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SELF-STUDY GUIDE

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This self-study guide is designed for institutions preparing for comprehensive evaluations utilizing the Commission's ~~1992-2006 Standards for Accreditation, as modified in 2001~~. Those responsible for giving direction to an institution's self-study should read through this document prior to embarking upon the process.

The Commission realizes that different types of self-study endeavors may be more appropriate to undertake at a given time in an institution's development. In every case, the Commission staff are available to work with an institution to ensure that the comprehensive evaluation, including the self-study, is of maximum possible benefit to the institution. In an effort to maximize the benefit of self-study, in exceptional cases, the institution seeking reaccreditation may wish to pursue a Self-Study with Special Emphasis, as described on pages ~~242-244 (??)~~ of this guide.

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PURPOSES OF SELF-STUDY

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Self-study is at the heart of the accreditation process. Effective self-study serves both internal and external purposes. It is concerned with quality assurance and encourages institutional improvement through rigorous self-analysis; it provides a basis for the Commission's evaluation in accordance with its *Standards for Accreditation*.

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Self-study is more than a document that addresses in depth the various *Standards for Accreditation*. It is an intensive endeavor involving individuals throughout the ~~entire~~ institution of higher education in a process of self-examination aimed at institutional improvement. Recognizing that self-study is both a process and a product, this Guide provides direction for the periodic review of institutional effectiveness and for the preparation of a self-study report encompassing the results of such a review.

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The Commission expects that self-study should not be viewed as an isolated phenomenon in which an institution periodically engages. Rather, if self-study is to be valuable, it should be an integral part of the institution's ongoing planning and evaluation efforts. Incorporating self-study into the planning process serves the institution in its continuing search for better ways of achieving its objectives. The self-study process necessitates thinking about the context in which the institution is operating and in what ways it is affected by its external environment.

The resulting report should present a clear, concise and accurate picture of the institution as a dynamic entity with a sense of its history, an understanding of its present, and a vision of its future. The self-study should demonstrate the institution's capacity for reflective self-examination as a means for improvement. Such a document best serves not only the Commission but the institution itself.

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COMMISSION'S EXPECTATIONS FOR SELF-STUDY

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In recognizing the unique characteristics of each institution of higher education and of its self-study experience, the Commission purposefully does not prescribe the details of an individual institution's self-study process. Nonetheless, the Commission does expect that a self-study effort exemplify the following general principles.

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In essence, self-study:

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- **focuses on the institution as a whole.** The Commission accredits the entire institution rather than specific departments, ~~or~~ programs, locations, or means of instruction. However, evaluating an institution in terms of the Commission's standards requires that all of the institution's component parts be examined and that all locations and modes of offering its academic program be included. Ultimately, the information gathered through evaluation of each part must be used to formulate an evaluation of the institution as a whole.
- **evolves from a plan of action.** Self-study is a complex and significant enterprise which that like all such enterprises involves planning. The nature of the process is critically important both within and beyond the campus. Foresight and thoughtful structuring of the self-study process enable institutions to gain maximum benefits from the time and energy expended.
- **epitomizes and is an integral part of ongoing self-evaluation efforts.** The self-study for accreditation should be part of, and inextricably linked to, a continuous process of self-examination and institutional improvement.
- **appraises and assesses institutional effectiveness.** While a self-study report provides substantial a clear description of an institution's programs, resources, and operations, it also analyzes and determines how well the institution is functioning and the degree to which the institution is meeting its objectives, as well as setting forth the institution's commitments for improvement. ~~Thus, through self-study, the institution works to identify~~ By identifying its strengths and those areas in need of improvement. ~~Doing so along with its plans for the future, the institution~~ demonstrates the capacity ~~of the institution~~ to continue to meet its objectives. Institutional improvement should always be a goal of the processes.

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Thus, through self-study, the institution demonstrates that it is using information gathered from its evaluative efforts to enhance its ability to meet its goals and fulfill its mission.

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Ultimately, the self-study effort culminates in the production of a report demonstrating that the institution satisfies the Commission's appropriate criteria.

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STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION

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The *Standards for Accreditation* are the constructs that guide self-study. The ~~1992~~ 2006 Standards for Accreditation, as modified in 2001, represent the Commission's articulation of the membership's expectations for quality in our system of self regulation: the Standards articulate the criteria for accreditation. Derived through a highly participatory process, the standards were fashioned to afford institutions opportunities to be creative, innovative and collaborative in approaching self-study and engaging in self-examination for purposes of institutional improvement.

Consistent with its tradition, the Commission continues to define quality and provide a framework for evaluation in terms of institutional mission. As such, an institution which is found to have quality worthy of accreditation is one which has appropriate postsecondary purposes and the resources necessary to fulfill those purposes. Furthermore, the institution can demonstrate that it is actually accomplishing its purposes and has the capacity to continue to do so. Thus, the standards are designed to acknowledge the legitimate diversity among institutions of higher learning in New England. In keeping with this approach, they are almost entirely qualitative rather than quantitative. Moreover, the standards in general are non-prescriptive.

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The *Standards for Accreditation* address a range of principal areas of institutional activity. Eleven separate standards have been developed. They are: *Mission and Purposes, Planning and Evaluation, Organization and Governance, ~~Programs and Instruction~~The Academic Program, Faculty, ~~Student Services~~Students, Library and Other Information Resources, Physical and Technological Resources, Financial Resources, Public Disclosure, and Integrity*. In terms of detail and emphasis the standards are explicit, comprehensive, and interrelated, thereby giving as much direction as possible to institutions. The importance of these eleven discrete areas notwithstanding, the Commission's judgments about accreditation are made about the institution as a whole.

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Two themes permeate the *Standards for Accreditation*: **institutional integrity and institutional effectiveness**. The final standard entitled *Integrity* is, as the term suggests, deliberately encompassing and attempts to provide an overview explicitly enunciating several principles making the matter of ethics all-inclusive. As such, the standard provides needed guidance in identifying specific areas related to integrity. In addition to this specific standard, each of the standards, where appropriate, addresses ethical considerations relevant to the sphere of institutional activity encompassed by the standard.

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The second theme focuses on institutional effectiveness, including assessment of student learning. ~~The Commission defines as~~ Thus, one of the essentials of institutional quality is the capacity and success of the institution in evaluating the extent to which it carries out its purposes and uses the results for institutional improvement. The importance of this activity is reflected in the comprehensive standard on *Planning and Evaluation*. Furthermore, ~~as with Integrity, the last numbered paragraph of~~ each of the standards, ~~where appropriate, includes criteria related to~~ speaks to the importance of the institution's monitoring the effectiveness of the activities encompassed by the standard and using the results for improvement. Also, a separate *Policy Statement on Institutional Effectiveness*, which is referred to in the standard on *Planning and Evaluation*, provides a general perspective on

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these endeavors. Essentially, that perspective stresses the importance of assessment and asks institutions to fashion appropriate mechanisms. [A copy of the policy is included in the Appendix of this document.](#)

~~With regard to institutional effectiveness and assessment th~~[The Commission's expectations are fourfold](#)[Commission expects that the institution will demonstrate that its efforts with respect to institutional effectiveness, including assessment:](#)

~~1. are a regular part of the institution's agenda, not simply areas that are contemplated as part of an accreditation review;~~

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~~2. are approached thoughtfully – not in a formulaic way – and that the means selected and developed reflect the institution's mission and character;~~

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~~3. concentrate principally on understanding what and how students are learning, reflective of the central purpose of the institution to educate students;~~

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~~4. have the support of the president and other institutional officers as well as faculty leadership and are accorded appropriate levels of institutional support to produce useful findings;~~

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~~5. concentrate on using the results of the findings for improvement, principally of programs and services for students;:-~~

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~~4.6. are regularly reviewed and integrated, so that assessment and evaluation are not simply concentrated efforts undertaken by various institutional units but also contribute to a larger and shared understanding of the institution's fulfillment of its fundamental purposes.:-~~

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~~(1)the Commission expects the institution to demonstrate that it has taken cognizance of the need to engage in such efforts;~~

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~~(2)the Commission expects the institution will have in place or have constructed realistic plans to put in place assessment mechanisms and that it has implemented those plans;~~

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~~(3)the Commission expects that the institution will utilize the results/findings of assessment efforts in informing the decision-making processes; and~~

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~~(4) the Commission expects that these efforts will occur on an ongoing basis and that they will become increasingly systematic, integrated and holistic.:-~~

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~~(Please see the *Policy Statement on Institutional Effectiveness* and the *Note on Institutional Effectiveness and Self Study*, pages 13-20.)~~

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SELF-STUDY: THE PROCESS

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Undertaking a self-study is a major enterprise. Through the process of self-study the institution mobilizes the various elements of its community to reflect on the purposes and effectiveness of the institution, to examine its strengths as well as areas that are in need of improvement, and where problems or opportunities are identified, to ~~begin to work toward their~~commit to methods for their resolution or fulfillment. Unquestionably, the process followed for doing self-study and the success of the ultimate product are inextricably linked. Done well, it is a ~~wonderfully~~ rewarding experience for the entire institution.

How long does self-study take? Self-study cannot be done well under rushed conditions. A full academic year is the very minimum working time needed. Pragmatically, preparation of the self-study should begin at least eighteen months before the date of the team evaluation visit. Two years time provides an even better time frame. ~~- In order to gain maximum strategic advantage from the process, some institutions begin planning for their self-~~study more than two years in advance of the team visit.

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A well-planned evaluation and expected follow-up processes usually encompass ~~over two-three~~ to five years. These activities should not be seen as distinct from but rather as intertwined with other institutional ~~planning and evaluative-evaluation~~ activities. The fundamental purposes and organization of the self-study process should build upon institutionalized organizational processes and databases, and, to the extent possible, use existing resources, processes and data.

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How should self-study be organized? There is no one best way to organize and direct a self-study. The specific ways institutions choose to orchestrate such an activity and the application of the selected procedures must fit the circumstances and the individuals of the institution. Nonetheless, there are general principles and procedures for conducting a self-study that offer guidance and provide a framework for action in approaching the activity.

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The institution should:

Set up a ~~steering committee~~ and provide its members with sample sets of appropriate Commission documents for study. Institutions may duplicate these materials for their own use. The steering committee should be chaired by an active, interested person who will plan and oversee the work, suggest approaches, and assume the responsibility for having the final report edited. This is not to imply that the chairperson is necessarily the individual who will do the editing.

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- The **chairperson** of this committee is one of the two key persons in the enterprise, the other being the president of the institution. Being a chair, with its demands on the individual's time and energy, is a major assignment. It is also a rewarding and valuable one. Some institutions appoint co-chairs, typically a senior academic officer and a faculty member.
- The **president's** role is to set the tone and provide the appropriate context conducive for pursuing self-study. The need to stimulate

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interest, encourage involvement and be involved without dominating the process, and to see that the results of all the efforts are channeled into the planning, evaluation and decision-making processes is critical.

- Encourage **widespread participation** in the process. Significant input leads to strong commitment which will produce the best results possible. Furthermore, a self-study by its very nature is a complex project which requires perspectives from various institutional constituencies. Faculty, administration, and as appropriate students should be represented in the steering committee and in the other working entities. Organize the various committees should be organized so that ultimately their work represents the institution as a whole. Institutions should also determine how the governing board will be involved in the process.
- Invite one of the **Commission's staff** to come to the campus early in the process, to meet with the steering committee and with the faculty as they consider the nature of the enterprise and to help them to plan it advantageously. In addition to site visits, the Commission encourages institutions to attend the Self-Study Workshop though it is not mandatory to do so.

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How should the Steering Committee and the work groups go about their tasks?

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- **Review the *Standards for Accreditation* and recent communication from the Commission to the institution.** Having a broad understanding of the Standards will help provide an overview and set of boundaries for the self-study. The recent communication from the Commission, in the form of the institution's most recent action letter, will highlight any areas of special emphasis that the Commission has asked the institution to address in the self-study. These should not be addressed in separate sections, but rather, the authors should ensure that proper attention is given to these matters in the process of self-study and in the self-study document.
- **Make sure that the self-study will incorporate all of the ways in which the institution provides its academic program to students.** While some institutions offer their academic program "on ground" at a single degree level to a student body at a single campus, for other institutions, the matter is more complex. Separate campuses and instructional locations or contractual relationships with non-regionally accredited groups may be involved. Some institutions offer programs through electronically mediated instruction or provide programs to students in other countries. The Commission has a policy on Substantive Change that addresses these additions to the institution; institutions initiating such offerings or adding additional campuses or instructional locations should ensure that the self-study will include consideration of the substantive change, unless that process has already been initiated. The institution should ensure that the Evaluation Summary Sheet, sent to the institution at the initiation of the comprehensive evaluation process, is accurate with respect to all elements of institutional operations. Information about these policies Substantive Change may be found on the Commission website: <http://www.neascNEASC.org/cihe/cihe.htm>.

Consultation with the Commission staff is strongly advised if there is any confusion.

In every case, the self-study process should include consideration of all students in all programs: full- and part-time students, residential and commuter students, students studying at remote locations or by distance learning. The composition of the self-study committee, how the Standards are addressed, and the ways in which the institution seeks participation of the community should all reflect the commitment to including all programs and all students in the self-study.

Determine mechanisms that will serve the institution best in doing the self-study. ~~Most often~~Often, the steering committee serves as a group of overseers and is not responsible for addressing each of the standards. ~~Usually~~In these cases, other committees (task forces, working groups or whatever entity an institution finds appropriate for accomplishing self-study) are set up ~~or identified~~ to address each of the standards individually. ~~In other instances, the steering committee is chaired or co-chaired by the overall directors of the process, with the membership composed of the chair of the committee for each standard.~~ Where appropriate, a committee may be responsible for addressing more than one standard or it may focus on parts of a standard. ~~Nevertheless~~In all cases, the steering committee should try to keep the number of committees to a reasonable number. Instead of creating new institutional committees, an institution may wish to use existing committees. ~~Not all committees should necessarily start work at the same time. For example, those individuals working on Mission and Purposes may need some lead time, in order that their work as it develops may provide a reference point and guidance for other committees.~~

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~~Regardless of the configuration of the committee structure, the objective is to provide the best possible means for the institution to engage in critical self-examination. And however it is configured, the steering committee has an essential role in ensuring the appropriate level of coordination among the committees and in identifying and bringing to the fore the most important institutional themes identified in the self-study.~~

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- **Adopt a definite timetable.** Plan backward. Give enough lead time for tasks to be accomplished. Insist that such a timetable be maintained. Set a publication date for the self-study report at least ten weeks before the visiting team is due to arrive so that it can be in the hands of the team six weeks before the visit. Having determined the completion date, allow at least a month preceding that for final editing and duplicating. Then work back toward the beginning allowing the necessary intervals for each stage. Keep in mind what a major undertaking this is and how many people will be involved. ~~Self~~While self-study must deal with separate aspects and components of the institution's life, ~~but~~ it must also ~~go beyond the discreteness in its concern with their relationships, with the focusing or directing of focus on~~ the institution's total effort and overall educational impact, and with the efficiency of each of its units. That takes time.

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- **Ensure that each committee becomes familiar with the Standards overall and especially with the standard to which it has been assigned.** The individual committees should then undertake assessment of those institutional components which are encompassed by the standard, evaluating them against the relevant criteria. This self-evaluative process involves first gathering the information, evidence, and data related to how well the institution meets the standard. While the self-study committee is asked to first to provide a describe-description of the current status of the institution in the area(s) encompassed by the standard, it should reserve its major time and attention to appraising-the appraisal of the extent to which the institution meets the standard. Finally, the committee, working with other individuals and groups within the institution, prepares a **projection** outlining the commitments the institution is making to preserve and enhance its strengths, address its problematic areas, and deal productively with changes it anticipates in the foreseeable future. This three-part analytical framework, discussed in more detail below, will later serve as the basis for the self-study report.

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- **Gather information, evidence, and data.** In the self-study process institutions will want to use existing institutional information and data as well as consider and initiate the gathering of any additional information necessary or useful in the process. This information, evidence, and data will serve as necessary resources to the institution during the process of self-study and also as confirming evidence and further explication for the visiting team.

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Begin with an inventory of what the institution has in place to support the self-study. It is useful at this point to gather key institutional policy, planning, and evaluation documents that will serve as evidence upon which to base findings of the self-study. It can also be useful to conduct an inventory of the institutional effectiveness efforts in place or recently conducted by the institution overall or by various units, with an emphasis on how the results have been used for improvement.

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Having determined what is already available, the steering committee can determine what additional factual and statistical data are required and request the appropriate personnel or committees to prepare them. Only condensed essential parts of this material will appear in the final report, but the self-study committees may need details, and conversations with the individuals responsible for compiling and analyzing statistical data will enable the committee members to grasp meanings and relationships among the data.

- **Work to ensure inquisitiveness and reflection.** Encourage all committees to be inquisitive, to question and to debate. One of the results of the self-study should be a broader knowledge of educational purposes and a more informed understanding of their application to the specific objectives of the institution.

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- **Begin to write.** After much deliberation and exchange of ideas, the committees will prepare various sections of what will become the self-study report. In doing this, the committees need to simplify, clarify, and distill their findings, to avoid clichés, and to develop thoughtful and accurate analyses of their data. Ultimately, the work of the committees including their findings, conclusions and recommendations will be distilled following the framework discussed above and will serve as the basis (or constitute the narrative) of the report.
- **Work together as a whole group.** As the work progresses, see that the committees or task forces are working steadily on their assignments and reporting to the steering committee for coordination. The steering committee should be initiating ideas, suggesting useful cross-references, and periodically keeping the entire institution informed of the process. The steering committee also has an important role in identifying and confirming themes that emerge from the process of self-study.
- **Edit and shape the report.** The steering committee, or its designee(s), should have clear editorial authority. Its task is to reduce the total materials submitted to a 100-page document excluding appendices and other attachments (~~200 if double spaced~~). Brevity and conciseness are encouraged to make the self-study most useful to the institution, the evaluation team and the Commission.
- **Ensure participation and buy-in.** Make sure that ultimately the whole faculty, administration, and governing board understand and take responsibility for the entire report. An important feature of this kind of study is that it brings the institution into focus, emphasizing relationships among as well as performance within units, and stimulating healthy cross-fertilization of ideas.

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The above process results, of course, in a document. First and foremost the self-study report needs to be a holistic and integrated document. While it is true that the self-study and evaluation process is driven by eleven separate and distinct standards for accreditation, ultimately the self-study report should reflect the totality of one institution. In a sense, then, the whole should indeed be greater than the sum of the parts.

FORMAT OF THE SELF-STUDY

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The Commission asks that the institution follow the format below in preparing its self-study. This format is designed to be straightforward and affords the reader a clear picture of the institution at a given point in time.

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Institutional Characteristics

The initial section of the self-study should provide the team and the Commission with a concise and factual summary of Institutional Characteristics. (Use the form provided on pages ~~27-30~~[27-31](#).)

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Preface

The preface should provide a brief description of the self-study process. The purpose is to afford the reader insight into and greater understanding of the contents of the report by relating how self-study was accomplished at the institution. Included should be information about how the institution's various constituencies (faculty, administration, staff, students, trustees) participated in the self-study, and how they were organized and undertook their task. In addition, the institution should discuss what its goals of the self-study were and the extent to which they were achieved as well as any other information the institution believes useful in understanding its self-study process.

Self-Study Overview

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This brief section (not to exceed five single-spaced pages) is an important component of the self-study. It provides the institution with an opportunity to present the reader with a succinct snapshot of itself at the conclusion of the self-study process. More specifically, the overview should accomplish two objectives. First, it should explain the present context in which the institution is functioning. Included here should be information about the environment in which the institution operates with respect to structural, programmatic, or financial issues or concerns which affect the overall condition of the institution. Moreover, the institution can discuss major changes since the last Commission review which have had an impact on the life of the institution. Secondly, the overview should include major findings of the self-study. While the institution does not have to address each of the standards, it is desirable to

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discuss the findings in terms of the areas the standards address. Finally, the institution should include any other information which will enhance the reader's understanding of the institution's self-study report. Ultimately, the overview is meant to capture the essence of the institution in its prevailing environment. The overview provides an opportunity for the institution to extract the most important themes and ideas of the self-study and to give readers a preview of the most important matters that the institution has identified throughout the self-study process.

Narrative

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A comprehensive institutional self-study addresses the eleven *Standards for Accreditation* in a narrative of ~~approximately no more than~~ 100 single-spaced pages. The Commission asks institutions to address the *Standards for Accreditation* by utilizing the analytical framework of description, appraisal and projection. By organizing the chapters of the self-study on each standard according to these three variables, the institution is afforded the opportunity to describe the status or condition of each area under review, to assess its strengths and identify opportunities for improvement and then to project ~~how~~ the institutional ~~commitments plans~~ to address ~~in these concerns in~~ the future ~~with respect to the findings of each chapter~~.

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The triad of description, appraisal, and projection essentially raises three questions: ~~What is? What should be? and, How does the institution get there?~~ How does the institution meet the standard? How well does it meet the standard? What commitments does it make for improvement in the future? Following the format of description, appraisal and projection allows the institution to develop a document that will show how it has changed over time and provides the opportunity for thoughtful and rigorous evaluation. What then should each of these sections look like?

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Description. This section should provide a realistic and objective presentation of the present status of the institution with respect to each standard. ~~It is as stated-descriptive in nature. It should answer the question: How does the institution meet this standard?~~ As with other parts of the self-study, it is important to achieve an appropriate balance between providing too much information or too little. In doing so the institution should keep in mind that sufficient descriptive information needs to be presented so that the reader has a comprehensive understanding of how various areas of the institution operate. However, the institution does not need to provide such details that may be found in institutional documents such as the institution's catalog. The descriptive sections should provide the appropriate groundwork for understanding the concerns and issues raised in the ensuing appraisal and projection sections. ~~In essence, this section sets the stage and provides the context for meaningful analysis of the institution in terms of the various standards. Through the description section, the visiting team and the Commission gain insight into how the institution meets the standards.~~

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Appraisal. Because the second section involves analysis, it represents the heart of self-study. It requires the institution to make a thorough assessment of the effectiveness of its practices in a given area, recognizing both the

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institution's achievements and its problems. This portion of every chapter should summarize the institution's self-evaluation of how well it meets the particular Standard-standard and include sufficient evidence so that the reader understands the basis on which the judgments have been made. This critical self-judgment forms the single most significant internal activity in the entire self-study process. It requires deliberation and critical thinking. The visiting team and the Commission will pay particular attention to the judgments made in the appraisal section, for these will provide considerable insight into the internal planning and management of the institution's resources to achieve the institution's objectives. Perhaps most importantly, the appraisal section articulates the accuracy of the institution's self-image. Through the appraisal section, the visiting team and the Commission gain insight into the institution's habits of relying on evidence to identify its principal strengths and those areas representing priorities for improvement.

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Projection. After the institution has described and appraised a given area, the institution is asked in the last section to indicate plans developed and commitments made to maintain and enhance strengths and address areas of concern. These projections should be realistic and specific, rather than vague and discursive. In accordance with the Commission's overall view that self-study is inextricably linked to planning, these projections should be part of the institution's planning process, representing a definite commitment to development in this area of the standard over the next several years. It is at this point that the results of self-evaluation are translated into practice. Through the projection section, the visiting team and the Commission gain insight into the institution's ongoing ability to act on its own assessments to ensure the continuing improvement of the institution.

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While every institution has to address all eleven standards using the above triad of description, appraisal and projection, the organization of the responses will vary significantly. Institutions of higher education in New England like those throughout the United States vary considerably from one another. The Commission on Institutions of Higher Education recognizes these variations and thus realizes that institutional responses to addressing the *Standards for Accreditation* will vary as well. Furthermore, institutions think about themselves differently and, hence, may decide to organize the self-study in different ways. Regardless of the approach taken all the standards have to be addressed.

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Clearly, the eleven *Standards for Accreditation* vary in length, degree of detail, scope, breadth, and complexity. While the Commission asks that institutions apply the triad of description, appraisal and projection in responding to the *Standards for Accreditation*, this by no means implies that each standard has to be dealt with in the same way and that each chapter of the self-study has to be written following an identical format.

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The Commission does expect that the subheadings provided in some standards will appear in the self-study as a way to help organize the report for the visiting team and the Commission. Depending on the length of the standard, or the topics covered, ~~e.g. Programs and Instruction~~ The Academic Program or depending on how the institution is organized, the institution may wish to

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apply the form of description, appraisal and projection not once treating the standard as a whole in the chapter but several times. Overall, what is important is that such sections present reasonable and logical responses to the various components within the standards and that they reflect the institution's use of self-study to look at the institution overall.

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In other words, it might be more useful and appropriate, and ultimately allow for a more coherent response, to address, for example, the first section of the ~~Programs and Instruction~~The Academic Program standard (4.1-4.12) with respect to description, appraisal and projection, and then proceed to the section on Undergraduate Degree Programs and address the criteria contained in that section utilizing the triad of description, appraisal and projection once again. That approach could be applied throughout the standard section by section.

Each standard is introduced by a statement in bold face type. This is the statement of the Standard and provides a summary of the expectations elaborated in the numbered paragraphs which follow. The institution, the team, and the Commission can use the statement of the standard as a guide in determining the overall extent to which the institution fulfills the expectation in that area.

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A word about the numbered paragraphs is perhaps in order here. ~~You will note~~Note that the paragraphs within the eleven standards for accreditation are preceded by numbers. The numbers have been included for purposes of reference and convenience. The inclusion of the numbers, therefore, is not meant to suggest that the institution's responses to the criteria for accreditation should be organized accordingly. On the other hand, if ~~the institution you~~the institution finds that the numbers provide a useful way to ensure that the self-study is addressing all portions of the standard, they may be useful during the early and middle stages of writing. No matter how ~~they you~~the institution decides to do it, the Commission expects each institution to respond to all components within a standard. Ultimately, the self-study should be organized in the most coherent and useful form to elicit the essential information and purposeful evaluation. The final version of the self-study should not, however, include numbers. This is keeping with the Commission's goal of producing a self-study that is an integrated and coherent document. ~~You~~Each institution will be the best judge for itself of how that end result is achieved.

Finally, each standard concludes with a section on institutional effectiveness, discussed in more detail below. This section, too, should be addressed in the description, appraisal, and projection portion of the -narrative for that standard.

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Appendix

The final section of the self-study is the Appendix, which includes the completed CIHE Data Forms for Comprehensive Evaluations. These statistical profiles serve one fundamental purpose: to assist institutions and the Commission in acknowledging, understanding, and evaluating trends over several years that reveal an accurate picture of where the institution is, what demographic and other changes have occurred and how it will look in terms of students, faculty, programs, and finances in the foreseeable future. As with the

Standards for Accreditation, ~~this~~ these data provides information that is intimately related to the institution's mission and purpose.

Different data forms exist for independent and publicly supported institutions. ~~They are available upon request through the office of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education in paper or in an electronic form; they have been prepared~~ using a Microsoft Excel application. To obtain ~~an electronic version of~~ the forms, send an e-mail to cihe@neascNEASC.org

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In addition, the self-study appendix should include the following materials:

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Audited financial statements, with accompanying auditor's opinion, for one year, and:

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- a. Balance Sheet.
- b. Statement of changes in fund balances.
- c. A current funds budget for the current fiscal year, and for the next fiscal year, if available.
- d. Types and extent of insurance coverage for the institution.

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EXHIBITS AND EVIDENCE

The data, information, and evidence that the institution gathers at the beginning of the self-study process – and those that are gathered, sponsored, and accumulated during the process – are made available to the visiting team in its workroom. The workroom provides a convenient and comfortable place for the team to work and consult with other team members. It contains documents which will assist the evaluators in understanding the institution by in effect supplementing the self-study report. Institutions are urged to keep in mind what documents will need to be available in the workroom as they undertake self-study.

Because each institution is unique, it is not possible to specify exactly the elements of the exhibits and evidence. Presented in the Appendix to this document is a sample list designed to help institutions think about the range and types of documents, reports, data, and other exhibits that will be useful in their work and to the team. In addition to those materials listed, all the documents referred to in the self-study should be in the workroom. Moreover, some institutions may have special reports, studies, or other relevant materials, which should be included for the evaluation team. Institutions are asked to use their own discretion in determining which additional materials should be made available guided by the question: Would the visiting team's overall grasp and appreciation of the college or university be enhanced through the availability of this document?

The development of a "document room," once operating in physical space, has become increasingly electronic. Institutions are encouraged to explore how the compilation of key institutional documents in a single place made available on the intranet can serve as a continuing resource to the community.

Institutions are also encouraged to make the documents available electronically to the team, through access to the institution's intranet during the period between mailing of the self-study and conclusion of the visit, through a CD-ROM that accompanies the self-study, or through hot-linking the evidence to the relevant words in an electronic copy of the self-study, distributed along with the paper copy to the team and the Commission offices.

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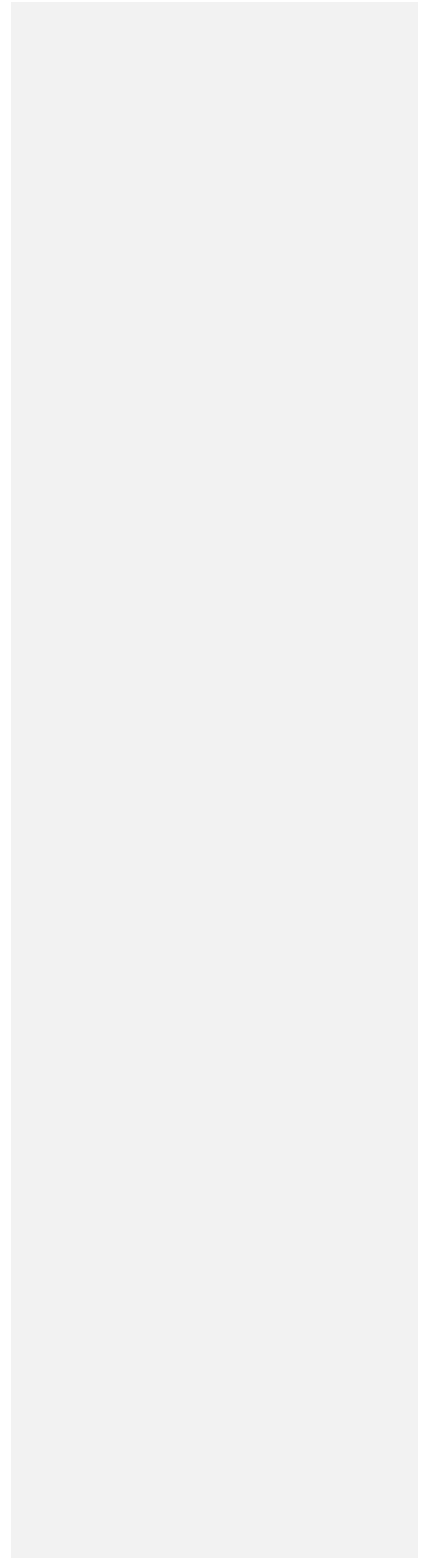
See sample list of documents in the Appendix, pages 34-39.

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~~REPLACE THIS PAGE WITH POLICY STATEMENT ON INSTITUTIONAL
EFFECTIVENESS~~ Place the Policy on Institutional Effectiveness in the appendix.

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**INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS, ASSESSMENT,
AND
SELF-STUDY**

One of the major themes permeating the ~~revised~~ *Standards for Accreditation* is institutional effectiveness. The Commission on Institutions of Higher Education defines institutional effectiveness as *the capacity of an institution to assess, verify, and enhance the fulfillment of its mission and purposes, giving primary focus to the attainment of its educational objectives*. With this primary focus, the assessment of student learning is a core component in determining institutional effectiveness.

To facilitate understanding and application of institutional effectiveness among member institutions, the Commission developed a Policy Statement on Institutional Effectiveness in 1992, a copy of which can be found in the Appendix of this document and on the NEASC/CIHE web site (http://www.neasc.org/cihe/commission_policies.htm).

Considered one of the essential elements of institutional quality, institutional effectiveness speaks to the dual purposes of accreditation -- accountability and improvement. Emphasis on institutional effectiveness necessitates a greater explication of what steps institutions need to take to demonstrate through self-study that they fulfill these criteria. In addition, institutional effectiveness serves as a useful organizer for institutions to use the standards in an aspirational way. The Preamble of the ~~standards~~ *Standards* -- indicates that the self-study is dedicated to "demonstrating that the institution meets the Standards and that it has effective means to ensure institutional improvement. This system of accreditation is based on institutions agreeing to participate in and to accept and profit by an honest and forthright assessment of institutional strengths and weaknesses."

Standards for Accreditation

The foundation for institutional effectiveness is contained within the standard on Planning and Evaluation:

The institution undertakes planning and evaluation appropriate to its needs to accomplish and improve the achievement of its mission and purposes. It identifies its planning and evaluation priorities and pursues them effectively.

The following numbered paragraphs provide more explication of the standard:

- 2.2 The institution undertakes short- and long-term planning, including realistic analyses of internal and external opportunities and constraints. The institution systematically collects and uses data necessary to support its planning efforts and to enhance institutional effectiveness. It plans for and responds to financial and other contingencies, establishes feasible priorities, and develops a realistic course of action to achieve identified objectives. Institutional

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decision-making, particularly the allocation of resources, is consistent with planning priorities.

- 2.4 The institution regularly and systematically evaluates the achievement of its mission and purposes, giving primary focus to the realization of its educational objectives. Its system of evaluation is designed to provide relevant and trustworthy information to support institutional improvement, with an emphasis on the academic program. The institution's evaluation efforts are effective for addressing its unique circumstances. These efforts use both quantitative and qualitative methods.
- 2.6 Evaluation enables the institution to demonstrate through verifiable means its attainment of purposes and objectives both inside and outside the classroom. The results of evaluation are used systematically for improvement and to inform institutional planning, especially as it relates to student achievement and resource allocation.

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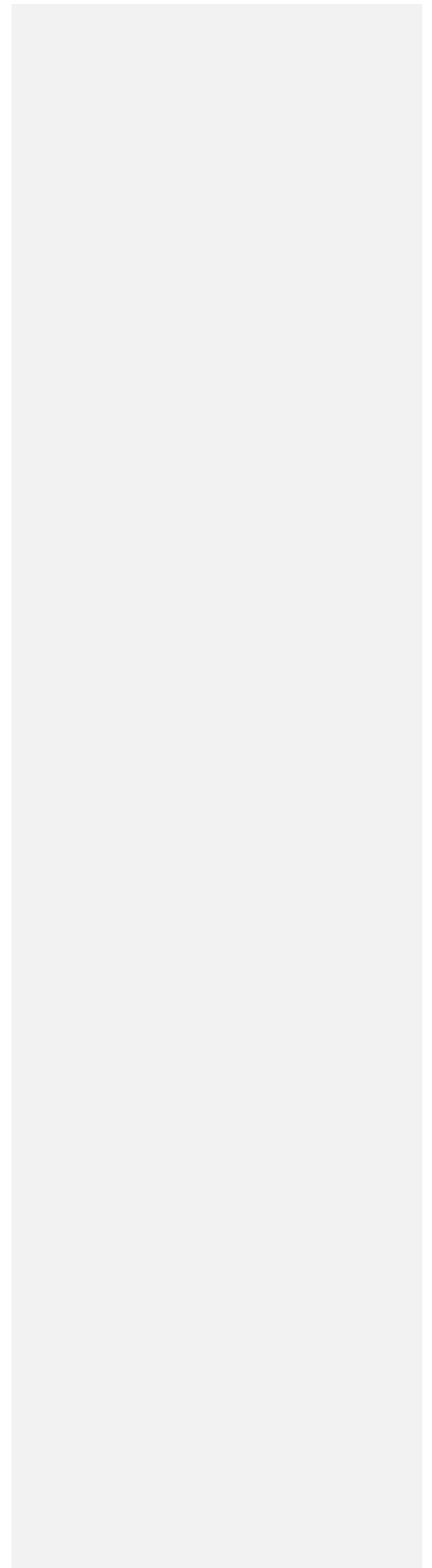
Implicit in these criteria is the expectation that institutional effectiveness is an ongoing cyclical process that involves ~~the~~ articulating the mission and purposes for the institution and aligning goals and objectives for each of its academic and administrative programs to the mission; gathering evidence to ascertain attainment of mission and purposes, and program level goals and objectives; interpreting that evidence; and using interpretations to make improvements and to inform institutional decision-making that enables continuous improvement. Specific to student learning, institutional effectiveness takes the form of assessing student learning, through a process that articulates expected student outcomes, gathers and interprets evidence regarding what and how students are learning, and uses these interpretations to enhance teaching and learning and to inform institutional decision-making in order to continually improve students' learning experiences and their expected outcomes. This cyclical process is illustrated in the diagram on the following page.

In addition to the *Planning and Evaluation and The Academic Program* standards, institutional effectiveness is given expression through the final numbered paragraph under each standard which speaks to the need to assess the attainment of institutional goals and to apply the information obtained through evaluation activities to further enhance the achievement of those goals.

One fundamental purpose of these criteria is to cultivate within an institution a habit of inquisitiveness, both formal and informal, about its effectiveness with a corollary commitment to making meaningful use of the results of that curiosity. In this way, deficiencies are recognized and corrected and processes to strengthen practice are identified and implemented. The effectiveness of the institution is thus improved. Equally important, these habits can identify and verify institutional strengths, providing a basis for their preservation, celebration, and enhancement.

Thus, the overall goal of the Commission's focus on institutional effectiveness is to develop within the institution the capacity to verify that it is, in fact, achieving its purposes. While each college or university is autonomous in establishing its own goals, all must strive to demonstrate their achievement as a condition of accreditation. In that way, the accountability function of accreditation is served.

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Assessment of Student Learning

Given that the achievement of defined educational objectives is central to the purpose of every institution of higher learning, the standards also speak explicitly to the need to verify the attainment of these objectives. The standard on *The Academic Program* states that:

The institution’s academic programs are consistent with and serve to fulfill its mission and purposes. The institution works systematically and effectively to plan, provide, oversee, evaluate, improve, and assure the academic quality and integrity of its academic programs and the credits and degrees awarded. The institution develops the systematic means to understand how and what students are learning and to use the evidence obtained to improve the academic program.

A section of numbered paragraphs under this standard with the heading of ‘Assessment of Student Learning’ as well as several other numbered paragraphs within *The Academic Program* standard speak directly to the assessment of ‘what and how students learn.’

In demonstrating that they meet this standard, institutions will focus on how they determine the competence of students and graduates. It is by no means the Commission’s intent to assess and certify such competence for individuals. Rather, the expectation is that institutions have in place mechanisms which assure that graduates have met specified educational objectives and that these mechanisms result in concrete evidence of their graduates’ achievement and provide the basis for further improvement of programs and services for students.

Evidence of Student Learning

Evidence of student learning can be collected through both direct and indirect methods during students’ undergraduate and graduate careers and after graduation. Using a combination of direct and indirect methods offers complementary information regarding ‘what and how students learn.’ Direct methods reveal student attainment of knowledge, abilities, skills, attitudes, and values. Other terms used for direct methods of assessment include ‘performance assessment,’ and ‘authentic assessment’ or, when integrating assessment with instruction, ‘embedded assessment.’ Indirect methods gather the perceptions of students and others about what students have learned, and opinions and reflections about the teaching and learning process as well as indications of what factors affect student learning.

~~In addition to the *Planning and Evaluation* and *The Academic Program* standards, institutional effectiveness is given expression through the final numbered paragraph under each standard which speaks to the need to assess the attainment of institutional goals~~

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and to apply the information obtained through evaluation activities to further enhance the achievement of those goals.

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Thus, the overall goal of the Commission's focus on institutional effectiveness is to develop within the institution the capacity to verify that it is, in fact, achieving its purposes. While each college or university is autonomous in establishing its own goals, all must strive to demonstrate their achievement as a condition of accreditation. In that way, the accountability function of accreditation is served.

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Some Methods that Can Provide Direct Evidence of Student Learning

- Locally developed tests administered program- or institution-wide
- Standardized tests
- Pre- and post-tests
- Essay tests blind scored across units
- Internally juried review of student projects
- Externally juried review of student projects
- Externally reviewed internships
- Performance on national licensure examinations
- Student work samples
- Collections of student work (e.g., Portfolios)
- Course-embedded assessment
- Observations of student behavior.
- Average scores and pass rates on licensure examinations
-

Some Methods that Can Provide Indirect Evidence of Student Learning

- Alumni and employer surveys
- Locally or nationally developed student surveys
- Focus groups
- Time diaries of students
- Exit interviews with graduates
- Student participation rates in elective internship, study abroad, or other enrichment programs
- Graduate follow-up studies
- Percentage of students who go on to graduate school
- Admission rates to selective programs at the higher degree
- Student performance in regional and national disciplinary and professional competitions
- Retention and transfer studies
- Job placement statistics.

Although the following methods may be useful to an institution for demonstrating institutional effectiveness other than the assessment of what and how student learn, they do not provide evidence of student learning.

Methods that Do Not Provide Evidence of Student Learning

- Faculty publications (unless students are involved)
- Courses selected or elected by students
- Faculty/student ratios
- Enrollment trends
- Amount of support for student scholarships
- Percentage of students who graduate within five to six years
- Diversity of the student body
- Size of the endowment
- Number of books in the library

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Policy Statement on Institutional Effectiveness

To facilitate understanding and application of institutional effectiveness among member institutions, the Commission developed a Policy Statement on Institutional Effectiveness in 1992, a copy of which can be found in the appendix of this document and on the NEASC/CHE web site (http://www.neasc.org/cihe/commission_policies.htm). Among the principles it enunciates are the following:

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- There is no one best way to assess institutional effectiveness, and the Commission prescribes no formula that an institution must use in measuring or demonstrating its effectiveness. Successful assessment efforts are compatible with the institution's mission and its available resources.
- Assessment is not a one-time activity; rather, it is evolutionary, ongoing, and incremental. Over time, the institution's assessment efforts will be more comprehensive, systematic, integrative, and organic.
- While institutional effectiveness is an overall institutional concern, as reflected in the various standards for accreditation, its primary focus is on the effectiveness of the teaching/learning experience.
- Ultimately, assessment and accreditation share the common goal of enabling the institution to reach its fullest academic potential by providing the highest quality education possible. In pursuing that goal, institutional autonomy should be preserved, innovation encouraged, and the distinct character of each institution recognized and honored.

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Addressing Institutional Effectiveness in the Self-Study Report

Through the self-study, the institution is afforded an opportunity to discuss and examine its efforts to ensure institutional effectiveness both for each standard (the last numbered paragraph of each standard) and in a more integrated way for the institution as a whole. In both instances, the institution needs to go beyond discussing evaluative processes and relate how it actually makes use of the results of its various institutional effectiveness efforts; the use of examples that is that describes specific results and the way the results have affected planning, decision-making, and resource allocation are most useful.

The Commission asks that the self-study chapter on *Planning and Evaluation*, particularly in responding to the paragraphs numbered 2.2, 2.4 and 2.6, provide an overall analysis or summary statement of the ways in which institutional effectiveness efforts are being undertaken at the institution and how the results are utilized. The Commission views this component of the self-study as the natural locus for the institution to provide a comprehensive and integrative discussion of how it addresses institutional effectiveness. This discussion should provide an overarching or institution-wide description and appraisal of the institution's institutional effectiveness efforts. Through it, the institution should explicate how it determines its institutional effectiveness priorities, collects evidence, undertakes the interpretation of such evidence, and uses the gathered information in various decision-making processes to make changes and improvements throughout the institution. In essence then, the chapter on *Planning and Evaluation* elucidates how the institution is addressing institutional effectiveness concerns as part of a comprehensive effort.

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The chapter on *Planning and Evaluation* also affords the institution to examine the extent to which it is moving or has moved from isolated and sporadic efforts in planning and evaluation to the development of practices and systems that are more comprehensive, systematic, and integrated – and thus more useful to the institution.

Moreover, in keeping with its function of quality assurance, the Commission asks the institution in its self-study chapters on *Planning and Evaluation* and *The Academic Program* ~~to~~ also to describe and assess the measures it uses to determine that its mission and purposes are being met. An important component of this effort should be the presentation of aggregate evidence of institutional accomplishment.

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In the projection component of the chapters on *Planning and Evaluation* and *The Academic Program* the institution should ~~endeavor to~~ identify ways in which it will address and how it will more effectively demonstrate outcomes, and the degree to which its institutional effectiveness efforts will become "more comprehensive, systematic, integrative, organic," – and thus more useful to the institution – as ~~as~~ called for in the Policy Statement on Institutional Effectiveness.

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EXHIBITS and EVIDENCE

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The development of a “document room,” once operating in physical space, has become increasingly electronic. Institutions are encouraged to explore how the compilation of key institutional documents in a single place made available on the intranet can serve as a continuing resource to the community.

Institutions are also encouraged to make the documents available electronically to the team, through access to the institution’s intranet during the period between mailing of the self study and conclusion of the visit, through a CD ROM that accompanies the self study, or through hot linking the evidence to the relevant words in an electronic copy of the self study, distributed along with the paper copy to the team and the Commission offices.

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SELF-STUDY OPTIONS

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The Commission views the traditional self-study undertaken by most institutions whereby the eleven *Standards for Accreditation* are comprehensively applied and improvement is sought in each area to be highly beneficial to all types of colleges and universities. Nevertheless, the Commission recognizes that there may be circumstances when it would be advantageous for an institution to take a different approach. Among these might be:

- the self-study with special emphasis (which is described at length below);
- adapting the self-study to a comprehensive strategic planning process;
- using the self-study effort as an opportunity to audit the institution's quality-assurance, assessment, improvement systems; and
- sequential self-study followed by coordinated site visits over a period of time.

This list is not meant to be exhaustive; institutions may wish to propose other ~~possibly~~ possible experimental approaches and the Commission encourages institutions to do so when as a result of thoughtful deliberation they conclude that benefits of following an alternative model appear to outweigh those likely to result from a more traditional design. Regardless of the approach adopted, the self-study process and resulting report must be undertaken in a manner which fulfills the basic purposes of accreditation: quality assurance and institutional improvement. It is also important that the self-study address broad institutional issues and that it provide a basis for ~~judgement~~ judgment regarding fulfillment of the *Standards for Accreditation*.

Submitting a Proposal for an Alternative ~~Optional~~ Approach. Institutions wishing to consider an alternative self-study option should discuss the possibility with a member of the Commission's staff. If there is an agreement that taking an alternative optional approach is desirable, the institution is asked to submit a proposal to the Commission office indicating its rationale and objectives for its self-study design. Essentially, the proposal should answer the following questions: Why does the institution wish to undertake an alternative self-study? What does the institution wish to study? How are these areas related to the Commission's *Standards for Accreditation*? How does it plan to ~~do so~~ study these areas? What planning and evaluation mechanisms will be utilized to demonstrate it meets the *Standards for Accreditation*? Approval by the Commission's staff is required for an institution to pursue a self-study option. The Commission will be informed of such approvals.

SELF-STUDY OPTION: SELF-STUDY WITH AREAS OF EMPHASIS

The most commonly adopted alternative to the traditional self-study is the Self-Study with Areas of Emphasis. Here an institution identifies a limited number of salient and challenging issues currently affecting it and engages in rigorous self-examination with an eye toward enhancing performance in these areas, and thus having a positive impact on its overall effectiveness. However, because accreditation is about quality assurance, the institution is also expected to provide a self-evaluative *overview* with regard to all the Standards. Thus, a Self-Study with Areas of Emphasis is designed to encourage institutional improvement while providing a basis to make a judgment about overall institutional quality. The dual purposes of self-study are thereby met. The resulting

report is a two-part document focusing on the areas of emphasis as well as addressing the Standards.

In ascertaining whether a Self-Study with Areas of Emphasis is appropriate, it is important that the institution seriously consider the following factors: (1) Are there salient and challenging issues that warrant this kind of intensive examination? (2) Do conditions and circumstances prevail in the life cycle of the institution that make the timing "right" to engage in self-examination with respect to primarily these selected issues? and (3) Does the institution have in place effective and ongoing mechanisms for planning and evaluation that can be used to demonstrate that it meets the *Standards for Accreditation* without utilizing the standard comprehensive self-study format?

If these conditions obtain, it is important that the institution be cognizant of the Commission's expectations with respect to the Areas of Emphasis portion of this type of self-study. It should embody the following characteristics:

- a concentration on broad, current, substantive institutional issues which reflects a commitment on the institution's part to meaningfully address them;
- an analytical framework for addressing those issues that is informed by the Standards;
- rigorous analysis and self-evaluation which focuses on institutional improvement;
- plans to provide for implementation of any steps determined to be necessary.

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SELF-STUDY WITH AREAS OF EMPHASIS: PROCESS/PRODUCT

While components of the process employed in undertaking the conventional self-study and aspects of the self-study report are somewhat similar, the processes and product do differ substantially as indicated below.

Process

Given the unique character and objectives of each institution and of the ways in which the areas of emphasis bear upon it, the Commission does not wish to prescribe an approach that all institutions should follow in undertaking the self-study process. It could be organized in several ways. Experience has shown that the following approach is helpful; nonetheless, institutions should not hesitate to adopt processes to meet their own needs and circumstances.

In general, the process employed in undertaking the self-study option may involve three distinct components.

- First, a steering committee may be formed with the dual responsibility of ensuring that the self-study adequately addresses all the *Standards for Accreditation*, and giving direction in the areas chosen for special emphasis.
- Second, there should be a mechanism devised for doing the first part of the self-study which involves a descriptive and analytical review of the institution

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against all eleven standards. The following points should be helpful in determining how to proceed:

- This mechanism could take several forms ranging from having one knowledgeable person working on a specific standard or standards to a committee composed of several individuals.
- It is not necessary to establish a committee for each of the eleven standards. It is important, however, that each individual or group of individuals be familiar with their assigned standard and its relationship to the institution. Existing committees may be utilized.
- The self-evaluative process involves gathering the information necessary to accurately describe the current status of the institution in the area(s) encompassed by the standard. This is followed by an appraisal of the extent to which the institution meets the standard. The institution then indicates plans contemplated or developed to address the standard.
- Whatever mechanism is employed, the institution should take advantage of and wherever possible build upon its existing planning and evaluation mechanisms. However the institution chooses to proceed with this part of the self-study, the draft should be validated by a larger group.
- Third, institutions exercising this option will most likely wish to establish committees to address each of the areas of emphasis that together will constitute the second half of the self-study. As with the other committee structures, the institution should ascertain the size and makeup of these entities in view of relevant institutional factors. Here again the institution can use existing committees to facilitate the process. While these committees will be expected to afford these topics much effort and deliberation, it is important to keep in mind that their work is informed by and their report related to the Standards. The efforts and results of undertaking a reflective examination of these areas should inform both the institution's short- and long-term planning initiatives and its various decision making and evaluative processes. Means for systematically and periodically assessing the institution's progress in effectively meeting the challenges posed by these areas should be established.

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Product

As noted, the Self-Study with Areas of Emphasis report involves two major parts. The first component is a broad overview of the institution against the full array of standards. Given the new ~~trusts~~ emphases and rigor of the Standards particularly as they relate to general education, scholarship, the quality of the academic program, institutional effectiveness, and institutional integrity, the Commission maintains that it is especially important that during this decade every institution engage in self-examination in terms of all of them. Therefore, the first part of the self-study report should address all eleven standards. Although this type of self-study provides an explanation and analysis of how the institution meets the Standards, it is not meant to be a comprehensive improvement mechanism like the conventional self-study. Substantively, this section of the self-study provides the reader factual information as to how ~~the institution~~ the institution meets each Standard, an assessment of the extent to which each Standard is met and an indication of any future direction commitments the institution plans to take in addressing the Standard.

The remainder of the self-study report is devoted to the areas of emphasis which involves utilizing the triad of description, appraisal, and projection. This triad essentially raises three questions: What is? What should be? and How does the institution get there? Following this format allows the institution to highlight its capacity to engage in continuous improvement and explicate its efforts to increase its effectiveness in the areas of emphasis. This triad is applicable to each of the areas of emphasis.

Description. This section should provide a realistic and objective presentation of the present status of the institution with respect to each area of emphasis. It is as stated descriptive in nature.

Appraisal. The second section involves analysis. It requires the institution to make a thorough assessment of the effectiveness in the areas of emphasis, recognizing both the institution's achievements and its challenges. This self-judgment is a crucial component of the entire self-study process. It requires deliberation and critical thinking.

Projection. After the institution has described and appraised each of the areas of emphasis, the institution is asked to indicate plans to maintain and enhance strengths and to address areas of concern. These projections should be realistic and specific, rather than vague and discursive. In accordance with the Commission's view that self-study is inextricably linked to planning, these projections should be explored as part of the institution's planning process, representing a definite commitment to development in the areas of emphasis over the next few years. It is at this point that the results of self-evaluation are translated into practice.

FORMAT OF THE SELF-STUDY WITH AREAS OF EMPHASIS

In order to enhance the reader's understanding of the institution at a given point in time, the Self-Study with Areas of Emphasis should include the following components: Institutional Characteristics, Preface, Self-Study Overview, Section on the Standards, Section on Areas of Emphasis, [data forms](#), and ~~an Appendix~~[other appendices](#) (see pages ~~10-149-1222~~ of this guide).

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DISTRIBUTION OF THE REPORT

Six weeks prior to the evaluation visit, mail to each member of the visiting committee:

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- a copy of the self-study report; and
- current catalog(s).

In addition, the institution may want to consider adding a limited amount of additional material, such as a viewbook, and, if central to the self-study, a copy of the institution's most recent strategic plan.

In addition, for use by members of the Commission, mail three-four complete sets of the same materials to:

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The New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc.
 Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
 209 Burlington Road
 Bedford, Massachusetts 01730-1433

The institution should also provide the Commission office with one electronic copy of the self-study for the Association archives. The preferred medium ~~is a 3.5 inch high density disc in Microsoft Word/Excel format~~ pdf document sent to cihe@neasc.org. It is imperative that the ~~file in the disc~~ electronic version and the ~~printout~~ printed version be identical.

Additional copies of the institution's self-study report should be retained by the institution.

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The Commission strongly urges that the self-study be widely distributed and available throughout the campus community before the evaluation team arrives for its site visit. After the evaluation team has departed, it is the Commission's hope that the self-study will be used by the institution to help guide its planning activities and to serve as a vehicle for engaging in continuous improvement.

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STAFF ASSISTANCE

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Each year in the fall, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education gives a Self-Study Workshop intended for institutions preparing for comprehensive evaluations in two-years' time. Participating in the Workshop are presenters and discussion group leaders who have experienced the various facets of the accreditation and self-study process through service as self-study committee chairs, evaluation team chairs, or presidents of institutions recently evaluated. The Workshop is designed for prospective self-study chairs, presidents and those key individuals who will be most intimately involved in organizing and directing the self-study. The Workshop provides a valuable opportunity to learn more about and more fully understand the intricacies and complexities involved in self-study.

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From the time of the Self-Study Workshop and perhaps even before that event to the days of the evaluation team's visit, the institution will be involved in a process of institutional self-examination. Indeed, during the course of engaging in self-study questions are raised, concerns surface. It is important to know that the staff of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education are here to assist throughout that time. The most common requests for staff assistance include a staff visit to the campus, with a focus on the self-study process and product or on institutional effectiveness, and the submission of a draft of the self-study for general feedback and comments.

At any time, please know the staff are only a phone call away. No question is unworthy of being asked as an institution undergoes this intensive and important process. Through conversation and discussion in person during the course of staff site visits, over the telephone and via correspondence and e-mail, every effort is made to ensure that self-study is a fulfilling experience and that the individuals and the institution are able to reach their fullest potential for self-improvement through that effort.

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