



Policies and Procedures

for independent schools in the US

Revised May 2022

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Policies and Procedures for Independent Schools in the US

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges has as its stated purposes: "to advance the cause of education in the colleges and schools of New England and of other geographical areas designated from time to time by the Board of Trustees to act as a regional accrediting organization dedicated to the establishment of cooperative relations among the colleges and schools of New England, and of other geographical areas designated from time to time by the Board of Trustees, to the development, maintenance, and improvement of sound educational standards, and to promote the interests common to both colleges and schools; ... " (Bylaws of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, as amended April 26, 2013.)

The NEASC Commission on Independent Schools is one of the three constituent commissions functioning within the framework of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. The Commission is responsible for:

- Developing standards and procedures for evaluation of institutions for institutional accreditation or Candidate for Accreditation; and
- Reporting to the Board of Trustees actions taken regarding candidacy or accreditation status, adverse decisions, or reports received relative to the continued monitoring of member and affiliate institutions. (Bylaws, Article IV, Section 7)

Historical note: While the New England Association of Schools and Colleges was founded in 1885, and reference is made to a Standing Committee on Independent (Private) Secondary Schools within NEASC as early as 1928, it was not until 1952 that NEASC became an accrediting body, and 1966 when the first full-time Director of Evaluation was appointed for the NEASC Commission on Independent Schools.

NEASC Commission on Independent Schools

The NEASC Commission on Independent Schools normally meets three times a year. The duties of the Commission are in Article IV, Section 7 of the Bylaws. Since the main work of the NEASC is evaluation and accreditation, the major items on any agenda are action on school reports of one sort or another. The Director of the Commission, in consultation with the Chair of the Commission, prepares the agenda.

At the present time there are twenty-five members of the Commission representing each of the six New England states and both elementary and secondary schools. Each member serves for a three-year term and may be reelected one time. Eligibility for nomination and procedures for election are in the Bylaws, Article IV, Sections 2-5, and in the Policy and Procedure for Nomination of Commission Members.

The members of the Commission elect their own Chair in a manner prescribed in Article IV, Section 6 of the Bylaws.

Commission Staff

The Commission is served by a full-time Director, one Deputy Director, two Associate Directors, an Executive Assistant to the Director, two full-time administrative assistants, and two part-time administrative assistants. In addition, the Commission makes use of the NEASC Central Office staff and resources as needed. This includes access to accounting and legal services.

The Commission Director acts as an agent of the NEASC Commission on Independent Schools in carrying out the responsibilities of the Commission. The Commission staff responds to communications and inquiries regarding the evaluation process from member and affiliate institutions, from institutions seeking affiliation and/or membership, and from individuals or agencies seeking information about NEASC and the evaluation process. The staff is also responsible for the maintenance of accurate records of meetings of the NEASC Commission on Independent Schools, up-to-date files on member and affiliate schools, processing reports, and in general overseeing the evaluation and accreditation process on behalf of the Commission on Independent Schools and NEASC.

Categories of Membership and Affiliation

An institution may be a member of NEASC and accredited thereby or affiliated as a Candidate for Accreditation. The Roster of the NEASC, published annually online, reflects a wide range of types and styles of schools. In terms of program, student body served, grades included, denominational affiliation, residential or otherwise, the universe is broad. The Commission will evaluate for accreditation by NEASC schools that include any combination of grades PK-12 (PG); e.g., PK-8; 7-12; 9-12, etc. The basic criterion defining a school is that programs are provided leading to a diploma or appropriate certificate of completion of the requirements of the program or programs. It is expected that the majority of students spend at least one year enrolled in such a program or a full semester in a semester-length program. The Commission does not accredit free-standing early childhood or day care programs.

Candidate For Accreditation

Institutions seeking affiliation in this category must file with the Commission office complete sets of information as requested on the appropriate forms. A prospective candidate must have been in operation for at least one year. A preliminary visit by a staff member is scheduled and the school's request for approval to apply for candidacy is presented at the next regularly scheduled Commission meeting. A committee, ordinarily three people, is appointed by the staff on behalf of the NEASC Commission on Independent Schools and supplied with copies of the application as filed by the school. The committee conducts an on-site visit, ordinarily a day in duration, to verify the information in the application. Expenses of this committee are borne by the school being evaluated. This committee then prepares a written report for the NEASC Commission on Independent Schools and provides a recommendation to the Commission as to action on the application. The Commission makes the final decision on the action and reports affirmative

decisions to the Board of Trustees. An evaluation fee equal to the annual fee for a member school is assessed based on the school's total operating expenses.

Schools that have been accredited by other accrediting bodies recognized by the Commission may be granted candidacy status based on a staff visit, following the filing of the candidacy application. At the time of application from a school that is a member of a diocesan school system, the Commission requests a written statement from the diocesan superintendent of schools approving the school's application for accreditation by NEASC or explaining why approval is not granted. The Commission will take the response of the diocese into account in its deliberations, but not be bound by it.

Institutions granted Candidate for Accreditation on status file Annual Reports. A school may be affiliated as a Candidate for Accreditation for a maximum of five years, by which time it must have either applied for evaluation for institutional membership or be terminated as a Candidate for Accreditation. Extension of time may be granted by the NEASC Commission on Independent Schools, on an annual basis if, in its opinion, circumstances warrant such an extension.

The annual fee for an institution so affiliated is equal to the annual dues for a member school and is based on the school's total operating expenses.

Member School

A school may be considered for accreditation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges only after it has been in operation for a sufficient period of time (a minimum of one year) to establish its ability to carry out its purposes and objectives and program and provide the necessary personnel and material support. Evidence of this stability may be produced by having successfully passed through affiliation with NEASC in the category of Candidate for Accreditation or by submission of such information as will, in the opinion of the NEASC Commission on Independent Schools, qualify it for consideration for membership and accreditation.

Institutions seeking accreditation must complete an institutional self-study leading to the preparation of a self-study report according to the Manual for School Evaluation. Copies of the manual and other related documents are available from the Commission.

Who Does What in the Accreditation Process?

Schools Seeking Candidacy for Accreditation

- School contacts Commission Office
- Commission staff sends:
 - Information about the Association
 - Standards for Accreditation
 - Manual for School Improvement
 - The Self-Study Overview
 - Statement regarding Candidate for Accreditation Status
 - Policy and Procedure to Apply for Candidate for Accreditation
 - Application for Candidate for Accreditation
 - Dues and Fees Memo
- Commission staff meets, at no expense to the school, with school officials to discuss the evaluation process.
- The request for approval to apply for candidacy is presented to the Commission at its next meeting
- School is notified by the Director that it may proceed with the application
- School prepares five sets of the Application for Candidate for Accreditation
- School sends two copies of the Application for Candidate for Accreditation to the Commission office
- School contacts the Commission office to set a date for the candidacy visit
- School sends single copies of the application to the members of the Visiting Team at least one month before date of evaluation

Automatic Candidacy

Schools that are currently accredited by certain associations recognized by the Commission (CAIS, ACSI, AWSNA, and several of the Catholic dioceses) may be granted automatic candidacy status. In these situations, a school will submit the Application for Candidate for Accreditation and host a staff visit. The staff member will write a brief report for the Commission, describing the school and making recommendations concerning particular areas of focus for the self-study.

Evaluation for Accreditation

- Commission office notifies an accredited member school 18-24 months in advance of the fact that the decennial evaluation for continued accreditation is due and
 - Sends a copy of the Manual for School Evaluation and an order form
 - Sends workshop registration forms

- Offers to visit, at no expense to the school, and meet with school staff to discuss evaluation process
- School obtains evaluation materials from NEASC office
- School prepares Self-Study Report in accordance with instructions in Manual for School Evaluation
- School establishes dates for evaluation visit in consultation with the Commission staff
- Commission staff works with Head of School to name the Visiting Team Chair. The school may reject up to three nominees suggested by staff.
- Commission staff appoint the Visiting Team and notify school
- The Head of School establishes contact with the Chair of the Visiting Team as soon as notified of the appointment to begin working out details of the evaluation visit
- School arranges for lodging for members of the Visiting Team
- School completes the Self-Study Report in the portal at least four weeks prior to date of evaluation
- Following evaluation and receipt of the Visiting Team Report, the school responds to the request from the Commission staff with written comments as to accuracy of the report, nature of the recommendations, and observations on the work of the Visiting Team

If a school seeking initial accreditation does not meet one or more standards with a rating of SU1 or SU2, action on its application will be tabled until it documents how the standard is being met and hosts a staff visit.

If a school seeking continued accreditation does not meet one or more standards with a rating of SU1 or SU2, continuing accreditation is granted, and the school has one year to submit a Special Progress Report demonstrating how the standard is met. A visit by a staff member will be scheduled following receipt of the report, and a written report of the visit will be presented to the Commission.

Each member institution must file Interim Evaluation Reports two years and five years following the evaluation in a form as prescribed by the NEASC Commission on Independent Schools. Special Progress Reports may be requested by the Commission at any time.

The Five-Year Interim Evaluation Report submitted by member institutions in the state of Vermont will satisfy that state's reporting requirement, and copies of the correspondence to the school following review of the report by the Commission will be forwarded to the Vermont State Department of Education.

The Visiting Team

Members of Visiting Teams to institutions undergoing evaluation for initial institutional or continued accreditation or candidate for accreditation are appointed by the Commission staff. Persons are nominated to serve on Visiting Teams by Heads of member or affiliate schools or are chosen from other sources that may provide useful candidates to be of assistance in the evaluation process.

Rosters of these potential Visiting Team members are kept in a database at the NEASC office. Their names, school positions, and experience on Visiting Teams are on record. These records are updated at least annually. General instructions to the Visiting Team are contained in *The Handbook for Visiting Team Members*. Detailed instructions for the Chair of the Visiting Team are contained in *The Handbook for Visiting Team Chairs*.

The Visiting Team will conduct its evaluation in accordance with procedures outlined in *The Handbook for Visiting Team Chairs* and *The Handbook for Visiting Team Members*. A copy of the Visiting Team Report prepared by the Chair on behalf of the Visiting Team will be sent to the Commission Director within a month following the evaluation. The report will be accompanied by a letter from the Chair of the Visiting Team including the recommendation to the Commission regarding membership and accreditation, the result of the specific votes by members of the committee on the Standards for Accreditation, and performance rating sheets for Visiting Team members.

Visiting Team members will hand in expense vouchers to the Chair prior to the conclusion of the visit. The Chair will submit all vouchers, along with his/her expense voucher for expenses incurred in conducting the evaluation as well as the cost of preparing the Visiting Team Report, to the school for payment at the conclusion of the visit.

The members of the Visiting Team, once the report is completed and filed with the Director of the Commission, have completed their responsibilities to NEASC and the school. Members of the committee will receive a copy of the notification letter to the school from the Commission.

Commission Action

Following is the Commission procedure for handling the reports on a school undergoing evaluation for initial institutional or continued membership and accreditation:

Each Commission member is sent:

- Agenda for meeting including specific committee assignments
- Supporting material for agenda including:
 - documentation or information regarding agenda items
 - Visiting Team reports for all schools on the agenda for action regarding initial or continuing membership and accreditation or Candidate for Accreditation are

posted on a secure page on, the NEASC website. Members login with a password provided by the Commission office.

An individual commission member assigned to a given school is sent the above material plus a copy of the school's self-study report, school's reaction letter to the Visiting Team report, and confidential material as described in the *Manual*. The individual commission member is expected to become an "expert" on that school, make a motion regarding a recommendation as to accreditation or affiliation, and lead discussion and respond to questions.

Following Commission meetings

In cases of schools applying for initial institutional membership and accreditation or Candidate for Accreditation:

- A letter from the Director of the Commission summarizing recommendations made by Visiting Team and Commission, reviewing the recommendation to be made to the Board of Trustees, and outlining school's responsibilities to the Commission in the way of reports, etc., is sent to the head of school. This letter states that the action will be reported to the NEASC Board of Trustees. Copies of this letter are sent to the chair of the governing body, the diocesan superintendent, or joint accrediting association (where applicable), and the chair and members of the Visiting Team.
- The President of NEASC writes to the head of school regarding the action of NEASC.

In cases of schools undergoing evaluation for continued accreditation:

- A letter summarizing key recommendations made by the Visiting Team and Commission and outlining the school's responsibilities to the Commission in the way of reports, etc. is sent by the Director of the Commission to the head of the school. Copies of this letter are sent to the chair of the governing body, the diocesan superintendent, or joint accrediting association (where applicable), and the chair and members of the Visiting Team.

Changes of Status

Mergers

In the event of a merger where one or more of the merged schools is accredited by NEASC, the accreditation of the school will be continued with a substantive change report due upon completion of one full year of the new configuration. The ongoing status of the school will then be determined by the Commission in accordance with the Substantive Change Policy.

View the *Principles, Policy, and Practical Steps for a Substantive Change Report* and the *Policy and Procedure for Merged School Report* on the NEASC website at <https://www.neasc.org/policies>.

Corporate or Other Substantive Change

Schools that undergo a corporate or other substantive change are required to notify the NEASC Commission on Independent Schools in writing of this change or changes and may be required to submit further documentation and/or be visited by representatives of the Commission for the purpose of making a recommendation to the Commission regarding continued accreditation. Substantive changes are those that affect significantly the nature of the institution, e.g., its purposes and objectives, its educational programs, the allocation of its resources, and its financial base.

Termination or Suspension of Operation

It is the responsibility of school officials to notify NEASC in the event of a termination or suspension of the operation of the school and to provide information as to where the permanent records of current and former students are to be located as well as the responsible person/agency to contact to obtain pertinent records.

Evaluation Expenses

Schools undergoing evaluation for initial accreditation, continued accreditation, and Candidate for Accreditation are responsible for the following expenses related to the evaluation:

- Expenses of the Visiting Team for travel, lodging, and meals related to the evaluation

Special Visits: In the event of a special visit by a representative or representatives of the Commission to review an Interim Evaluation Report or Progress Report or any other matter relating to continuing accreditation or affiliation, i.e., a Focused Visit, the school is liable for expenses for the travel, lodging, and meals of the representative(s). Expenses of Commission staff are not charged to the school.

State Departments of Education

In Connecticut, as part of the approval process, the State Department of Education may appoint a member to the Visiting Team. If the department or agency exercises that option, their designee will remain with the Visiting Team during the entire visit, participate as the chairperson may direct in the preparation and review of the Visiting Team report, and serve as a voting member of the committee. His or her expenses will be paid by the institution being evaluated on the same basis as the other members of the committee.

In the event, of evaluation of special education programs where separate procedures are required for approval by state departments of education or agencies, the Director of the Commission will exercise his/her judgment as to whether it can be combined with the evaluation and accreditation on the basis shown above or will require a separate evaluation by that agency for their purposes.

A copy of the Visiting Team report, votes on standards, and the letter of notification from the Commission will be sent to the responsible person in the state department of education in Connecticut and Vermont.

Reports

Annual Reports

Each year NEASC requests each member and affiliate to file an Annual Report. This report is routine in nature and asks for basic information such as enrollment totals and tuition figures for day, boarding and international students, prior year's operating income and operating expense figures, names and addresses of certain officials, and notification of any "substantive change." This report provides information for the school master file, information for calculating annual dues, and information that might suggest a change in the circumstances under which a school was accredited.

Interim Evaluation Reports

Each member institution is required to complete Interim Evaluation Reports to be filed two and five years following their most recent evaluation for institutional or continued accreditation. The Five-Year Interim Evaluation Report filed by Vermont schools will fulfill that state's reporting requirements.

Progress Reports

Schools may be required, at the discretion of the Commission, to file Progress Reports responding to specific concerns expressed and identified by the Commission.

School File

Each school file includes routine correspondence since the most recent evaluation, copy of the most recent self-study (culled at the time of the Five-Year Interim Evaluation Report), the Visiting Team report, and Two and Five-Year Interim Evaluation Reports where applicable. Also included are previous Visiting Team reports and notification letters from the Director of the Commission and President of NEASC where applicable. Files are culled following each periodic evaluation. Irrelevant correspondence is destroyed.

Ownership of Evaluation Materials

Prior to NEASC action on the application for institutional membership or Candidate for Accreditation and Commission action on schools seeking continued accreditation, the documents relating to the evaluation, reports prepared by the school for the Visiting Team and for the Commission and the Visiting Team reports are privileged documents, for use by the Commission/NEASC and school only.

Following action by NEASC or the Commission, the documents are the property of the school and may be used by them as they see fit, except NEASC reserves the right to take action against a school misusing or misrepresenting material in the reports.

Public Disclosure

Please refer to the Policy on Public Disclosure of Information about Affiliated Institutions.

Due Process

The Commission provides reasonable due process to schools undergoing the evaluation process.

Adverse Recommendations

In addition, the due process procedures in use by NEASC are spelled out in a document entitled “Policy and Procedure for the Appeal of Adverse Action by Commission of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges”. The full document can be found on the NEASC website at www.neasc.org/policies.

Complaint Procedure

From time to time, NEASC receives a complaint about a member or affiliate school. Usually these are concerned with allegations of unfair disciplinary procedures in regard to a student dismissed or suspended, or a dispute over the financial obligations. The Commission has adopted a complaint policy which can be found on the NEASC website at www.neasc.org/policies.

The Commission on Independent Schools

Policy and Procedure for Nomination of Commission Members

From Minutes, Commission on Independent Schools, October 16, 1973.

On MOTION made and seconded, it was

VOTED: To adopt the nomination procedure as amended. The text of the policy as adopted follows:

A letter is to be sent to the head of each member or affiliate school, diocesan school superintendent(s), state or regional association of independent schools, and other interested parties.

This letter will spell out some of the expectations of the Commission, solicit their suggestions, and ascertain their personal interest and availability.

1. *In all letters there will be a statement of the fact that we are soliciting names for a member-at-large. (A sample letter will be prepared for review by the Commission.)*
2. *In states where Commission vacancies will exist, a special paragraph will be inserted in the letter requesting nominations to fill the vacancy in that state.*
3. *An Ad Hoc nominating committee appointed by the Chair of the Commission would meet prior to the fall meeting of the Commission, review the suggestions and any other names they might have to consider and prepare a slate of suggested candidates. These people would be approached to ascertain their interest and availability if nominated. The suggestions would be presented to the Commission at its fall meeting. The Nominating Committee will report at the meeting of institutional delegates at the Annual Meeting of the Association. A vote for nominees will follow.*

Policy Statement on Conflict of Interest

In carrying out its accreditation responsibilities, the NEASC Commission on Independent Schools of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges seeks to ensure that its decisions are based solely on the application of professional judgment to the information resulting from its processes. Therefore, it seeks to avoid both the reality and the appearance of conflict of interest. For purposes of this policy statement, conflict of interest is defined as:

A circumstance in which an individual's capacity to make an impartial or unbiased accreditation decision may be affected because of a prior, current, or anticipated institutional affiliation(s), other significant relationship(s), or association(s) with the institution under review.

The following examples are meant to be illustrative:

Affiliation:

- employee, board member, appointee, consultant, or graduate

Other Significant Relationships:

- affiliation with another institution in the same educational system
 - having a close relative affiliated with the institution under review
 - sought or seeking a position at the institution under review
- knowledge or personal interest concerning the institution under review which might prejudice decision making.

Members of the NEASC Commission on Independent Schools are committed to full disclosure and restraint in any institutional consideration involving a conflict of interest. Members of the Commission absent themselves from deliberations or votes on decisions regarding institutions with which they are affiliated. They do not participate in discussions or vote on decisions on institutions where it would reasonably appear that they have a conflict of interest. Commission members who are uncertain regarding the possible appearance or reality of conflict of interest shall seek the advice of the Director of the Commission. At the request of the Chair, the Commission can determine the question by vote. In general, however, if there is any doubt on the part of a Commission member, it should be resolved by the member refraining from any discussion or action to the institution under review. All school-related materials made available to Commission members, e.g., self-studies, Visiting Team reports, etc., must be turned in to the Commission staff at the conclusion of every meeting. Visiting Team Reports available to Commission members at a secure page of the NEASC website are removed and passwords disabled immediately after each meeting. Members are instructed to destroy all electronic notes and information regarding schools reviewed at each meeting.

Revised and Approved by the NEASC Commission on Independent Schools, June 2010

Policy and Procedure for Disclosure of Information about Affiliated Institutions

Upon inquiry, the NEASC Commission on Independent Schools through its Director will release the following information about affiliated institutions:

- Descriptive information as contained in the Commission database:
- Date of founding
- Contact information (address, phone, fax, email, website, etc.)
- Grade levels included
- Type of school, e.g., boarding or day, coeducational or single-sex, denominational, etc.
- Enrollment (as of the preceding October)
- Name of Chief Administrative Officer
- Name and address of the Chair of the Governing Body

Information concerning the school's accreditation status:

- Current status - Member or Candidate (Probation is a public status, Warning is not)
- Dates of candidacy or initial membership and accreditation by NEASC; most recent full visit and confirmation of accreditation; next regularly scheduled report
- In the event of an adverse recommendation (probation, denial of membership, dropping from membership) where final action has been taken and no appeal is pending, the reasons for the adverse status and the effective date are released. For schools placed on Probation, the Commission's plans to monitor the school are stated.

The self-study, Visiting Team Report, and notification letters regarding Commission/NEASC action are the property of the school. Neither NEASC nor the Commission releases copies of any material relating to an individual school's evaluation without the express permission of the school.

However, the self-study is an exercise in analysis and planning that should be inclusive of professional staff and should engage others as the school deems appropriate. The self-study presupposes work done in advance that provides background information, including surveys of parents, students, and staff. The Visiting Team Report and the letter from the Commission regarding its review respond to the self-study and add recommendations that are to be integrated with the conclusions of the self-study. The Commission encourages that, in the spirit of inquiry and institutional improvement, the school will provide access to these documents relating to the evaluation process to the professional staff and to other responsible parties in the school community, as appropriate.

Approved by the NEASC Commission on Independent Schools, November 2008

Policy and Procedure for Use of Visiting Team Reports and Notification Letters

Following an evaluation for membership or accreditation, initial or continued, the school is provided the following documents in sequence:

1. The Visiting Team Report to which the school is asked to respond as to its factual accuracy, the nature of the recommendations, and comments relative to the work of the Visiting Team and the votes on *Standards for Accreditation*;
2. Following Commission action, a letter from the Director of the Commission, outlining the action taken, the continuing responsibilities of the school to NEASC, and the recommendations to be dealt with in future reports; and,
3. A brief letter from the President of NEASC noting the action taken regarding initial membership and accreditation. These last two letters may be expected some weeks following receipt of the Visiting Team Report.

The Visiting Committee Report and notification letters regarding Commission/NEASC action are the property of the school. Either the report or the notification letter may be used in whole or part by the school for external purposes. However, if excerpts are to be released to the public, they must present a balanced view of recommendations as well as commendations.

The NEASC policy as approved by the Board of Trustees, May 12, 1978, and as amended, December 10, 1981, states:

If something is publicly released by an institution that misrepresents or distorts the Commission recommendation, the appropriate Director of the Commission should contact the chief administrative officer of the institution and request that corrective action be taken. If the misrepresentation or distortion is not promptly corrected, the Director of the Commission should so notify the Executive Director who is the chief executive officer of the Association and who speaks on behalf of the Association.

Neither NEASC nor the Commission releases copies of any of the material relating to an individual school's evaluation without the express permission of the school. In certain cases, such as the institution seeking approval by the appropriate state department of education, or membership in or recognition by another agency; there will be sent, at the request of the Head of School, a copy of the Visiting Team Report and the letter of notification regarding membership and accreditation from the Director of the Commission. In the event of a request being made for a research study, the material may be made available for use at the NEASC office only with the specific approval of the Head of School.

Within the framework of the above policy, the Commission encourages, in the spirit of inquiry and institutional improvement, access to the documents relating to the evaluation process to interested parties in the school community.

Accreditation Status

Policy and Procedure for Standards for Accreditation

Accreditation has as its purpose quality assurance and school improvement. As a tool to assure quality, the NEASC Commission on Independent Schools maintains Standards for Accreditation against which a school is measured. These standards are reviewed and updated on a regular basis through a participatory process with accredited schools and adopted by the Commission.

The voluntary accreditation process provides the opportunity for a school, through its self-study, to demonstrate that it meets the accreditation standards of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges and also demonstrate that it carries out its mission in an appropriate fashion.

The NEASC Commission on Independent Schools in its decisions regarding accreditation has the expectation that each accredited school will meet all Standards for Accreditation. If a school seeking continued accreditation does not meet all standards at the time of the accreditation visit, it is expected that all standards will be met within one year. If a school seeking initial accreditation does not meet all standards at the time of the evaluation visit, action by the Commission will be tabled and the school will be asked to report on the status of compliance with all standards within one year.

A school that has an "unmet" standard with a rating of SU1 or SU2 should notify the Commission office within one year when it believes it has taken necessary action to warrant a "met" rating. At that time:

1. A staff visit to the school will be made to assess whether the standard(s) is met with a SM1 or SM2. If the staff member finds that the school is clearly in compliance, the staff member will recommend to the Commission that the standard is met and propose any further recommendations related to the standard to which the school should be asked to respond and a date for the response. The Commission may accept the recommendation of the staff member or may direct a focused visit by a visiting team of two or three, possibly including a Commission member.
2. If the staff member finds that the school is still not in compliance, the school will be notified of the outstanding issues and asked to submit a further report when ready. The Commission will be informed. If the school disagrees with the finding of the staff member it may request that a visiting team of two or three conduct a focused visit to assess compliance with the standard(s).

Approved by the NEASC Commission on Independent Schools, November 2011

Policy and Procedure to Apply for Candidate for Accreditation

Under normal circumstances a school seeking affiliation with NEASC would first go through the Candidate for Accreditation process. The category of Candidate for Accreditation is not to be confused with membership in and accreditation by NEASC. It is a temporary status. An institution so recognized is entitled to make public this fact in its catalog and other publications. This candidacy is subject to annual review and may not be continued beyond five years.

The conditions for recognition as a Candidate for Accreditation are as follows:

1. For a school to be recognized as a Candidate for Accreditation, it must meet the following criteria:
 - a. It must be a nonpublic school that is separately incorporated under the relevant laws of the state in which it is located or a member of a school system.
 - b. At least one year of operation of the school program must have been completed.
 - c. The institution must be developing in accordance with the general *Standards for Accreditation* for independent schools in NEASC.
 - d. The school must provide academic programs leading to a diploma or appropriate certificate issued by the school being considered.
 - e. It is expected that the majority of students spend at least one year enrolled in such a program or for a full semester in a semester-length program.
 - f. In the case of a proprietary school, that the school has a governing body which meets the criteria set forth in the Commission Policy on Governing Bodies/or Proprietary Schools.
2. Such an institution would be required to:
 - a. Host a preliminary visit by a staff member and receive approval by the Commission to proceed with the application.
 - b. Following that approval, submit an Application for Candidate for Accreditation. An evaluation fee equal to the annual fee for a member school with that enrollment is assessed following receipt of the application.
 - c. Host a one-day visit from representatives of the Commission to determine the readiness of the school to be accepted into Candidate status and to move toward full accreditation and membership in NEASC. The Committee

will prepare a written report for the Commission which will include a recommendation as to acceptance of the school into Candidate status.

- d. Pay all costs of the Visiting Team — travel, meals, and lodging.
 - e. Pay an annual fee set by the Board of Trustees of NEASC while the institution remains in this category. *This fee is equal to the dues for a member school with that enrollment.*
- 3. The NEASC Commission on Independent Schools grants Candidate status to those institutions which appear to tire Commission to merit it. When this status is conferred, the school may attend, without vote, the Annual Meeting and other meetings of NEASC. The institution will submit annual reports to the NEASC Commission on Independent Schools and may be visited by representatives of the Commission. Failure to submit these reports as requested or inadequate progress in the development of the school toward meeting the *Standards for Accreditation* in NEASC may be cause for dropping a school from this category of affiliation.
 - 4. A school may remain affiliated with the NEASC as a Candidate for Accreditation for a maximum of five years, in the course of or at the end of which period an institution must apply for membership and undergo evaluation in accordance with established procedures.
 - 5. The Visiting Team must be able to assess the total program of the school. With a school that is adding grades, a visit may proceed, at the discretion of the Commission, if complete plans are in place.

Approved by the NEASC Commission on Independent Schools, June 2009

Policy Regarding Financial Reporting Requirements

The Commission is sensitive to its responsibility to monitor the financial health of member schools, but also to limit the cost to schools of reporting requirements. With these dual objectives in mind, the Commission has established a reporting calendar that reduces the requirement for externally validated financial reports to five-year intervals, at the times of the decennial visit and the five-year interim evaluation report. The Commission currently accepts:

1. A full-opinion audit
2. An independent auditor's review with a management letter
3. A Diocesan Report on School Finances
4. A Report on School Finances from a Religious Order

For reports other than the decennial visit and the five-year interim evaluation report, the Commission accepts internally generated balance sheets, budgets, and operating statements.

Approved by the NEASC Commission on Independent Schools, 2002

Policy and Procedure for Warning Status

The Commission's policy for placing a school on Warning Status is as follows:

When the Commission finds that an institution is in direct and immediate danger of losing its accreditation because of conditions that threaten its ability to comply with the requirements of affiliation and/or *Standards for Accreditation* and/or other policies, but when the Commission feels that it is not appropriate to use the Probation status, the Commission may place the school on Warning. *(It is noted that Probation status is a matter of public record and must be made public by the school. Warning has no such requirement.)*

The school that is placed on Warning will be required to file frequent reports and undergo, at a minimum, an annual visit from representatives of the Commission. If the institution does not show progress in correcting the conditions, the Commission will review its decision on Warning and will report to the Board of Trustees of the Association that the school has been placed on Probation, unless there are mitigating circumstances which would indicate a more appropriate course of action.

Policy and Procedure for Probation Status

Probation is a public status signifying that the NEASC Commission on Independent Schools has found that conditions exist at the school which if left uncorrected pose a direct and immediate threat to the school's ability to retain its accreditation.

A school holding probationary status is subject to close scrutiny by the Commission. The school is expected to take appropriate corrective action within a specified time period. Failure to resolve the cause for probation will lead to an action asking the school to show cause why its accreditation should not be removed.

Probation is a public status indicated in any NEASC publication or communication about the affected school. NEASC will also provide in its relevant publications notice of the availability of a statement regarding the school's probationary status as well as a plan to monitor the school. This statement will be developed by the Commission, and the Commission reserves the right to make final determination as to its nature and content.

A school on Probation is obliged to disclose its status as well as the availability of additional information on its probationary status to prospective students, those currently enrolled, and the public in its catalog and recruitment materials. The following statement will be used:

(School Name) is accredited on Probation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, effective **(date)**, because it has not fully met the accreditation standard(s) on _____. A statement providing further information about the probationary status will be made available upon request by:

Commission on Independent Schools

New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc.

1115 Westford Street, Third Floor

Lowell, MA, 01851 USA

Revised and Approved by the NEASC Commission on Independent Schools, 2009

Policies Regarding Special Circumstances

Policy for Extending Accreditation Across Commissions

If an institution accredited by one NEASC commission develops a division or branch campus that falls within the authority of another NEASC commission, the latter commission may conduct a staff inquiry into the quality of the new entity and then may extend accreditation to it, subject to a full accreditation review at the commission's discretion, but no later than that scheduled for the originating institution.

Approved by the NEASC Commission on Independent Schools, November 2014

Examples:

A university accredited by CIHE establishes a lab school serving elementary and/or secondary students; after a staff visit to confirm the quality of the new entity, the NEASC Commission on Independent Schools (or the NEASC Commission on International Education) may extend accreditation to the lab school, subject to a full accreditation review at the commission's discretion, but no later than the review scheduled for the university.

An independent school accredited by NEASC establishes a branch campus overseas; after a staff visit to confirm the quality of the new entity, the NEASC Commission on International Education may extend accreditation to the branch campus, subject to a full accreditation review at the commission's discretion, but no later than the review scheduled for the originating school. (In this case, the Commissions on International Education and also Independent Schools may choose to grant joint accreditation.)

Note: NEASC currently has a policy to extend accreditation to cover substantive change (adding a division, merging with another institution, establishing a new campus, etc.) subject to a report with staff visit in one year.

Focused Visit Review

The Role of the Visiting Team

The NEASC Commission on Independent Schools will, from time to time, request a small team of evaluators to visit a member school to obtain information or verify a report submitted by the institution. This focused visit is different from a regular comprehensive evaluation visit as follows:

- The visit is typically scheduled for one day
- The Visiting Team is small in number
- The entire institution is not evaluated

Material to assist in preparation for a focused visit is in the form of a progress report submitted by the school, any communication between the Commission and the institution, and the charge to the Visiting Team by the Commission.

One member of the Visiting Team is identified as the Chair and that person is responsible for making necessary arrangements for the Committee and for all communications with the school to ensure an efficient and meaningful visit. The Chair is expected to be in contact with the other members of the committee and with the chief administrative officer of the institution prior to the visit.

It is expected that team members will review all materials provided by NEASC prior to the on-site visit. Upon arrival at the school, the Chair will hold an organizational meeting and assign responsibilities to the members of the committee.

The Visit

Because the visit is very brief, it is important that a schedule be established with opportunities to meet with appropriate school personnel and review necessary written material. It is expected that the Committee will be prepared to write a report and make a formal recommendation to the NEASC Commission on Independent Schools at the conclusion of the visit.

Although it is not necessary to communicate all the findings of the committee to the chief administrative officer, it is certainly appropriate to schedule an exit interview with him or her prior to departing. Care should be taken that the content and tone of the exit interview are consistent with the written report.

The Focused Visit Report

Each *Focused Visit Report* should contain a narrative section describing the school and the issues that were identified as the focus for the work of the Committee. Strengths of the school and areas of concern should be mentioned, particularly as they relate to the charge by the Commission. Recommendations and suggestions may also be made which are intended to strengthen the school. It is certainly appropriate to relate any comments to the *Standards for Accreditation*. The report should conclude with a specific recommendation to the Commission.

The Chair of the Visiting Team is responsible for the preparation of the report. The completed report and the recommendation of the committee should be submitted by the Chair within thirty days of the visit to the Director of the NEASC Commission on Independent Schools at the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. Any expense vouchers should be submitted to the school.

When the *Focused Visit Report* is submitted to the Director of the Commission, the committee's assignment is complete.

Approved by the NEASC Commission on Independent Schools, December 1997

Policy for a Governing Body for a Proprietary School

It is the policy of the NEASC Commission on Independent Schools that each proprietary school granted accreditation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges have a governing board.

Essential to the proper conduct and public trust of an accredited proprietary school is a governing body charged with these responsibilities:

- Collaborates in sustaining the mission of the school to assure a clear and commanding commitment to education
- Ensures continuity and provides evaluative feedback on leadership which may include appointment and evaluation of the Head of School
- Collaborates with the owner of the school in assuring the school's fiscal health
- Reviews the policies by which the school is conducted
- Reviews, assesses, and constructively comments on the school's effectiveness in accomplishing its mission and goals

The governing board shall have as at least a third of its members people who represent the public interest, that is, who have no contractual, employment or personal financial interest in the institution (other than an enrollment contract in the case of a current parent). Public representatives should be free from present or potential conflict of interest.

Accreditation through the NEASC Commission on Independent Schools is granted expressly to a particular institution with clearly defined and identified ownership and/or control. A change in ownership or control automatically results in a self-executing, immediate discontinuance of accreditation unless the new owner or controlling authority provides adequate written assurance and evidence that the standards of the Commission will be maintained. Such assurances will be validated by a Focused Review Committee appointed by the Commission to visit the institution at a time designated by the Commission.

Revised and Approved by the NEASC Commission on Independent Schools, February 2006

Policy for International Campuses

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges accredits individual schools. That accreditation does not extend to additional campuses, branches, partnerships, or other related entities except with the explicit authorization of NEASC and in accord with published policies.

The NEASC Commission on Independent Schools is aware that member schools are exploring opportunities to share their expertise and experience with new and existing schools abroad. Member schools have been generous in assisting in hiring and training faculty, in providing curriculum, and in participating on boards of trustees. The Commission applauds these initiatives; however, it wishes to make clear that in general the member school's accreditation cannot be included in a package of services provided to another entity and that the member school is responsible for making sure that no such claim of accreditation is made or suggested. Further, on one specific matter, a member school may not award (or authorize the award of) its diploma to graduates of another entity.

There are two circumstances in which a member school may extend its accreditation to an international campus and may issue diplomas in its name:

1. The international school meets fully the provisions of the "Multi Campus School" policy, subject to confirmation by a site visit by NEASC staff or a visiting team appointed by NEASC.
2. The international campus has been approved for accreditation by the NEASC Commission on International Education and thereby receives joint NEASC accreditation from both NEASC Commissions.

(NOTE ON EXPEDITED INITIAL APPROVAL: For expedited initial approval, the member school must demonstrate that the international school or program is an integral part of the member school; that there is a formal agreement with the international school or program, signed by both boards; and that the member school provides the required curriculum [fully aligned with that of the member school], participates in the recruitment, training, and evaluation of faculty, and oversees the general operation of the school or program to assure that it meets acceptable standards with regard to the student experience. In this circumstance, the international school or program may gain initial approval from the NEASC Commission on International Education [and jointly from the NEASC Commission on Independent Schools] on the basis of a successful two-to-three-day Eligibility Visit by NEASC, with the understanding that the school or program must achieve full accreditation by NEASC within two years.)

The Commission holds schools accountable to its Standards for Accreditation and determines the terms of its award of the status of school accreditation; it does not otherwise restrict activities sponsored or conducted by the member school.

Approved by the NEASC Commission on Independent Schools, February 2016

Policy for Making Changes to Visiting Team Reports

When NEASC staff deem it necessary to make substantive editorial changes to a Visiting Team Report to ensure clarity and appropriateness, the staff will make the change(s) and provide a memo listing those changes for the Commission. The memo will be included with the report when it is sent to the Reviewer. In addition, the memo will remain as part of the Visiting Team Report record.

The staff will continue to make grammatical corrections to Visiting Team Reports as necessary.

Approved by the NEASC Commission on Independent Schools, June 2014

Policy for Multi-Campus Schools

The Commission is aware of plans to consolidate existing schools in various ways or to add campuses. Some plans call for combining two or more schools into a single school with more than one campus. Recently, schools have opened branch campuses abroad. The Commission recognizes that such arrangements may make sense for administrative, governance, and/or financial reasons. However, the Commission reserves the right to determine how it will view these new entities for purposes of accreditation.

The Commission has adopted the following policy:

Pending further review, the Commission will regard each campus location as a separate school for purposes of accreditation (reports, visits, dues, etc.) regardless of nomenclature suggesting one school on more than one campus.

A school may demonstrate that the multiple campuses are in fact one school by documenting in writing how each of the Commission's Standards for Accreditation is met by the multi-campus entity as though it were a single school. Upon receipt of the report, the Commission will review the information at its next scheduled meeting, make a determination, and notify the school in writing of its decision.

Unless and until a school demonstrates to the satisfaction of the Commission that a branch campus is part of the accredited school, as though the two campuses were a single school, the Commission will consider the branch campus as a separate school and does not authorize the awarding of transcripts or diplomas with the name of the accredited school to students at that branch campus. The award of such a transcript or diploma suggests the endorsement of the accrediting agency and is unacceptable.

Revised and Approved by the NEASC Commission on Independent Schools, June 2014

Policy and Procedure for Postponing Visits to Merging or Consolidating Accredited Schools

(When the merge/consolidation moves the school beyond its scheduled decennial visit and the one-year postponement allowed by the Commission)

The Commission is aware of plans to merge or consolidate existing schools in various ways. Some plans call for combining two or more schools into a single school or closing two or more schools and reopening them as a new school. The Commission recognizes that such arrangements may make sense for administrative, governance, and/or financial reasons. The Commission understands that some of these mergers may come at the same time as the normal accreditation decennial visit. Schools which find themselves in this situation may ask for an extraordinary extension; complete a report explaining the circumstances; and host a small focused Visiting Team, composed of a staff member and a member of the Commission, to recommend a timetable for proceeding with the full accrediting process and any intermediate reports that might be required. The Commission reserves the right to determine the appropriate timetable and procedure for the accreditation process. The school's accreditation will be continued until the time set by the Commission.

Approved by the NEASC Commission on Independent Schools, November 2007

Policy on Postponing the Decennial Evaluation and Interim Reports

Member schools in NEASC are engaged in a decennial cycle of accreditation activities. Schools have the choice of fall or spring for the visit. Schools may request, in writing, a postponement of no more than one calendar year for the scheduled visit; such a postponement requires a vote of the Commission. Schools in the state of Vermont may postpone visits and reports only if the Commission receives state approval for the delay.

The Two- and Five-Year Interim Evaluation Reports are scheduled from the date of the Commission action. The Commission may, at the staff's discretion, grant postponement of due dates for the Two- and Five-Year Interim Reports. Such postponements will be granted if, in the judgment of the staff, a postponement is likely to result in a more positive experience/outcome for the school.

Approved by the NEASC Commission on Independent Schools, November 2014

Policy Regarding Schools Affiliated with Other Governing or Accrediting Entities

Many member schools of NEASC have responsibilities to other accrediting associations, diocesan central offices, and/or to government entities. NEASC seeks to communicate and, where possible, to cooperate with these groups in ways that will minimize the duplication of effort for schools. However, NEASC accredits schools as individual and independent institutions according to the policies of NEASC. Therefore:

1. The Commission will not enforce the requirements of other associations, offices, or entities as part of its accreditation process.
2. The Commission will not waive or modify its standards to correspond with the requirements of other associations, offices, or entities.

In certain circumstances, the Commission has agreed to cooperate with another accrediting association to conduct a joint visit to a school. The Commission has agreed to include representatives of the other association on the Visiting Team and has allowed the school to add sections to its self-study at the request of the other association. All elements of the NEASC Accreditation process are followed, however, and granting of NEASC Accreditation is based solely on the NEASC components of the jointly conducted evaluation.

Approved by the NEASC Commission on Independent Schools, February 2005

Policy on Accreditation of Semester and One-Year Schools

NEASC accredits schools that are an integral part of the Kindergarten — Grade 12 continuum. To achieve accreditation, limited-time schools must demonstrate that students do not step out of the continuum, but transfer in from and back to sending schools while receiving academic credit for their time away.

Applicants must meet all Standards for Accreditation and the following:

Approval to Apply for Candidacy

Semester or One-Year Schools seeking accreditation from NEASC must, prior to being approved to apply for candidacy, submit evidence that independent schools who are now members of NEASC routinely grant full credit to those students who attend the limited time school so that those students do not lose time in the normal school progression.

Documentation of Program Continuity

Semester or One-Year Schools seeking accreditation from NEASC must provide along with their self-study documentation of the curriculum for the current and three prior years that demonstrates program continuity.

Semester or One-Year Schools seeking accreditation from NEASC must provide survey data from students and parents from the previous three years.

Semester or One-Year Schools seeking accreditation from NEASC must document sufficient continuity of staff to assure consistency of program.

Observation of Off-Campus and/or Out of New England Programs

Semester or One-Year Schools seeking accreditation from NEASC that conduct their programs in significant part away from a central New England campus must host separate Visiting Teams or representatives of a central Visiting Team at all sites.

Approved by the NEASC Commission on Independent Schools, June 2011

Policy for Substantive Change

A school that has undergone a substantive change to the nature of the students it admits, or the students' educational experience must provide the Commission with a *Substantive Change Report* after completing one year of the substantive change. Receipt of this report may be followed by a staff visit or, if determined by the Director of the Commission, with a focused visit and a written report presented to the Commission, which will determine if further action is warranted.

Examples of substantive changes include adopting a new mission, purpose, or admitting different students (e.g., changing from a traditional school to a therapeutic school), adding a division (e.g., early childhood for three and four-year-olds, elementary school, middle school, high school, post-graduate), adding a residential or homestay program, adding or removing enrollment of a sex (e.g., single-sex to coed), adding a new local campus that will serve current students, and changing ownership for a proprietary school.

The merging of two or more schools is also a substantive change but is addressed under the Merged School Policy.

View the *Principles, Policy, and Practical Steps for a Substantive Change Report* and the *Policy and Procedure for Merged School Report* on the NEASC website at <https://www.neasc.org/policies>.

Revised and Approved by the NEASC Commission on Independent Schools, June 2022.

NEASC Policies

You may view the following documents on the NEASC website at <https://www.neasc.org/policies>.

1. Bylaws of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges
2. Policy and Procedures for the Appeal of Adverse Accreditation Action by Commissions of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges
 - a. An institution shall have the right to appeal an adverse accrediting action made by a Commission of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. Please refer to the guide for instructions:
3. Complaints against NEASC affiliated institutions
 - a. Your feedback, including complaints about an affiliated school/center, is important to us. NEASC is concerned with institutional integrity and performance consistent with Association Standards and policies. While it does not intervene in the internal procedures of institutions or act as a regulatory body, it does address concerns about conditions at affiliated institutions that raise significant questions about the institution's compliance with the Standards and policies for candidate or accredited institutions. Please read the guide for instructions:
4. NEASC Privacy Statement

About us

NEASC Mission Statement

NEASC partners with schools to assess, support, and promote high quality education for all students through accreditation, professional assistance, and pursuit of best practices.

Commission on Independent Schools Statement

To assure the positive and equitable development of all students, inspire creativity, foster excellence, and promote institutional well-being, NEASC Accreditation engages schools in aspirational, mission-driven self-study and peer review.

Resources

Accreditation resources are available on our website at www.neasc.org

Contact us

New England Association of Schools and Colleges
1115 Westford Street, Third Floor
Lowell, MA, 01851 USA

Email: cis@neasc.org

Contacts: www.neasc.org/our-team