

## **GLOSSARY OF DEFINITIONS AND ACRONYMS USED IN ACCREDITATION**

**AABC:** American Association of Bible Colleges.

**AACRAO:** American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers.

**Academic Credit:** Credit applicable toward a degree or credential at the institution awarding it or accepting it on transfer.

**ACCJC:** Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges.

**Accrediting Body:** A voluntary, non-governmental association established to administer accrediting procedures. A listed accrediting body is one that is officially listed by the Secretary of Education because it is used as part of the Department of Education's processes for determining institutional eligibility for certain federal funds.

**Accreditation:** A voluntary process involving an association of schools and/or colleges to encourage high standards of education. Accreditation indicates that the Commission judges that the institution, in a manner consistent with Commission standards, offers its students on a satisfactory level the educational opportunities implied in its objectives and is likely to continue to do so.

**Accreditation Liaison Officer:** The individual in an institution assigned to carry on continuing relations with the Accrediting Commission. See Policy on Accreditation Liaison Officer, page 64.

**Admission Policy:** The rationale and criteria which determine the applicants who will be admitted to an institution.

**AICCU:** Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities.

**AICPA:** American Institute of Certified Public Accountants; publishes the guide, *Audits of Colleges and Universities*.

**Appeal:** An appeal from certain Commission decisions to a panel in accordance with due process described in the Constitution of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. (See also Review, below.)

**ATS:** Association of Theological Schools.

**Baccalaureate:** See "Degrees, B.A. and B.S." below and also Standard 2.

**Calendar:** The institution's scheduling arrangement for classes, i.e., quarter, semester, summer, intercession, etc.

**Candidate or Candidate for Accreditation; Candidacy:** A status of preliminary affiliation with the Commission, awarded for three years, following a specified procedure for Institutional Review and on-site visitation. Candidacy is subject to one period of renewal. Candidacy is not accreditation and does not assure eventual accreditation. It is an indication that an institution is progressing toward accreditation.

**Catalog:** The official bulletin or college publication stating admission and graduation requirements, institutional mission, majors, minors, current course offerings, costs, faculty, and all other significant information necessary for an accurate understanding of the institution.

**Central Office:** Refers, as appropriate to the context, to statewide offices of the university systems, such as the University of California, University of Hawaii, and California State University, or the central administration of an independent institution with multiple campuses.

**CHEA:** The Council for Higher Education Accreditation, a non-profit organization of colleges and universities serving as the national advocate for voluntary self-regulation through accreditation.

**College:** Generic term to denote any of the postsecondary educational institutions including universities eligible for accreditation or accredited by the Commission. In this *Handbook*, the term does not refer to a specialized unit of university campus; it is used as a synonym for “institution.”

**Commission:** Refers to the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges.

**Complaint:** In WASC terms, a signed, written complaint to the Commission about an institution, or against WASC. See policy on Complaints Against Accredited and Candidate Institutions, page 92.

**Course:** A single subject described in college catalog or bulletin.

**Credentials:** (1) A certificate stating that the student has been graduated from a certain curriculum or has passed certain subjects; (2) a statement signed by proper authority certifying that a person is authorized to perform certain functions or has been designated as an official representative; (3) a detailed record of an application for a position, usually including transcripts of academic records and testimonials relative to previous experience, performance, and character; (4) the confidential file of an applicant sent to prospective employers; (5) teaching credentials.

**Credit, Unit of:** A quantification of student academic learning. One semester unit represents how much time a typical student is expected to devote to learning in one week of full time undergraduate study (at least 40-45 hours including class time and preparation). Thus a six-week summer session might, if fulltime, equate to six units. An

alternative norm is one unit for three hours of student work per week (e.g., one hour of lecture and two of study or three of laboratory) for ten weeks per quarter or 15 weeks per semester. A full-time undergraduate student program should normally be 14 to 16 units, and, if fulltime, no less than 12 units. More time is expected to be devoted to study at the graduate level, typically more than three hours of study for every hour in class. A full-time graduate program is normally nine units or less. Considerable excess allowed on grounds of student ability should be subject to special analysis and approval.

### **Degrees:**

**B.A., B.S.:** An undergraduate degree normally representing about four years (120 semester or 180 quarter units) of college study, or its equivalent in depth and quality of learning experience. The B.S. usually implies more applied orientation and the B.A. more liberal education orientation, although these distinctions are not always clear.

**M.A., M.S.:** A first graduate degree, representing at least one year of post-baccalaureate study (30 semester or 45 quarter units), or its equivalent in depth and quality. The distinctions between M.A. and M.S. are similar to those between B.A. and B.S. Some M.A. and M.S. degrees are merely continuations at a higher level of undergraduate work without basic change in character. Others emphasize some research that may lead to doctoral work.

**M.B.A., M.P.A., M.S.W., etc.:** Professional degrees requiring up to two years of full-time study. Extensive undergraduate preparation in the field may reduce the length of study to one year.

**Ph.D.:** The standard research-oriented degree which indicates that the recipient has done, and is prepared to do, original research in a major discipline. The Ph.D. usually requires three years or more of postgraduate work including an original research thesis or project.

**Ed. D., Psy. D., M.D., J.D., etc:** Degrees with emphasis on professional knowledge. These degrees normally require three or more years of prescribed postgraduate work.

**Executive Director:** The chief full-time employee of the Commission.

**Experiential Learning:** See on policy on Credit for Prior Experiential Learning, page 69.

**Faculty:** As used here, refers to instructional faculty, not librarians, administrators, counselors, etc., who may have faculty rank. Full-time faculty: Those employed by the institution whose primary employment obligation is to teaching and research at the institution. Part-time or adjunct faculty: Faculty whose major responsibility is not related to the institution in question. These faculty are customarily assigned one or two classes with class-related responsibilities only.

**Fiscal Control; Fiscal Responsibility:** Final authority at the institutional level and responsibility for all financial transactions including billing, collection of revenues, payment of salaries and other obligations, loans, debt service, bonding, and insurance. An institution is expected to have full and direct control of all financial or monetary affairs related to courses, credits, and programs using its name.

**Graduate Standing:** Advancement from undergraduate to graduate status. For admission to graduate standing, a baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution and specified grade average are generally required. Examinations and/or personal recommendations may also be required. Frequently the graduate dean or the dean of the student's major department and/or committee must approve the applicant. Admission to a graduate school gives the privilege of taking course work; it does not imply that the student will later be admitted to candidacy for a degree.

**Higher Education:** Postsecondary education emphasizing degrees or credentials rather than solely trade or vocational preparation.

**Independent College:** College or university with self-perpetuation, or otherwise not publicly chosen, board of directors. The institution receives little, if any, direct tax support.

**Institutional Presentation:** Materials prepared for each stage of the Institutional Review Process, including the Institutional Proposal, the Preparatory Review, and the Educational Effectiveness Review.

**NACUBO:** National Association of Collegiate and University Business Offices which publishes "College and University Business Administration."

**NWASC:** Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges.

**Outcomes:** Used to describe the anticipated or achieved results of programs or the accomplishment of institutional objectives, as demonstrated by such indicators as student attitudes, knowledge and/or performance.

**Planning:** The development of a design or scheme of arrangement with a definite purpose. Institutional planning may be of the education program, the physical plant, or budgets and finances, and is intended to accomplish the purposes of the institution.

**Portfolio Based Credit:** Information prepared by the student to be used as evidence in the evaluation process to determine any credit which may be awarded for prior experiential learning.

**President:** A generic term signifying the chief executive officer of an institution. Chancellor, director, etc., may be substituted.

**Private College:** See Independent College.

**Professional Program:** An educational program designed to prepare persons for a specific profession. It may apply to undergraduate programs preparing for direct entry into employment (e.g., nursing, accounting). Some programs are offered at both undergraduate and graduate levels (e.g., engineering, business management). Most are primarily or solely graduate in nature (e.g., medicine, law, dentistry). All professional programs presuppose a background preparation in liberal or general education.

**Program:** A systematic, usually sequential, grouping of courses, forming a considerable part, or all, of the requirements for a degree or credential; may refer to the total educational offering of an institution.

**Public College:** College or university with a governing board elected or appointed by elected officials and with some of its financial support from tax funds.

**Public Service:** A function accepted by nearly all publicly supported institutions and many independent colleges and universities; service of a practical nature to the external (non-academic) community—local, regional, national, or international. Public service often includes public lectures and performances, various forms of applied research, non-credit courses, and agricultural or other similar forms of extension programs. It should not include activities unrelated to or in conflict with the institution's purposes and capabilities. It may include making the physical plant available to the outside community.

**Quarter:** A calendar of approximately 11 weeks, with ten full weeks of academic class work or its equivalent.

**Research:** May refer to collection of institutional data useful for self-analysis or planning (institutional research); to that carried on by teacher-scholars in order to remain current in their fields or expertise; or to that expanding a field knowledge or its application ("pure" or "applied" research).

**Review:** Upon request of an institution, reexamination by the Commission of a sanction taken by it. See policy on Commission Review Process, page 56.

**SAS:** Statement of Affiliation Status. A common form used by several regional accrediting agencies to simplify public information on each institution's affiliated status with the Commission.

**Semester:** A calendar of 17 weeks with at least 15 full weeks of academic class work or its equivalent in effort.

**Team:** An accrediting evaluation committee; a group of men and women assigned to review the Institutional Review or other report and conduct an on-site evaluation visit to the institution.

**University:** An institution with numerous graduate degree programs and adequate resources to support them, as defined by the Standards.

**WASC:** Western Association of Schools and Colleges.