



Self-Study Guidelines for Institutions Seeking Initial Accreditation Under Pathway B

Purpose of the Self-Study: The WASC Policy “Initial Accreditation for Institutions Currently Accredited by a USDOE- Recognized Agency” (termed “Pathway B” for WASC usage) provides a procedure by which an institution *may* obtain Initial Accreditation more rapidly than those seeking institutional accreditation for the first time. The USDOE has stipulated that the WASC Commission must determine that an applicant institution meets WASC Standards of Accreditation regardless of its standing with another accrediting agency. When the institution has been successfully reviewed for Eligibility by a panel of the Eligibility Review Committee and also approved by this panel to apply under Pathway B, the institution will submit a self-study under the WASC Standards in preparation for a visit by a site team to verify compliance with the Standards. Submission of the self-study report is the responsibility of the designated Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO); however, WASC expects that the report be the product of wide institutional consultation and involvement.

Nature of the Self-Study: Institutions should consider the following when preparing the Pathway B self-study:

Approach. The recommended method to align the self-study with the WASC Standards and Criteria for Review (CFRs) is to use the document, “Preliminary Self-Review under the Standards,” available on the WASC website. This structuring device supports an institution’s self-analysis under each CFR, inviting participants to rate the institution’s strength in each area using a numeric scale. Participants may also rate how important it is for each CFR to be addressed by the institution at this time. By using this approach, campus constituencies will increase their awareness of the WASC Standards, identify areas of good practice and those needing attention, and provide broad input into the report’s findings. For each CFR, the institution should assess its status with regard to both its capacity to undertake its mission and, as appropriate, its effectiveness in fulfilling that mission. Thus the distinction between these two foci as carried out in other WASC reviews does not apply. The self-study should address both, while being appropriately brief. Finally, this tool is also useful for identifying and recording the evidence and documents that you will need to include in a data portfolio to demonstrate compliance. (See below on data portfolio.)

Engagement and Reflection. The purpose of the self-study report is to provide a site team and the Commission with a basis for determining the degree to which the institution currently meets the WASC Standards. It should not be viewed as a promotional document designed primarily to feature the institution’s positive attributes. It should be a candid portrayal of institutional strengths and achievements as well as a reflection on areas needing development and challenges.

The Report. The narrative self-study report submitted to the WASC office and the team should not exceed 50 pages, not counting appendices. The institution will submit one hard-copy version and one digital copy (on a memory stick/USB thumb drive) to the WASC office, with additional digital copies sent directly to each site team member. The report is due 12 weeks prior to the scheduled site visit. The appendices should be arranged as a **Data Portfolio:** Using a format in which each assertion is linked to evidence, and drawing on some of the materials gathered for the Eligibility application, along with others, the self-study should link supporting documents to the assertions made under each CFR. The institution is also expected to complete the data portfolio typically required for the CPR visit of a comprehensive review. These forms can be found on the WASC website at [http://www.wascenior.org/findit/files/forms/Data Exhibits for Capacity Preparatory Review Sep 08 .doc](http://www.wascenior.org/findit/files/forms/Data_Exhibits_for_Capacity_Preparatory_Review_Sep_08_.doc). Additional details for the preparation of the report can be obtained from the institution's WASC staff liaison.

Additional Documents. The institution is required to submit the following documents (available on the WASC website) with the self study:

- a. **Summary Data Form.** In this document, the institution submits information essential for the Commission review and for completing the WASC database, such as enrollment (which is used to determine dues), key personnel, graduation numbers and rates, and basic information about finances and governance.
- b. **Compliance Audit.** Required of all institutions seeking WASC accreditation, this form is used to confirm that the institution has in place a core set of policies, procedures, and forms essential for operation. The institution should complete the form electronically, creating internal links to the required documents. During the site visit, the team will verify the existence of the required documents.
- c. **Other Forms.** Depending on the nature of the institution, additional forms may be required dealing with matters such as related entities, governance structures, and the like. The institution's WASC liaison will specify prior to the site visit which forms may be required.

Integrating with the WASC Culture. Even as it prepares for this important report and site visit, the institution is encouraged to support key faculty members and administrators to participate in WASC workshops, conferences, and other training events. These activities will build institutional familiarity with the values, concepts, and terminology associated with a WASC review. In addition to attending workshops specific to his or her role, the ALO should also begin to build a "WASC library" of publications, correspondence, examples, and other helpful materials that can be referenced by present and future personnel associated with WASC activities. We strongly advise that institutional leaders schedule a two-hour meeting at the WASC office with the assigned liaison to discuss the self-study, WASC review and visits processes, and to meet other members of the WASC

staff. You may also host the liaison on a visit to the campus. These interactions will help to build mutual understanding as the institution moves forward.

Required WASC Interactions. As specified in the letter notifying the institution that it has been deemed Eligible to apply for Initial Accreditation, any anticipated changes that would typically require a Substantive Change – such as new degree programs, teaching locations, degree levels, or delivery modalities – that were not identified in the Eligibility application must either be postponed until the institution has a formal relationship with WASC (i.e., Candidacy or Initial Accreditation) or be submitted for prior review and approval by the Eligibility Review Committee panel.