

Purposes of WASC Accreditation

Voluntary, non-governmental, institutional accreditation as practiced by the WASC and the other regional commissions is a unique characteristic of American education. In many other countries the maintenance of educational standards is a governmental function. No institution in the United States is required to seek accreditation, however, because of the recognized benefits, most of the eligible institutions in this and other regions have sought to become accredited.

The WASC accreditation process aids institutions in developing and sustaining effective educational programs and assures the educational community, the general public, and other organizations that an accredited institution has met high standards of quality and effectiveness.

The Commission accredits institutions, not individual programs. Therefore, in addition to assessing the academic quality and educational effectiveness of institutions, the Commission emphasizes institutional structures, processes, and resources.

The accreditation process is aimed at:

1. Assuring the educational community, the general public, and other organizations and agencies that an accredited institution has demonstrated it meets the Commission's Core Commitments to Institutional Capacity and Educational Effectiveness, and has been successfully reviewed under Commission Standards;
2. Promoting deep institutional engagement with issues of educational effectiveness and student learning, and developing and sharing good practices in assessing and improving the teaching and learning process;
3. Developing and applying Standards to review and improve educational quality and institutional performance, and validating these Standards and revising them through ongoing research and feedback;
4. Promoting within institutions a culture of evidence where indicators of performance are regularly developed and data collected to inform institutional decision making, planning, and improvement;
5. Developing systems of institutional review and evaluation that are adaptive to institutional context and purposes, that build on institutional evidence and support rigorous reviews, and reduce the burden and cost of accreditation; and
6. Promoting the active interchange of ideas among public and independent institutions that furthers the principles of improved institutional performance, educational effectiveness, and the process of peer review.