Eligibility Requirements for Accreditation
Introduction to the Eligibility Requirements for Accreditation

Eligible institutions offering one or more programs of two academic years leading to the Associate Degree, located in the states of Hawai‘i and California, the territories of Guam and American Samoa, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Republic of Palau, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands may apply to the Commission for candidacy.

Prior to making a formal application, an institution wishing to become a Candidate for Accreditation must begin by assessing itself in relation to the basic criteria for institutional eligibility, stated below. The institution should also review the Accreditation Standards and Commission policies, as they will provide a clear statement of ultimate Commission expectations of institutional performance and quality and give further definition to the eligibility criteria. The eligibility process is designed to screen institutions prior to a period of formal and extensive institutional self study so that only institutions which meet the basic criteria for eligibility may proceed.

The Commission uses the same self study and site visit process for both candidacy and accreditation applications. The results of a candidacy, or initial accreditation visit could be denial, candidacy, or accreditation. Clearly, the history of the applicant institution will have great bearing on the Commission’s decision.
Eligibility Requirements for Accreditation


In order to achieve eligibility, the institution must completely meet all Eligibility Requirements. Compliance with the Eligibility Requirements is expected to be continuous and will be validated periodically, normally as part of every Institutional Self Evaluation process and Educational Quality and Institutional Effectiveness Review.

Institutions that have achieved accreditation are expected to include in their Institutional Self Evaluation Report information demonstrating that they continue to meet the Eligibility Requirements.

1. Authority
   
The institution is authorized or licensed to operate as an educational institution and to award degrees by an appropriate governmental organization or agency as required by each of the jurisdictions or regions in which it operates.

   Private institutions, if required by the appropriate statutory regulatory body, must submit evidence of authorization, licensure, or approval by that body. If incorporated, the institution shall submit a copy of its articles of incorporation.

2. Mission
   
The institution’s educational mission is clearly defined, adopted, and published by its governing board consistent with its legal authorization, and is appropriate to a degree-granting institution of higher education and the constituency it seeks to serve. The mission statement defines institutional commitment to achieving student learning.

3. Governing Board
   
The institution has a functioning governing board responsible for the quality, integrity, and financial stability of the institution and for ensuring that the institution’s mission is being carried out. This board is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the financial resources of the institution are used to provide a sound educational program. Its membership is sufficient in size and composition to fulfill all board responsibilities.

   The governing board is an independent policy-making body capable of reflecting constituent and public interest in board activities and decisions. A majority of the board members have no employment, family, ownership, or other personal financial interest in the institution. The board adheres to a conflict of interest policy that assures that those interests are disclosed and that they do not interfere with the impartiality of governing body members or outweigh the greater duty to secure and ensure the academic and fiscal integrity of the institution.
4. **Chief Executive Officer**
The institution has a chief executive officer appointed by the governing board, whose full-time responsibility is to the institution, and who possesses the requisite authority to administer board policies. Neither the district/system chief executive officer nor the institutional chief executive officer may serve as the chair of the governing board. The institution informs the Commission immediately when there is a change in the institutional chief executive officer.

5. **Administrative Capacity**
The institution has sufficient staff, with appropriate preparation and experience to provide the administrative services necessary to support its mission and purpose.

6. **Operational Status**
The institution is operational, with students actively pursuing its degree programs.

7. **Degrees**
A substantial portion of the institution's educational offerings are programs that lead to degrees, and a significant proportion of its students are enrolled in them.

8. **Educational Programs**
The institution's principal degree programs are congruent with its mission, are based on recognized higher education field(s) of study, are of sufficient content and length, are conducted at levels of quality and rigor appropriate to the degrees offered, and culminate in identified student outcomes. At least one degree program must be of two academic years in length.

9. **Academic Credit**
The institution awards academic credits based on generally accepted practices in degree-granting institutions of higher education. Public institutions governed by statutory or system regulatory requirements provide appropriate information about the awarding of academic credit.

10. **Student Learning and Achievement**
The institution defines and publishes for each program the program's expected student learning and achievement outcomes. Through regular and systematic assessment, it demonstrates that students who complete programs, no matter where or how they are offered, achieve these outcomes.

11. **General Education**
The institution defines and incorporates into all of its degree programs a substantial component of general education designed to ensure breadth of knowledge and promote intellectual inquiry. The general education component includes demonstrated competence in writing and computational skills and an introduction to some of the major areas of knowledge. General education has comprehensive learning outcomes for the students who complete it. Degree credit for general education programs must be
consistent with levels of quality and rigor appropriate to higher education. See the
Accreditation Standards, II.A.3, for areas of study for general education.

12. Academic Freedom
The institution’s faculty and students are free to examine and test all knowledge
appropriate to their discipline or area of major study as judged by the
academic/educational community in general. Regardless of institutional affiliation or
sponsorship, the institution maintains an atmosphere in which intellectual freedom and
independence exist.

13. Faculty
The institution has a substantial core of qualified faculty with full-time responsibility to
the institution. The core is sufficient in size and experience to support all of the
institution’s educational programs. A clear statement of faculty responsibilities must
include development and review of curriculum as well as assessment of learning.

14. Student Services
The institution provides for all of its students appropriate student services that support
student learning and development within the context of the institutional mission.

15. Admissions
The institution has adopted and adheres to admission policies consistent with its mission
that specify the qualifications of students appropriate for its programs.

16. Information and Learning Resources
The institution provides, through ownership or contractual agreement, specific long-
term access to sufficient information and learning resources and services to support its
mission and instructional programs in whatever format and wherever they are offered.

17. Financial Resources
The institution documents a funding base, financial resources, and plans for financial
development adequate to support student learning programs and services, to improve
institutional effectiveness, and to assure financial stability.

18. Financial Accountability
The institution annually undergoes and makes available an external financial audit by a
certified public accountant or an audit by an appropriate public agency. The institution
shall submit with its eligibility application a copy of the budget and institutional
financial audits and management letters prepared by an outside certified public
accountant or by an appropriate public agency, who has no other relationship to the
institute, for its two most recent fiscal years, including the fiscal year ending
immediately prior to the date of the submission of the application. The audits must be
certified and any exceptions explained. It is recommended that the auditor employ as a
guide Audits of Colleges and Universities, published by the American Institute of
Certified Public Accountants. An applicant institution must not show an annual or
cumulative operating deficit at any time during the eligibility application process.
19. Institutional Planning and Evaluation
The institution systematically evaluates and makes public how well and in what ways it is accomplishing its purposes, including assessment of student learning outcomes. The institution provides evidence of planning for improvement of institutional structures and processes, student achievement of educational goals, and student learning. The institution assesses progress toward achieving its stated goals and makes decisions regarding improvement through an ongoing and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, resource allocation, implementation, and re-evaluation.

20. Public Information
The institution provides a catalog for its constituencies with precise, accurate, and current information concerning the following:

General Information
• Official Name, Address(es), Telephone Number(s), and Website Address of the Institution
• Educational Mission
• Course, Program, and Degree Offerings
• Academic Calendar and Program Length
• Academic Freedom Statement
• Available Student Financial Aid
• Available Learning Resources
• Names and Degrees of Administrators and Faculty
• Names of Governing Board Members

Requirements
• Admissions
• Student Fees and Other Financial Obligations
• Degree, Certificates, Graduation and Transfer

Major Policies Affecting Students
• Academic Regulations, including Academic Honesty
• Nondiscrimination
• Acceptance of Transfer Credits
• Grievance and Complaint Procedures
• Sexual Harassment
• Refund of Fees

Locations or Publications Where Other Policies may be Found
21. Relations with the Accrediting Commission

The institution provides assurance that it adheres to the Eligibility Requirements and Accreditation Standards and policies of the Commission, describes itself in identical terms to all its accrediting agencies, communicates any changes in its accredited status, and agrees to disclose information required by the Commission to carry out its accrediting responsibilities. The institution will comply with Commission requests, directives, decisions and policies, and will make complete, accurate, and honest disclosure. Failure to do so is sufficient reason, in and of itself, for the Commission to impose a sanction, or to deny or revoke candidacy or accreditation.
Accreditation Standards
Introduction: Shaping the Dialogue

The primary purpose of an ACCJC-accredited institution is to foster learning in its students. An effective institution ensures that its resources and processes support student learning, continuously assesses that learning, and pursues institutional excellence and improvement. An effective institution maintains an ongoing, self-reflective dialogue about its quality and improvement.

An institution-wide dialogue must be at the heart of the self-evaluation process for the college community to gain a comprehensive perspective of the institution. Although the Standards are presented in four parts, they work together to facilitate this dialogue on the institution's effectiveness and on ways in which it may improve. The self study provides the Commission with the institution's assessment of itself as a whole.

The Standards

The institutional mission provides the impetus for achieving student learning and other goals that the institution endeavors to accomplish. The institution provides the means for students to learn, assesses how well learning is occurring, and strives to improve that learning through ongoing, systematic, and integrated planning (Standard I). Instructional programs, student support services, and library and learning support services facilitate the achievement of the institution's stated student learning outcomes (Standard II). Human, physical, technology, and financial resources enable these programs and services to function and improve (Standard III). Ethical and effective leadership throughout the organization guides the accomplishment of the mission and supports institutional effectiveness and improvement (Standard IV).

A college-wide dialogue that integrates the elements of the Standards provides the complete view of the institution that is needed to verify integrity and to promote quality and improvement.
Standard I: Institutional Mission and Effectiveness

The institution demonstrates strong commitment to a mission that emphasizes achievement of student learning and to communicating the mission internally and externally. The institution uses analyses of quantitative and qualitative data and analysis in an ongoing and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, implementation, and re-evaluation to verify and improve the effectiveness by which the mission is accomplished.

A. Mission

The institution has a statement of mission that defines the institution's broad educational purposes, its intended student population, and its commitment to achieving student learning.

1. The institution establishes student learning programs and services aligned with its purposes, its character, and its student population.

2. The mission statement is approved by the governing board and published.

3. Using the institution’s governance and decision-making processes, the institution reviews its mission statement on a regular basis and revises it as necessary.

4. The institution's mission is central to institutional planning and decision making.

B. Improving Institutional Effectiveness

The institution demonstrates a conscious effort to produce and support student learning, measures that learning, assesses how well learning is occurring, and makes changes to improve student learning. The institution also organizes its key processes and allocates its resources to effectively support student learning. The institution demonstrates its effectiveness by providing 1) evidence of the achievement of student learning outcomes and 2) evidence of institution and program performance. The institution uses ongoing and systematic evaluation and planning to refine its key processes and improve student learning.

1. The institution maintains an ongoing, collegial, self-reflective dialogue about the continuous improvement of student learning and institutional processes.

2. The institution sets goals to improve its effectiveness consistent with its stated purposes. The institution articulates its goals and states the objectives derived from them in measurable terms so that the degree to which they are achieved can be determined and widely discussed. The institutional members understand these goals and work collaboratively toward their achievement.

3. The institution assesses progress toward achieving its stated goals and makes decisions regarding the improvement of institutional effectiveness in an ongoing and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, resource allocation, implementation, and re-evaluation. Evaluation is based on analyses of both quantitative and qualitative data.
Standard II: Student Learning Programs and Services

The institution offers high-quality instructional programs, student support services, and library and learning support services that facilitate and demonstrate the achievement of stated student learning outcomes. The institution provides an environment that supports learning, enhances student understanding and appreciation of diversity, and encourages personal and civic responsibility as well as intellectual, aesthetic, and personal development for all of its students.

A. Instructional Programs

The institution offers high-quality instructional programs in recognized and emerging fields of study that culminate in identified student outcomes leading to degrees, certificates, employment, or transfer to other higher education institutions or programs consistent with its mission. Instructional programs are systematically assessed in order to assure currency, improve teaching and learning strategies, and achieve stated student learning outcomes. The provisions of this standard are broadly applicable to all instructional activities offered in the name of the institution.

1. The institution demonstrates that all instructional programs, regardless of location or means of delivery, address and meet the mission of the institution and uphold its integrity.¹
   a. The institution identifies and seeks to meet the varied educational needs of its students through programs consistent with their educational preparation and the diversity, demographics, and economy of its communities. The institution relies upon research and analysis to identify student learning needs and to assess progress toward achieving stated learning outcomes.
   b. The institution utilizes delivery systems and modes of instruction compatible with the objectives of the curriculum and appropriate to the current and future needs of its students.¹
   c. The institution identifies student learning outcomes for courses, programs, certificates, and degrees; assesses student achievement of those outcomes; and uses assessment results to make improvements.

2. The institution assures the quality and improvement of all instructional courses and programs offered in the name of the institution, including collegiate, developmental, and pre-collegiate courses and programs, continuing and community education, study abroad, short-term training courses and programs, programs for international students, and contract or other special programs, regardless of type of credit awarded, delivery mode, or location.¹²
   a. The institution uses established procedures to design, identify learning outcomes for, approve, administer, deliver, and evaluate courses and programs. The institution recognizes the central role of its faculty for establishing quality and improving instructional courses and programs.
   b. The institution relies on faculty expertise and the assistance of advisory committees when appropriate to identify competency levels and measurable student learning outcomes for courses, certificates, programs including general
4. All degree programs include focused study in at least one area of inquiry or in an established interdisciplinary core.

5. Students completing vocational and occupational certificates and degrees demonstrate technical and professional competencies that meet employment and other applicable standards and are prepared for external licensure and certification.

6. The institution assures that students and prospective students receive clear and accurate information about educational courses and programs and transfer policies. The institution describes its degrees and certificates in terms of their purpose, content, course requirements, and expected student learning outcomes. In every class section students receive a course syllabus that specifies learning outcomes consistent with those in the institution's officially approved course outline.

   a. The institution makes available to its students clearly stated transfer-of-credit policies in order to facilitate the mobility of students without penalty. In accepting transfer credits to fulfill degree requirements, the institution certifies that the expected learning outcomes for transferred courses are comparable to the learning outcomes of its own courses. Where patterns of student enrollment between institutions are identified, the institution develops articulation agreements as appropriate to its mission.

   b. When programs are eliminated or program requirements are significantly changed, the institution makes appropriate arrangements so that enrolled students may complete their education in a timely manner with a minimum of disruption.

   c. The institution represents itself clearly, accurately, and consistently to prospective and current students, the public, and its personnel through its catalogs, statements, and publications, including those presented in electronic formats. It regularly reviews institutional policies, procedures, and publications to assure integrity in all representations about its mission, programs, and services.

7. In order to assure the academic integrity of the teaching-learning process, the institution uses and makes public governing board-adopted policies on academic freedom and responsibility, student academic honesty, and specific institutional beliefs or world views. These policies make clear the institution's commitment to the free pursuit and dissemination of knowledge.

   a. Faculty distinguish between personal conviction and professionally accepted views in a discipline. They present data and information fairly and objectively.

   b. The institution establishes and publishes clear expectations concerning student academic honesty and the consequences for dishonesty.

   c. Institutions that require conformity to specific codes of conduct of staff, faculty, administrators, or students, or that seek to instill specific beliefs or world views, give clear prior notice of such policies, including statements in the catalog and/or appropriate faculty or student handbooks.

8. Institutions offering curricula in foreign locations to students other than U.S. nationals operate in conformity with Standards and applicable Commission policies.
3. The institution researches and identifies the learning support needs of its student population and provides appropriate services and programs to address those needs.
   a. The institution assures equitable access to all of its students by providing appropriate, comprehensive, and reliable services to students regardless of service location or delivery method.
   b. The institution provides an environment that encourages personal and civic responsibility, as well as intellectual, aesthetic, and personal development for all of its students.
   c. The institution designs, maintains, and evaluates counseling and/or academic advising programs to support student development and success and prepares faculty and other personnel responsible for the advising function.
   d. The institution designs and maintains appropriate programs, practices, and services that support and enhance student understanding and appreciation of diversity.
   e. The institution regularly evaluates admissions and placement instruments and practices to validate their effectiveness while minimizing biases.
   f. The institution maintains student records permanently, securely, and confidentially, with provision for secure backup of all files, regardless of the form in which those files are maintained. The institution publishes and follows established policies for release of student records.

4. The institution evaluates student support services to assure their adequacy in meeting identified student needs. Evaluation of these services provides evidence that they contribute to the achievement of student learning outcomes. The institution uses the results of these evaluations as the basis for improvement.

C. Library and Learning Support Services

Library and other learning support services for students are sufficient to support the institution’s instructional programs and intellectual, aesthetic, and cultural activities in whatever format and wherever they are offered. Such services include library services and collections, tutoring, learning centers, computer laboratories, and learning technology development and training. The institution provides access and training to students so that library and other learning support services may be used effectively and efficiently. The institution systemically assesses these services using student learning outcomes, faculty input, and other appropriate measures in order to improve the effectiveness of the services.

1. The institution supports the quality of its instructional programs by providing library and other learning support services that are sufficient in quantity, currency, depth, and variety to facilitate educational offerings, regardless of location or means of delivery.

   a. Relying on appropriate expertise of faculty, including librarians and other learning support services professionals, the institution selects and maintains educational equipment and materials to support student learning and enhance the achievement of the mission of the institution.
Standard III: Resources

The institution effectively uses its human, physical, technology, and financial resources to achieve its broad educational purposes, including stated student learning outcomes, and to improve institutional effectiveness.

A. Human Resources

The institution employs qualified personnel to support student learning programs and services wherever offered and by whatever means delivered, and to improve institutional effectiveness. Personnel are treated equitably, are evaluated regularly and systematically, and are provided opportunities for professional development. Consistent with its mission, the institution demonstrates its commitment to the significant educational role played by persons of diverse backgrounds by making positive efforts to encourage such diversity. Human resource planning is integrated with institutional planning.

1. The institution assures the integrity and quality of its programs and services by employing personnel who are qualified by appropriate education, training, and experience to provide and support these programs and services. Criteria, qualifications, and procedures for selection of personnel are clearly and publicly stated. Job descriptions are directly related to institutional mission and goals and accurately reflect position duties, responsibilities, and authority.

   a. Criteria for selection of faculty include knowledge of the subject matter or service to be performed (as determined by individuals with discipline expertise), effective teaching, scholarly activities, and potential to contribute to the mission of the institution. Institutional faculty play a significant role in selection of new faculty. Degrees held by faculty and administrators are from institutions accredited by recognized U.S. accrediting agencies. Degrees from non-U.S. institutions are recognized only if equivalence has been established.

   b. The institution assures the effectiveness of its human resources by evaluating all personnel systematically and at stated intervals. The institution establishes written criteria for evaluating all personnel, including performance of assigned duties and participation in institutional responsibilities and other activities appropriate to their expertise. Evaluation processes seek to assess effectiveness of personnel and encourage improvement. Actions taken following evaluations are formal, timely, and documented.

   c. Faculty and others directly responsible for student progress toward achieving stated student learning outcomes have, as a component of their evaluation, effectiveness in producing those learning outcomes.

   d. The institution upholds a written code of professional ethics for all of its personnel.

2. The institution maintains a sufficient number of qualified faculty with full-time responsibility to the institution. The institution has a sufficient number of staff and administrators with appropriate preparation and experience to provide the administrative services necessary to support the institution's mission and purposes.
2. To assure the feasibility and effectiveness of physical resources in supporting institutional programs and services, the institution plans and evaluates its facilities and equipment on a regular basis, taking utilization and other relevant data into account.
   a. Long-range capital plans support institutional improvement goals and reflect projections of the total cost of ownership of new facilities and equipment.
   b. Physical resource planning is integrated with institutional planning. The institution systematically assesses the effective use of physical resources and uses the results of the evaluation as the basis for improvement.

C. Technology Resources
Technology resources are used to support student learning programs and services and to improve institutional effectiveness. Technology planning is integrated with institutional planning.

1. The institution assures that any technology support it provides is designed to meet the needs of learning, teaching, college-wide communications, research, and operational systems.
   a. Technology services, professional support, facilities, hardware, and software are designed to enhance the operation and effectiveness of the institution.
   b. The institution provides quality training in the effective application of its information technology to students and personnel.
   c. The institution systematically plans, acquires, maintains, and upgrades or replaces technology infrastructure and equipment to meet institutional needs.
   d. The distribution and utilization of technology resources support the development, maintenance, and enhancement of its programs and services.

2. Technology planning is integrated with institutional planning. The institution systematically assesses the effective use of technology resources and uses the results of evaluation as the basis for improvement.

D. Financial Resources
Financial resources are sufficient to support student learning programs and services and to improve institutional effectiveness. The distribution of resources supports the development, maintenance, and enhancement of programs and services. The institution plans and manages its financial affairs with integrity and in a manner that ensures financial stability. The level of financial resources provides a reasonable expectation of both short-term and long-term financial solvency. Financial resources planning is integrated with institutional planning.

1. The institution relies upon its mission and goals as the foundation for financial planning.
   a. Financial planning is integrated with and supports all institutional planning.
Standard IV: Leadership and Governance

The institution recognizes and utilizes the contributions of leadership throughout the organization for continuous improvement of the institution. Governance roles are designed to facilitate decisions that support student learning programs and services and improve institutional effectiveness, while acknowledging the designated responsibilities of the governing board and the chief administrator.

A. Decision-Making Roles and Processes

The institution recognizes that ethical and effective leadership throughout the organization enables the institution to identify institutional values, set and achieve goals, learn, and improve.

1. Institutional leaders create an environment for empowerment, innovation, and institutional excellence. They encourage staff, faculty, administrators, and students, no matter what their official titles, to take initiative in improving the practices, programs, and services in which they are involved. When ideas for improvement have policy or significant institution-wide implications, systematic participative processes are used to assure effective discussion, planning, and implementation.

2. The institution establishes and implements a written policy providing for faculty, staff, administrator, and student participation in decision-making processes. The policy specifies the manner in which individuals bring forward ideas from their constituencies and work together on appropriate policy, planning, and special-purpose bodies.

   a. Faculty and administrators have a substantive and clearly defined role in institutional governance and exercise a substantial voice in institutional policies, planning, and budget that relate to their areas of responsibility and expertise. Students and staff also have established mechanisms or organizations for providing input into institutional decisions.

   b. The institution relies on faculty, its academic senate or other appropriate faculty structures, the curriculum committee, and academic administrators for recommendations about student learning programs and services.

3. Through established governance structures, processes, and practices, the governing board, administrators, faculty, staff, and students work together for the good of the institution. These processes facilitate discussion of ideas and effective communication among the institution’s constituencies.

4. The institution advocates and demonstrates honesty and integrity in its relationships with external agencies. It agrees to comply with Accrediting Commission Standards, policies, and guidelines, and Commission requirements for public disclosure, self study and other reports, team visits, and prior approval of substantive changes. The institution moves expeditiously to respond to recommendations made by the Commission.

5. The role of leadership and the institution’s governance and decision-making structures and processes are regularly evaluated to assure their integrity and effectiveness. The
In multi-college districts/systems, the governing board establishes a clearly defined policy for selecting and evaluating the presidents of the colleges.

2. The president has primary responsibility for the quality of the institution he/she leads. He/she provides effective leadership in planning, organizing, budgeting, selecting and developing personnel, and assessing institutional effectiveness.
   a. The president plans, oversees, and evaluates an administrative structure organized and staffed to reflect the institution's purposes, size, and complexity. He/she delegates authority to administrators and others consistent with their responsibilities, as appropriate.
   b. The president guides institutional improvement of the teaching and learning environment by the following:
      • Establishing a collegial process that sets values, goals, and priorities.
      • Ensuring that evaluation and planning rely on high quality research and analysis on external and internal conditions.
      • Ensuring that educational planning is integrated with resource planning and distribution to achieve student learning outcomes.
      • Establishing procedures to evaluate overall institutional planning and implementation efforts.
   c. The president assures the implementation of statutes, regulations, and governing board policies and assures that institutional practices are consistent with institutional mission and policies.
   d. The president effectively controls budget and expenditures.
   e. The president works and communicates effectively with the communities served by the institution.

3. In multi-college districts or systems, the district/system provides primary leadership in setting and communicating expectations of educational excellence and integrity throughout the district/system and assures support for the effective operation of the colleges. It establishes clearly defined roles of authority and responsibility between the colleges and the district/system and acts as the liaison between the colleges and the governing board.6
   a. The district/system clearly delineates and communicates the operational responsibilities and functions of the district/system from those of the colleges and consistently adheres to this delineation in practice.
   b. The district/system provides effective services that support the colleges in their missions and functions.
   c. The district/system provides fair distribution of resources that are adequate to support the effective operations of the colleges.
   d. The district/system effectively controls its expenditures.
   e. The chancellor gives full responsibility and authority to the presidents of the colleges to implement and administer delegated district/system policies without his/her interference and holds them accountable for the operation of the colleges.