, an institution should undertake a self-assessment in consultation with WASC staff. If selecting the Thematic approach, staff will assist the institution in determining the emphasis/proportion of each capacity element in the institutional report. The Proposal Review Committee (PRC) may also help guide the institution by identifying issues or topics for emphasis.

**Report Length:** The entire Capacity and Preparatory Review report is limited to thirty-five (35) pages of text, exclusive of data exhibits and appendices.

**Process of the Capacity and Preparatory Review:** To verify the evidence included in the Capacity and Preparatory Review report, a site visit with the following characteristics will be conducted:

- 1. Team Size.** CPR teams normally range from four to six people, depending on the size and complexity of the institution and the scope of the issues involved.
- 2. Visit Length.** CPRs normally involve two or three days on campus.
- 3. Process of Review.** The CPR team's responsibility is to assure that the four goals of the CPR, identified above, are met. The team typically organizes its visit around the format adopted by the institution's CPR report, using the Standards of Accreditation as a framework. The team may also address other issues that it identifies in its pre-visit activities, or on site.
- 4. Pre-Visit Activities.** The CPR team reviews the institution's CPR report and data portfolio in a team conference call prior to the site visit and communicates with the institution to clarify any ambiguities, to request additional evidence, and to submit specific questions that it wishes to explore more fully in the course of the visit. Also prior to the visit, the institution is expected to circulate an email to all faculty, students and staff, inviting them to submit comments about the institution to a secure email account set up by WASC for the visit.
- 5. Team Report.** The CPR team prepares a report of its review, describing and analyzing institutional compliance with the Accreditation Standards, especially in relation to the Core

Commitment to Institutional Capacity as embodied in the Standards. The team also addresses the institution's preparedness to engage in developmental analysis of its educational effectiveness and recommends ways to improve the focus and presentation of issues in the Educational Effectiveness Review. The team report is submitted to the institution for correction of errors of fact before the report is finalized and sent to the Commission. The institution also has the opportunity to prepare a formal written statement to the Commission in response to the final report.

**Commission Action:** Following submission of the team report, the Commission will take action. The full range and definition of Commission decisions are found in Section IV of the *Handbook*. Typically, the Commission will act as follows:

1. Receive the report of the CPR team, find that the institution fulfills the Commission's expectations under the Core Commitment to Institutional Capacity, and proceed with the scheduled Educational Effectiveness Review. Accreditation (or candidacy) continues.
2. Identify any additional issues to be addressed in the Educational Effectiveness Review, adjusting the date of the EER, if needed, to allow the institution more time to address identified issues and prepare more effectively for the Educational Effectiveness Review.
3. Request an interim report or special visit, or impose a sanction, if warranted.

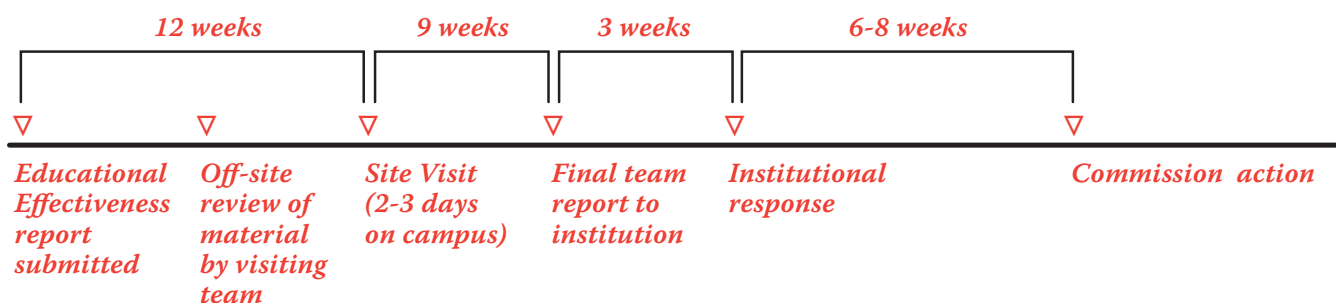
## STAGE 3: THE EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW

**Purposes:** The Educational Effectiveness Review is intended to be aligned with the Capacity and Preparatory Review. Its primary purpose is to invite sustained engagement by the institution on the extent to which it fulfills its educational objectives. Through a process of inquiry and engagement, the Educational Effectiveness Review also is designed to enable the Commission to make a judgment about the extent to which the institution fulfills its Core Commitment to Educational Effectiveness.

Specific purposes of the Educational Effectiveness Review include:

1. To review institutional efforts to evaluate the effectiveness of educational programs, with special attention to the institution's program review process;
2. To examine institutional practices for evaluating student learning and to develop and share good practices for using educational results to improve the process of teaching and learning;
3. To examine the alignment of institutional resources with activities designed to achieve the institution's educational objectives;
4. To promote sustained engagement with selected issues of educational effectiveness consistent with Commission Standards. These issues will have already been identified by the institution and approved through the proposal review process. The institution is encouraged to select issues of importance to itself in this process, so that the review will be of maximum value to the institution.

**Timing:** As developed and approved through the proposal review process, the Educational Effectiveness Review will normally take place one and a half to two years following the Capacity and Preparatory Review.



**Who Is Involved in Preparation:** Because the primary emphasis in this review is placed on inquiry and engagement related to teaching and learning, the faculty should be deeply involved in the design and implementation of the Educational Effectiveness report and review process, along with others at the institution who are involved in matters related to educational effectiveness.

**The Educational Effectiveness Report:** To support the Educational Effectiveness Review, each institution is responsible for developing an Educational Effectiveness Review report. In this report, institutions are expected to explore topics or themes that are related to the institution's own priorities and needs, with special emphasis on the assessment and improvement of student learning and the development of a culture of organizational learning and improvement. The Commission Standards, especially Standards 2 and 4, serve as a frame for selecting topics to be examined in the course of the Educational Effectiveness Review report. The Commission has developed an *Educational Effectiveness Framework* and other documents to assist institutions and teams in assessing educational effectiveness under Standards 2 and 4. In developing their Educational Effectiveness reports, institutions should draw upon, or combine the best elements of, the two approaches described below. Alternative approaches should be discussed with WASC staff.

1. **Comprehensive/Standards-Based.** Organized primarily around Standards 2 and 4, the institution produces a single comprehensive document describing how it investigates and assures educational quality. This report may include a comprehensive review of assessment at the institution, a comprehensive examination of how the institution can become more learning-centered, or an extensive review of the entire institution, using specific points of inquiry. Through any of these approaches, the institution is expected to include evidence-based discussions of student learning.
2. **Thematic.** In addition to the required elements specified below, the institution carefully selects a limited number of topics for review in depth, identifies expected areas of inquiry or researchable questions for each topic, selects a methodology for engaging each topic, and carries out each investigation as a rigorous research-based study. Typically, three or four topics are selected, involving aspects of educational effectiveness. Student learning should be addressed in at least one of the selected themes, and the analysis of each theme should be grounded in, and supported by, concrete data.

Regardless of the approach taken, all Educational Effectiveness Review reports are expected to include the following elements:

1. **A Description of the Educational Effectiveness Review Approach.** Institutions should provide background descriptions and analyses of how they approach educational effectiveness through their own intentional and comprehensive system of quality assurance and improvement. This part of the report is intended to provide the team and Commission with the basic context for examining educational effectiveness at the institution. This section should also serve the institution by providing an opportunity to inventory the scope and effectiveness of the institution's processes for maintaining and improving educational quality. The institution should broadly describe a) the design and approaches it takes to assure quality in teaching and learning; b) the kinds of evidence of learning it collects; and c) the way in which evidence is used to

support further inquiry and improvement.

2. **Significant Engagement and Analysis of Educational Effectiveness.** As part of the Educational Effectiveness Review, each institution is expected to engage the issue of educational effectiveness in depth. The institution is expected to move well beyond description of activities to provide analysis of the evidence in its data portfolio, reflections on how well the institution's quality assurance processes are working, and ways that those processes have led to further improvement. In addition, the Educational Effectiveness Review should provide an occasion for engagement of the institution's constituencies, especially its faculty, to further its understanding of the results of its educational effectiveness inquiry and to lead to specific recommendations for improvement. The Educational Effectiveness Review is also an opportunity to connect the efforts of co-curricular programs with institutional and program learning outcomes. The institution is expected to work with evidence of educational results and student learning as a major part of the Educational Effectiveness Review report.
3. **An Analysis of the Effectiveness of the Program Review Process.** Institutions are expected to analyze the effectiveness of the program review process, including its emphasis on the achievement of the program's learning outcomes. The process should be sufficiently embedded for the institution and the team to sample current program review reports (self-studies and external review reports) in order to assess the impact of the program review process and its alignment with the institution's quality improvement efforts and academic planning and budgeting.
4. **Further Development of Student Success Efforts.** Based on the findings of the institution and the team at the CPR, the institution will be expected to further its analysis of student success, deepening its analysis of its own and comparative data of graduation and retention rates, year to year attrition, campus climate surveys, etc.
5. **An Updated Data Portfolio.** Building on the data portfolio that was developed for the Capacity and Preparatory Review, the institution should present additional evidence and exhibits that support its analysis of educational effectiveness and student learning. The institution should provide an updated version of the *Summary Data Form*, *Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators*, and the *Inventory of Concurrent Accreditation*, and a list of current assessment activities, such as that submitted as part of the CPR. In addition, the institution might include selected results of assessment studies, results of any summative learning measures that are deemed important by the institution (e.g., pass rates for licensure examinations, capstone courses, etc.), surveys of graduates and current students, and employer feedback on former student performance. Institutions should analyze the data and expectations for improvement, including milestone targets for specific groups of learners.
6. **An Integrative Component.** All Educational Effectiveness reports are expected to include an integrative component in which the institution synthesizes and integrates the discrete elements of its Educational Effectiveness Review and the impact of the entire sequential accreditation review process. For most institutions, this takes the form of an integrative chapter. Institutions may choose to provide integrative comments and reflections throughout their presentation. Whichever model is used, the institution should move beyond the separate topics for review, and ask, "Were there common themes or issues that emerged? What was learned from the internal review process and what major recommendations emerged? Were the goals and outcomes established in the proposal achieved? What will be the next steps taken to address the major recommendations of the internal review process? How will momentum be sustained?" The institution is also expected to include its plan, methods, and schedule for assessing learning outcomes beyond the Educational Effectiveness Review and for embedding assessment into regular institutional functioning.
7. **Response to the Capacity and Preparatory Review Recommendations.** Institutions are

expected to respond to the recommendations in the CPR team report and the related Commission action letter, and describe and evaluate their progress in addressing these recommendations. This response may be embedded in the report or included in an appendix to the report.

**Report Length:** The entire Educational Effectiveness report is limited to fifty (50) pages of text, exclusive of the data portfolio and appendices.

**Process of the Educational Effectiveness Review:** To verify the evidence included in the Educational Effectiveness Review report, a site visit will be conducted with the following characteristics:

1. **Team Size.** The EER team will normally range from four to seven people, depending on the nature of the institution and the scope of issues.
2. **Visit Length.** The Educational Effectiveness Review will normally involve two or three days on campus.
3. **Process of Review.** The EER team will be selected to ensure expertise in the themes of the review and in topics related to educational effectiveness. Teams will use a combination of methods to gather evidence while on campus, such as sampling core quality assurance processes and student learning assessment methods, conducting structured interviews, and reviewing documentary evidence. Teams may also conduct selected on-site audits to validate the procedures used by the institution in its own self-investigation and/or to verify the accuracy of data included in the institution's report.
4. **Pre-Visit Activity.** As in the CPR, the EER team may also communicate with the institution in advance of the visit to clarify any ambiguities in the Educational Effectiveness Review report, to request additional evidence, and/or to submit specific questions that it wishes to explore more fully in the course of the visit. Also prior to the visit, the institution is expected to circulate an email to all faculty, students and staff, inviting them to submit comments about the institution to a secure email account set up by WASC for the visit.
5. **Team Report.** The EER team prepares a report of its review, describing and analyzing the institution's status with respect to the Core Commitment to Educational Effectiveness. In doing so, the team uses the institution's presentation and supporting evidence, along with the on-site review, to evaluate the institution's ability to sustain an evidence-based inquiry into educational effectiveness that leads to institutional improvement. Where applicable, the team addresses themes selected by the institution, recommendations for improvement, and issues identified by the Commission after the CPR for consideration at the Educational Effectiveness Review. The team report is submitted to the institution for correction of errors of fact before the report is finalized and sent to the Commission. The institution is also provided opportunity to prepare a formal written statement to the Commission in response to the final report.

**Commission Action:** Following submission of the Educational Effectiveness Review team report, the Commission will take action. The full range and definition of Commission decisions are described in Section VI of the *Handbook*. Typically, the Commission will act as follows:

1. Receive the report of the EER team and determine that the institution has satisfactorily addressed the Core Commitments as embodied in the Commission Standards. The Commission reviews the reports of both the Capacity and Preparatory and the Educational Effectiveness Reviews to make this determination. With positive results from both reviews, the Commission will reaffirm accreditation for a period of up to ten years.
2. Reaffirm accreditation with monitoring conditions, such as special visits or interim reports.
3. Impose a sanction, if warranted.

- Schedule follow-up activities as needed.

## Fees and Charges

---

Institutions granted candidacy or accreditation are responsible for paying annual dues to maintain this status, or arranging an acceptable payment plan, upon billing by the Commission and no later than September 30<sup>th</sup> of each year. If an institution fails to pay all required dues by this date, its candidacy or accredited status will automatically expire. Annual fees are based on institutional enrollment.

In addition, fees and expenses are charged for the following activities:

**Eligibility Applications:** Fees are charged for the initial application, reapplications, and for appeal of eligibility determinations. (Information for institutions seeking eligibility can be found in the publication, *How To Become Accredited*, on the Commission website.)

**Candidacy and Initial Accreditation Applications:** Once an institution has been determined to be Eligible, it is required to submit a one-time fee, which covers staff support for the candidacy and initial accreditation reviews. Additional fees are charged for visits and other services, as indicated on the Commission website.

**Evaluation Visits:** A visit fee is charged for each visit to an institution. The institution is also billed for the expenses of the visiting team and staff, including the cost of the chair's appearance before the Commission.

**Special Charges:** Additional charges are assessed for unusually complex evaluations that require staff time beyond that normally expended. These charges may include visits to off-campus and out-of-region programs and to institutions requiring unusually large teams in relation to the size of the institution.

**Substantive Change:** Fees are charged for substantive change applications and visits.

**Commission Review of a Negative Action:** When an institution requests a Commission Review, a special processing fee is charged and a deposit against costs is required. If the actual costs are less than paid, the excess is refunded. If actual costs are greater, the institution is billed for the difference.

**Legal Fees:** In the event that WASC receives subpoenas related to litigation between its accredited institutions and/or third parties, the institution involved in the litigation will be responsible for reimbursing WASC for all costs associated with responding to the subpoena. (See the Commission policy on *Legal Fees* for more details.)

All fees and charges are due and payable upon submission (of applications) or upon receipt of a bill from the Commission office.

A fee schedule for the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities is prepared each year and is available on the Commission website ([www.wascsenior.org](http://www.wascsenior.org)).