

[INSTITUTION NAME] BPPE Accreditation Plan

WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC)

In accordance with Title 5, California Code of Regulations (5, CCR) section 71105, **[Institution Name]** presents its Accreditation Plan to the Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education.

[Institution Name] Plan

Introduction: WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) is a California nonprofit public benefit corporation established for the purposes of accrediting senior colleges and universities in the region.

WSCUC was originally formed on July 1, 1962 to evaluate and accredit schools, colleges, and universities in California, Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Palau, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Three separate accrediting commissions serve this region: one for K-12 schools (ACS WASC), one for community and junior colleges (ACCJC), and one for senior colleges and universities (WSCUC).

WSCUC has been recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation as a reliable authority concerning the quality of education provided by member institutions of higher education offering the associate degree, baccalaureate degree and post-baccalaureate degrees.

5, CCR section 71105(b)(1): **[Institution Name]** has identified **WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC)** as its accreditation agency.

5, CCR section 71105(b)(2): WSCUC's Eligibility Criteria

WSCUC has 16 Criteria to achieve Eligibility before site visits begin to achieve Preaccreditation (defined as Candidacy by WSCUC) and Initial Accreditation. Panelists from the WSCUC Eligibility Review Committee review the institution's evidence of compliance with the criteria in order to grant Eligibility. Full information with more details about each Criterion is published in the *How to Become Accredited Procedures Manual for Eligibility, Preaccreditation (Candidacy) and Initial Accreditation* in Appendix A which can be found at:

<http://www.wascsenior.org/resources/eligibility>

SECTION ONE: INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Criterion 1. Authority

The institution is authorized to operate as an educational institution and to award degrees by the appropriate governmental organization or agency as required by each of the jurisdictions or regions in which it operates. For private institutions incorporated in California, the institution shall have completed formal state approval process through the Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education (BPPE); temporary approval will not be accepted. Because of the current backlog of approvals by BPPE, ERC panels can recommend Eligibility on condition that state approval is acquired prior to Initial Accreditation.

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For law schools in California, the institution shall also demonstrate that it is accredited by the California State Bar Association. Institutions offering online law degrees, which are not eligible for accreditation by the State Bar of California Committee of Bar Examiners, may be considered for eligibility provided they are deemed to have met all other WSCUC Eligibility Criteria.

Institutions operating entirely in an online modality, with students enrolled without regard to geographical location, are expected to be incorporated or otherwise legally constituted within the region and have their primary executive offices in the region, including operational functions (executive offices, student records, board minutes, support staff, etc.)

If the applicant is part of a larger system or organization, the entity that WSCUC would accredit must meet these location requirements.

Criterion 2. Operational Status

It must be clear that institutional planning and resources are sufficiently mature to ensure that by the time of the first review for Initial Accreditation, the institution will be operational with students actively pursuing its degree program(s) **and will have graduated its first class.**

Criterion 3. Public Information

The institution publishes in its catalog, or in other appropriate places, accurate and current information that describes its purposes and objectives, admission requirements and procedures, financial aid policies and procedures, rules and regulations directly affecting students, programs and courses, degrees offered and the degree requirements, costs and refund policies, formal and informal grievance procedures, academic credentials of faculty and administrators, and other items relative to students' attending the institution or withdrawing from it.

Criterion 4. Relations with the Accrediting Commission

The governing board provides a formal statement as part of its Eligibility Application that the institution agrees to adhere to these Eligibility Criteria, describes itself in identical terms to all of its accrediting agencies, promptly communicates any changes in its status, and discloses any and all information required by the Commission to carry out its accrediting responsibilities. Such information includes actions taken by governmental bodies and other accrediting agencies, including investigations, reports, and legal actions taken by or against the institution. Further, the institution agrees that in pursuing Candidacy and Initial Accreditation, it is committed to abiding by the Standards, Policies, and Procedures established by WSCUC.

Criterion 5. Academic and Transfer Credit

The institution awards academic credits based on generally accepted practices in degree-granting institutions of higher education. In awarding credit, the institution adheres to federal guidelines consistent with WSCUC's *Credit Hour Policy* (available on the WSCUC website).

If the institution accepts transfer students, it has established policies for the review and acceptance of transfer credits consistent with WSCUC's *Transfer of Credit Policy* (available on the WSCUC website).

SECTION TWO: INSTITUTIONAL MISSION AND PLANNING

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Criterion 6. Mission and Principle Policies

The institution's purposes are clearly defined and appropriate for higher education. They are formally adopted by the governing board and published in key institutional documents. Published statements reflect the institution's commitment to achieving student learning.

The institution offers academic programs and administrative support consistent with its purposes, and ensures a climate of openness and academic freedom.

Criterion 7. Governance and Administration

An institution must demonstrate that the primary locus of its governance and operational oversight activity is based within the WSCUC region, including that the institution is a legally recognized organization that envisions a long and stable future. This is particularly relevant if the institution will seek to obtain access to federal financial assistance upon attaining WSCUC accreditation. Additionally, the institution is effectively independent of its owners or investors. Institutions should refer to WSCUC's *Independent Governing Board Policy* for WASC's expectations about governing board structures, characteristics and best practices (available on the WSCUC website). The following represent key aspects of the policy:

- Interactions with ownership and governance entities are free from interests that could compromise the institution's mission.
- The institution has a chief executive officer who is appointed and evaluated by the governing board and whose full-time or primary responsibility is to the institution.
- The institution has a chief financial officer whose full-time or primary responsibility is to the institution, and sufficient staff with appropriate preparation and experience to provide the administrative services necessary to conduct and support its affairs and the achievement of its purposes.

Criterion 8. Financial Resources and Accountability

The institution documents a viable funding base, financial resources, and plans for financial development adequate to support its purposes and educational programs and to ensure financial stability. It is expected that an operating institution not show a cumulative operating deficit for the current and preceding two years, or since its inception if less than two years old. If the institution shows a deficit, the institution must explain the reasons for the deficit, demonstrate that it has the resources to ensure its financial viability, and present a plan to restore a fiscally healthy state.

The institution annually undergoes and makes available an external financial audit by a certified public accountant or an audit by an appropriate public agency. The institution shall submit a copy of each of the two most recent audited financial statements and management letters (if any). The audit must (1) be prepared by an outside certified public accountant that has no other relationship to the institution; (2) be certified and any exceptions explained; and (3) specify whether any capital or operational funds have been provided by employees or Board members of the organization and describe any conditions related to such provisions.

Criterion 9. Institutional Planning

The institution provides evidence of basic planning for the development of the institution, which identifies and integrates plans for academic personnel, learning resources, facilities, and financial development. The institution also has established procedures for program and/or unit review, including methods for assessing student learning and the attainment of educational goals, and for using the data obtained from institutional research to support planning for institutional improvement.

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SECTION THREE: EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND STUDENT SUCCESS

Criterion 10. Degree Programs

Substantial portions of the institution's educational offerings are programs that lead to degrees, and significant proportions of its students are enrolled in the degree programs.

The institution's degree programs are congruent with its purposes, are based on recognized higher education fields of study, are of sufficient content and length, and are conducted at levels of quality and rigor appropriate to the degrees offered. At least one degree program must lead to the baccalaureate degree or higher. Institutions seeking to offer graduate degrees must be able to demonstrate that they have an appropriate graduate-level academic culture or have plans to develop a graduate culture. Relevant factors include faculty qualifications and workload, research support, access to library and other research facilities, and explicitly stated thesis or dissertation requirements.

Criterion 11. Educational Objectives and Assessment of Student Learning

The institution clearly defines and publishes educational objectives for each program, including expected student learning outcomes, and identifies how these objectives and outcomes will be addressed within the curriculum. Strategies for assessing students' achievement of these educational objectives, including direct assessment of student learning, are also established.

The institution actively engages in, or has a plan in place to systematically engage in, the evaluation of how well and in what ways it is accomplishing its purposes related to student learning and educational effectiveness.

Criterion 12. General Education

The institution defines and incorporates into all of its undergraduate degree programs a substantial component of general education, including for baccalaureate degrees both lower- and upper-division offerings, designed to ensure basic collegiate skills, breadth of knowledge, and the structures of intellectual inquiry. Educational objectives for the general education program, which include student learning outcomes, are periodically reviewed and revised with faculty involvement, and include demonstrated competence in writing, critical thinking, scientific literacy, computational skills, and an introduction to the broad domains of knowledge. Degree credit for general education programs should be consistent with levels of quality and rigor appropriate to higher education. Institutions implementing a baccalaureate degree-completion model, inverted curriculum (in which career-related courses are completed first, with general education courses being taken in the final years), or other curricular format that relies on students transferring significant portions of general education from other institutions, must describe the criteria or overall philosophy of general education by which it determines which general education credits it will accept from other institutions toward its baccalaureate degrees.

Criterion 13. Faculty

The institution has a substantial core of qualified faculty, sufficient in size, background, and experience to support all of the institution's educational program offerings, including a core of faculty whose primary responsibility is to the institution. A clear statement of faculty responsibilities must exist, which include the development and review of the curriculum, and assessment of student learning at multiple levels.

Criterion 14. Student Success

The institution has a clearly articulated commitment to the success of its students. Student services are

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aligned with that commitment and demonstrated by data on student learning, persistence, and development.

Criterion 15. Admissions

The institution has adopted and adheres to admission policies consistent with its purposes that specify the qualifications of students that are appropriate to the degree levels offered.

Criterion 16. Information and Learning Resources

The institution holds or otherwise provides long-term access to sufficient information and learning resources to support its purposes and all of its educational programs. To supplement resources beyond the core library of the institution, there may be specific long-term written arrangements for student access to off-campus or electronic resources. Programs are in place to train students in the use of library and other information resources, and to develop information literacy skills. The institution must demonstrate that library and learning resource use is a fundamental part of all its curricula, and that the faculty is involved in ensuring such use.

5, CCR section 71105(b)(3): Outline of the process and timeline for complying within two years of provisional approval with the accrediting agency's requirements for submission of a completed application for initial accreditation with the required fee

There are typically three stages to becoming accredited:

- 1. Eligibility:** a status conferred on non-WSCUC-accredited institutions for five years after committee review; signifies the institution meets the 16 Eligibility Criteria (see Appendix A) and in the judgment of the committee has the potential to meet WSCUC Standards at a minimum level and thus progress to candidacy.
- 2. Preaccreditation (Candidacy):** a status of preliminary affiliation with the Senior College and University Commission, awarded for a maximum of five years following a procedure for institutional review that includes self-study and on-site visitation. Candidacy indicates that the institution meets all or nearly all the Standards at a *minimum* level. Candidacy is not accreditation and does not ensure eventual accreditation; it means that an institution is progressing toward accreditation. (The U.S. Department of Education uses "preaccreditation" to describe the period between when the institution begins a formal relationship at Candidacy and Initial Accreditation is achieved and allows a maximum of five years in this status.)
- 3. Initial Accreditation:** indicates that the institution has met the WASC Senior College and University Commission's Standards at a *substantial* level. Initial accreditation is awarded for a period of six years before the next comprehensive review. When an institution is able to demonstrate *substantial* compliance, the Commission may grant Initial Accreditation. An onsite visit is required before the Commission will award an institution Initial Accreditation.

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Each stage has specific criteria, processes, and timeframes. An institution starting the process should carefully consider the requirements for each stage to ensure its understanding of the process and be aware that the time frame for the entire process may take several years.

5, CCR section 71105(4) (A-D): An outline of the process and timeline whereby the institution will achieve full accreditation within five years of provisional approval:

Full details about achieving Initial Accreditation can be found at:
<http://www.wascsenior.org/resources/eligibility> .

Although each institution will vary depending on maturity and preparation, the following represents what is typical:

1. Contact WSCUC Vice President Richard Osborn who oversee the process for achieving accreditation by writing: rosborn@wascsenior.org or by calling his direct line at (510) 995-3150 for further information.
2. Attendance at an Eligibility Workshop is required before submitting an Eligibility Application.
3. The fee for applying for eligibility is \$12,500. Most recent fees can be found on the WSCUC website at: www.wascsenior.org by putting "fee and dues" into the search feature of the website.
4. The institution submits a one-page Notification of Intent to Apply with the application fee.
5. WSCUC staff will provide access to an online portal to which the full Eligibility Application is submitted demonstrating compliance with the 16 Eligibility Criteria.
6. After the application is submitted, a panel of the Eligibility Review Committee is convened, usually within two months, to review the application and to make a decision. The institution is invited to join a conference call as part of the deliberations.
7. Shortly before the conference call takes place, a WSCUC staff liaison is assigned to work with the institution after Eligibility is granted.
8. If Eligibility is granted (for five years), the institution submits a \$15,000 fee which covers the cost of the first two Seeking Accreditation Visits (SAV) with team member travel costs and on-site costs such as hotel and food expenses in addition.
9. A Letter of Intent is submitted to the staff liaison for approval.
10. The institution begins its self-study process to prepare an institutional report demonstrating compliance with WSCUC's Standards. Typically one year is needed between approval of Eligibility and the first SAV. A peer team is appointed of around five team members, depending on the size and complexity of the institution.
11. The SAV is scheduled for three days on campus or at the headquarters of the institution by the staff liaison in consultation with the institution.
12. A team report is submitted focusing on the level of compliance found by the team which is reported to the Commission in a team report.
13. The Commission meets to make decisions either at its February or June meeting.
14. If at least minimal compliance is found with the four Standards by the Commission, the institution is granted Candidacy for five years. Institutions should expect at least two visits with one for Candidacy and one for Initial Accreditation although some institutions may achieve Initial

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Accreditation with one visit. Subsequent visits only focus on areas found to be in minimal compliance.

15. When substantial compliance is found by the Commission, Initial Accreditation can be granted at either the February or June Commission meeting.
16. If more than one SAV is needed, the interval between visits is usually eighteen months although more or less time may take place depending on advice from the staff liaison.
17. The time required to achieve Eligibility, Candidacy, and Initial Accreditation vary widely, depending on the maturity and robustness of the institution.

[Institution] outlines the process and timeline for full accreditation by **[Date]**

(Note from BPPE – Please determine what the appropriate timelines will be in consultation with WSCUC staff.)

Tasks	Jan 2019	July 2019	Nov 2019	Jan 2020	Jul 2020	Dec 2020	July 2021	Jul 2022	Dec 2022
Submit Notification of Intent to Apply	x								
Submit Eligibility Application		x							
Eligibility is Granted			x						
Submit Application and fee for Initial Accreditation				x					
Submit Letter of Intent					x				
Initial Team Site Visit						x			
Candidacy Status Granted							x		
Initial Accreditation Institutional Report								x	
Team Site Visit									x
Accreditor Decision									

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Notes:

- (1) This is a sample accreditation plan. The requirements and dates for each individual plan will vary by institution and chosen accreditor.**
- (2) It is possible that achieving accreditation with WASC for new institutions may take longer than five (5) years. Institutions may request an extension of time, not to exceed two (2) years, to meet accreditation requirements. However, the institution must demonstrate it is making strong progress toward obtaining accreditation.**