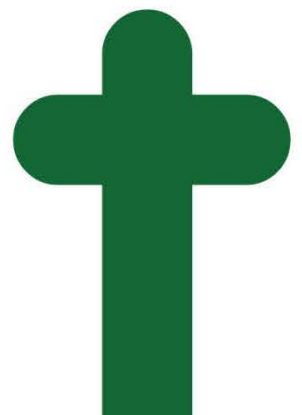


Steps Toward Accreditation



Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools



Steps Toward Accreditation

Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools (TRACS) is recognized by the United States Department of Education (USDE), the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), and International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) as a national accrediting agency for Christian postsecondary institutions that offer certificates, diplomas, associate, baccalaureate, and graduate degrees, including distance learning.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	iii
a. Purpose	iii
b. Aims.....	iv
c. The Role and Value of Accreditation	iv
d. Scope	vi
e. Affiliation and Membership	vii
CATEGORIES FOR ACCREDITATION.....	viii
INSTITUTIONAL ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS (IERS).....	viii
CORRESPONDING TO APPLICANT STATUS	1
a. Steps to Achieve Applicant Status.....	3
b. Institutional Eligibility Requirements	5
c. Withdrawal of Application	5
d. Corresponding to Applicant Checklist.....	7
APPLICANT TO CANDIDATE STATUS.....	9
a. Steps to Achieve Candidate Status	11
b. Denial of Candidate Status	13
c. Reference to Candidate Status in Inst. Publications.....	13
d. Progress Report for Candidate Institutions.....	14
e. Applicant to Candidate Checklist.....	15
CANDIDATE TO ACCREDITED STATUS.....	17
a. Steps to Achieve Accredited Status.....	20
b. Denial of Accredited Status	22
c. Right to Appeal the Accreditation Commission Decision	22
d. Reference to Accredited Status in Inst. Publications	22
e. Status Report for Accredited Institutions.....	22
f. Candidate to Accredited Checklist.....	23
REAFFIRMATION OF ACCREDITED STATUS	25
a. Steps to Reaffirmation	27
b. Denial of Reaffirmation	29
c. Right to Appeal the Accreditation Commission Decision	29
d. Reference to Reaffirmed Status in Inst. Publications.....	29
e. Status Report for Reaffirmed Institutions.....	30
f. Interim Fifth-Year Review	30
g. Reaffirmation Checklist.....	31
APPENDIX A: Sample Timeline with Deadlines	33
APPENDIX B: Interim Fifth-Year Review	37

INTRODUCTION

The *Steps Toward Accreditation* manual is designed to convey all steps to guide institutions through Applicant Status, Candidate Status, Accredited Status, and reaffirmation with the Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools (TRACS).

The manual is intended for all institutions who have indicated an interest in seeking accreditation with TRACS, and details the steps of each of the processes for moving from a corresponding institution to an applicant institution, from an applicant institution to a candidate institution, from a candidate institution to an accredited institution, and for those accredited institutions which are seeking reaffirmation of their accreditation. Questions regarding the accreditation process (policies, procedures, standards, or evaluative criteria) should be directed to the TRACS office.

All accreditation standards, which serve as the basis of the process toward accreditation, are available in the *Accreditation Manual*. This publication may be downloaded from the TRACS website (www.tracs.org) in the *Downloads* section.

Purpose

The principal purpose of TRACS is to provide an accreditation program for postsecondary institutions, e.g., Christian liberal arts, colleges/universities, graduate schools/seminaries, Bible colleges/institutes, that offer a certificate, diploma, or degree (Associate, Baccalaureate, or graduate) at both accredited and candidate (pre-accredited) level to ensure their academic quality, financial stability, and student support services, which will allow the institution and their students the benefits of participating in federally-funded programs.

The Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools (TRACS) is a voluntary, non-profit, self-governing organization of Christian postsecondary institutions. TRACS is recognized as a national institutional accrediting agency by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) and is a member of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). TRACS was established by a group of educators in 1979, the purpose of which was to promote the welfare, interests, and development of quality Christian postsecondary institutions whose mission is characterized by a distinctively Christian orientation. While TRACS encourages each institution to develop its own distinctive, TRACS expects institutions to provide quality postsecondary education within the context of Christian values, with emphasis on high academic standards, integrity, practical application, and spiritual development. The governing boards of these institutions have voluntarily applied to TRACS and their institutions have been approved by the Accreditation Commission after having met the established requirements for either the candidate (pre-accredited) level or accredited level as described below.

The required criteria includes both FOUNDATIONAL STANDARDS (assuring the institution's constituents and the public of its biblical foundations, mission and objectives, philosophical, ethical and moral values) and OPERATIONAL STANDARDS (providing assurance of educational and financial integrity).

The Accreditation Commission is solely responsible to carry out all accreditation activities and has final authority regarding all accreditation actions. It formulates and implements all policies,

STEPS TOWARD ACCREDITATION

procedures, standards, and evaluative criteria used in the accreditation process. The Accreditation Commission consists of nine to eighteen (9-18) commissioners, including three (3) but not more than one-third public representatives.

Aims

- To foster excellence and quality in Christian postsecondary education through the development of policies, procedures, and standards for assessing educational effectiveness leading to enhanced educational quality.
- To ensure the consistent application of accreditation standards.
- To develop an accreditation process that requires continuous institutional self-study and assessment.
- To serve as an accrediting agency that recognizes institutions demonstrating quality through compliance with the standards at a candidate (pre-accredited) or accredited level.
- To provide counsel and assistance to both established and developing institutions.
- To provide accredited and candidate (pre-accredited) institutions the opportunity to participate in federal programs authorized under Title IV and other government programs.
- To assure the educational community, the general public, and other agencies or organizations that an institution evaluated by TRACS 1) has clearly defined appropriate educational objectives and outcomes, 2) has established conditions under which educational outcomes are being achieved at an acceptable level with reference to the TRACS standards, and 3) is so organized, staffed and supported that it can be expected to continue to offer quality education in the foreseeable future.
- To establish and encourage cooperative relationships among its institutions that promotes common interests both, nationally and internationally.

The Role and Value of Accreditation

Accreditation is a status granted to an educational institution that meets or exceeds the Standards and Evaluative Criteria and the policies and procedures established by the Accreditation Commission and is validated by peer review of membership institutions for educational quality. In the United States, accreditation is voluntarily sought by institutions and is conferred by independent, autonomous bodies. Voluntary, non-governmental, institutional accreditation, as practiced by TRACS and other recognized accrediting agencies, is uniquely characteristic of American education. In other countries, the development, maintenance, control, and supervision of educational standards is a governmental function.

Principal concerns of accreditation are the improvement of educational quality and the assurance to the public that affiliated institutions meet established standards. While no institution in the United States is required to seek accreditation, the benefits leading to both self-improvement and self-enhancement provide strong motivation for most institutions to do so. Other recognized advantages include reciprocity in the transfer of credit from one accredited institution to another (although recognition of one institution's degrees and course work is in accordance with the policies of the receiving institution, or the State or other regulatory agency). In addition, a contributing factor in accreditation for many institutions is the fact that governmental and other agencies rely on Candidate

(Pre-Accredited) Status or Accredited Status from a recognized accrediting agency as a qualification for financial support and grants to students.

For purposes of determining eligibility for federal government assistance under certain legislation, the United States Department of Education (USDE) is required to publish a list of nationally recognized accrediting agencies that it determines to be reliable authorities as to the quality of training offered by educational institutions after initial recognition. Criteria for recognition and guidelines have been established by the U.S. Secretary of Education to be used in recognition of accrediting agencies. The Accrediting Agency Evaluation Branch (AAEB) of the Office of Postsecondary Education reviews the policies and performance of nationally recognized accrediting agencies approximately every five years to determine whether they should be reauthorized as an approved agency.

The accreditation process of all recognized accrediting agencies follows a common pattern. Procedures, Standards and Evaluative Criteria in the accreditation process. These are developed by those involved in the work of an accrediting agency and used in evaluating an institution to determine its educational effectiveness in fulfilling its stated mission. The established Standards and Evaluative criteria are designed to guide institutions through all stages of process from initial contact with the agency through reaffirmation as a result of a uniform institutional self-study and peer review process. The process requires a self-study by the institution, followed by an on-site peer evaluation team visit, and a subsequent review and decision by the Accreditation Commission. The basic purpose of accrediting agencies, including TRACS, is to attest to the fact that an institution is achieving its stated mission, goals and objectives and is meeting the Standards.

One of the goals of the process is to foster on-going assessment and planning at the institution. After the Accreditation Commission has approved an institution for Candidate (Pre-Accredited) or Accredited Status, each institution maintains a continuous dialog with TRACS for accountability and improvement. Compliance with the Standards is expected to be maintained and is validated through required annual reports and comprehensive periodical evaluations following an institutional self-study. While accreditation indicates an acceptable level of overall quality, even the best institution is capable of improvement, which comes from its own clear identification and understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. The advice and counsel provided by the TRACS staff in communication with the institution and an on-site peer evaluation team, comprised of experienced educators drawn primarily from other accredited institutions, encourages improvement. Finally, on-going training, publications and staff visits by the accrediting agency enhance improvement.

TRACS has established a review schedule for standards, evaluative criteria, policies, and procedures under the guidance of the Standards Review Committee, a sub-committee of the Accreditation Commission. After such review, appropriate changes are made in the light of ensuing recommendations, but only after opportunity for comments on any proposed change has been provided to all parties significantly affected. Recommendations for improvements in the standards, policies, and procedures are encouraged and welcomed by the Accreditation Commission.

As stated above, two fundamental purposes of the accreditation process are (1) to assure the quality of an institution and (2) to assist in the improvement of an institution. Accreditation by an accrediting agency indicates that the institution:

- has appropriate mission and goals
- has all staff and physical resources needed to accomplish its mission
- can demonstrate that it is accomplishing its goals
- gives reason to believe it will continue to accomplish its mission

STEPS TOWARD ACCREDITATION

Recognition by a USDE approved accrediting agency assures the educational community, the general public, and other organizations and agencies that an institution:

- Has a clearly defined educational mission appropriate to higher education and consistent with the accrediting agency's standards
- Has established conditions under which achievement of this mission and objectives can reasonably be expected
- Appears in fact to be accomplishing them substantively
- Is so organized, staffed and financed that it can be expected to continue to provide a quality program in the future.

The accrediting process fosters both integrity and excellence in member institutions that use the standards for assessing educational effectiveness. The requirement that the institution conduct periodic self-evaluations helps the institution in identifying what it does well, determining the areas in which improvement is needed, and developing plans for improvement. Periodic evaluation by qualified peer professionals who serve on evaluation teams assures the institution's self-study is realistic. The process confirms honesty and integrity in institutional relations with students and other consumers, thus supplementing state agency protection for the educational consumer. An institution has the obligation to offer its students a sound education leading to a recognized certificate or degree.

Scope

Institutional Categories: TRACS serves Christian postsecondary institutions (e.g., liberal arts colleges/universities, graduate schools/seminaries, Bible colleges/institutes) that offer a certificate, diploma or degree (Associate, Bachelor, or graduate). TRACS accredits the entire institution.

Institutions are classified according to the degrees offered. The following is the official classification for TRACS institutions:

- Category I Institutions offering Certificates, Diplomas, Associate degrees
- Category II Institutions offering Bachelor's degrees
- Category III Institutions offering Master's degrees
- Category IV Institutions offering Specialist's degrees and Doctorate degrees

Institutions are listed by the category approved by the Accreditation Commission.

Institutions that are initially awarded Candidate (Pre-Accredited) Status by the Accreditation Commission at specific categories (I, II, III, and IV) may not move to another level until it obtains Accredited Status.

Geographical Territory: The geographic territory of TRACS consists of the United States and its territories, plus other locations as determined by the Accreditation Commission. TRACS Accreditation Standards are applied consistently to all institutions, regardless of the geographical location of the institution.

Affiliation and Membership

Institutions which have Applicant Status are considered an affiliated with TRACS. Member institutions are those holding either Candidate (Pre-Accredited) Status or Accredited Status.

Category for Accreditation

Corresponding Institution: an institution which has made initial contact with TRACS and is actively pursuing the process toward accreditation.

Applicant Status: an institution which has an Application approved by the Applicant Review Committee (ARC) after hosting a successful staff visit and responding positively to the staff report recommendations.

Candidate (Pre-Accredited) Status: indicates that the institution is in *basic compliance*. This means that the institution has met all the Standards and Criteria related to the TRACS Institutional Eligibility Requirements (IERs), has been evaluated by an on-site evaluation team, and in the professional judgment of the evaluation team and the Accreditation Commission, has provided the basic level of quality in instruction and student services required of a pre-accredited institution of higher education.

Accredited Status: indicates that the institution is in *substantive compliance*. This means that the institution remains in compliance with all the IER related Standards and Criteria, has completed a comprehensive institutional self-study, has successfully hosted a peer evaluation team visit. Within a maximum of two years, the institution is required to come into compliance with all Standards related to the Recommendations of the visiting team, and in the professional judgment of the evaluation team and the Accreditation Commission, the institution has financial stability and provides the level of quality in instruction and student services required of an accredited institution of higher education.

Reaffirmation Status: indicates that the Institution has continued in substantive compliance since the last review for Accredited Status and has completed a successful self-study, hosted an on-site team evaluation, responded to the team Recommendations and appeared before the Accrediting Commission.

Institutional Eligibility Requirements (IERs)

The Institutional Eligibility Requirements (IERs) are the Standards with which an institution must be in compliance to begin a self-study and be considered by the Accreditation Commission in order to be a candidate for accreditation. Basic compliance with the Accreditation Standards means that an institution is in compliance with all of the Standards identified in the IERs and has the ability to be in compliance with all of the Standards within the period of candidacy for accreditation. The Accreditation Commission considers basic compliance as the threshold for considering whether to recognize an institution as a candidate for accreditation and that recognition is not automatic.

The Institutional Eligibility Requirements (IERs) are the Standards with which an institution must be in compliance to be considered for candidacy for accreditation by the Accreditation Commission. The initial determination of compliance with the IERs is made by the TRACS President. Following the President's determination that an institution is in compliance with the IERs, the institution must prepare a Self-Study addressing all Standards which will be followed by a team visit. The team will determine the institution's compliance with all standards. If the Accreditation Commission determines that the institution is in compliance with the IERs and the institution can come into compliance with all of the Standards within the period of candidacy, the institution can be granted candidacy for accreditation.

NOTE: The referenced Standard numbers for the IERs may be changed from time to time to reflect any modifications of the numbering of the Standards which are approved by the Accreditation Commission.

Institutional Eligibility Requirements (IERs)

IER 1 FOUNDATIONAL STATEMENTS. The institution has:

- a. A biblical foundation statement (1.1 and 1.2.).
- b. A mission statement (2.1.).
- c. Measurable institutional objectives which are consistent with the institution's mission (2.2.).
- d. A Christian Philosophy of Education (3.1.).

IER 2 LEGAL AUTHORITY TO OPERATE. The institution has:

- a. A legally established and functioning board with at least 5 voting members (6.1. and 6.1.b.).
- b. Legal authority to operate from the government of the state or country in which it is located, including all teaching sites and branch campuses (5.1., 13.1.a, and 14.1.a.).
- c. A set of board-approved By-laws within which the board operates (6.1).

IER 3 ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF. The institution has:

- a. A full-time Chief Executive Officer who is appointed by the Board (6.8.).
- b. The Chief Executive Officer has the authority to carry out the published board policies and procedures (7.2.).
- c. A full-time Chief Academic Officer with the appropriate graduate degree(s) from an accredited institution. (7.4.)
- d. Other administrative or leadership team members and staff sufficient in number and competence to give direction to the major operational areas of the institution (7.5.).
- e. Complete job descriptions for all administrators and staff (7.3.)
- f. An organizational chart that clearly depicts lines of administrative responsibility (7.1.)

IER 4 PUBLICATIONS AND POLICIES. The institution has:

- a. A Board Manual (9.7.).
- b. A Policies Manual (9.8.).
- c. A Catalog (or catalogs, if appropriate) (9.9.).
- d. A Faculty Handbook (9.10.).
- e. A Student Handbook (9.11.).

IER 5 EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS. The institution has:

- a. A minimum of one post-secondary educational program which meets national norms and supports the mission and institutional objectives (11.1. and 11.2.).
- b. Learning outcomes for each academic program (11.4.a. and 19.5.).
- c. Appropriate general education requirements for each undergraduate degree (11.16.).
- d. An adequate number of students enrolled in each program (11.10).

STEPS TOWARD ACCREDITATION

IER 6 FACULTY. The institution has:

- a. At least one full-time, contracted, academically and spiritually qualified faculty for each major/program offered, including general education for undergraduate programs (15.1.).
- b. A sufficient number of qualified faculty to provide the instruction needed for the programs offered (15.2.).

IER 7 FINANCES. The institution has:

- a. Certified external audits which demonstrate adequate finances to support the institutional purpose and programs (17.4.c.).
- b. Evidence that finances will continue to support the programs (17.1. and 17.7).

IER 8 INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS. The institution has:

- a. A comprehensive, board-approved *Assessment Plan* which is in use (19.1.).
- b. A comprehensive, board-approved strategic plan which is in use (20.1.).

IER 9 LEARNING RESOURCES. The institution:

- a. Adequately supports the educational programs offered with appropriate learning resources (21.1, 21.2 and 21.5).
- b. Employs an adequate number of professionally qualified library staff (21.4.).

IER 10 FACILITIES. The institution has

- a. Facilities and equipment which are adequate for all learning activities (22.1.).

CORRESPONDING TO APPLICANT STATUS

CORRESPONDING TO APPLICANT STATUS

Categories for Accreditation

Corresponding Institution: an institution which has made initial contact with TRACS and is actively pursuing the process toward accreditation.

Applicant Status: an institution which has an Application approved by the Applicant Review Committee (ARC) after hosting a successful staff visit and responding positively to the staff report recommendations

Steps to Achieve Applicant Status

Corresponding Institutions which have received the application orientation and determine themselves capable of demonstrating compliance with the Standards for each Institutional Eligibility Requirement (IER) may be considered for Applicant Status. TRACS staff will work with the corresponding institution as it prepares its application materials with the goal of strengthening any noncompliant areas prior to the institution being considered for Applicant Status.

1. Initial Communication and Orientation

- 1.a. An interested institution contacts the TRACS Office and expresses desire to seek accreditation (Call: 434-525-9539 or email us at info@tracs.org).
- 1.b. TRACS sends the Initial Contact Form which is completed by the institution and returned to the TRACS Office.
- 1.c. TRACS Staff contacts the institution to schedule the required application orientation. (If this meeting is scheduled at the TRACS office the institution will have no costs. If it is held away from the TRACS office the institution will be responsible for all expenses for the Staff Visit. The required orientation is also available at the TRACS Annual Conference).
- 1.d. After completing the application orientation, the institution is given information which allows for the downloading of the application packet from the TRACS website (www.tracs.org).

2. Institutional Submissions

- 2.a. After the institution determines that it is in compliance with all Institutional Eligibility Requirements (IERs), the institution completes the Application and IER checklist.
- 2.b. The institution submits to the TRACS office:
 - 2.b.i. One hard copy of the Application, IER checklist, and all supporting documentation.
 - 2.b.ii. One electronic copy of the Application, IER checklist, and all supporting documentation.

STEPS TOWARD ACCREDITATION

2.b.iii. The Application Fee (see *Fee Schedule*).

3. Applicant Review Committee Procedures

- 3.a. Institution is assigned a TRACS representative.
- 3.b. The Applicant Review Committee (ARC) completes an initial review of the Application including the IERs and all supporting documents. Financial documentation is reviewed by the TRACS Vice President of Finance. If additional information is required, the institution will receive a communication detailing the outstanding items.

4. Staff Visit, Review, and Report

- 4.a. Once the ARC determines that the Application is complete, a staff visit to the institution is scheduled to verify documentation received.
- 4.b. Staff Visit Report is prepared

5. Review Committee Determination

- 5.a. The ARC completes the final review of the Application including the IERs and all supporting documents.
- 5.b. The ARC makes one of the following recommendations regarding the institution's application:
 - 5.b.i. Approval of Application (institution may proceed with Self-Study process.)
 - 5.b.ii. Deferring the institution as an applicant with recommendations (response required from institution)
 - 5.b.iii. Reject the institution as applicant with rationale

6. Notification by TRACS

- 6.a. The President of TRACS sends a notification letter to the institution that it may begin the Self-Study process.

NOTE: Submitting an application does not guarantee the institution will achieve Applicant Status and be permitted to move toward candidacy.

All institutions must move to Candidate Status within 5 years of submitting an application. An institution that does not achieve Candidate Status within this period must wait a minimum of one year before reapplying. No extensions will be given beyond the five-year period.

Institutional Eligibility Requirements

Basic Compliance is defined by TRACS Policy as meeting all TRACS Standards related to the *Institutional Eligibility Requirements* (which may be found on TRACS website). The IERs are used by the Accreditation Commission for the awarding of Candidate (Pre-Accredited) Status to an institution.

Withdrawal of Application

An institution may voluntarily withdraw its application at any time after an application has been submitted until the time the Accreditation Commission makes a decision on Candidate Status.

Corresponding to Applicant Checklist

1. Initial Communication and Orientation

- 1.a. An interested institution contacts the TRACS Office and expresses desire to seek accreditation (Call: (434) 525-9539 or email us at info@tracs.org).
- 1.b. TRACS Staff sends the Initial Contact Form for completion and return to the TRACS Office.
- 1.c. The institution is informed of the necessity for scheduling a free (but mandated) application orientation.
- 1.d. A TRACS letter sent to the corresponding institution notifying them of the mandated application orientation.
- 1.e. Application Orientation meeting is completed on _____.
- 1.f. Application Packet is provided to the institution.

2. Institutional Submissions

- 2.a. After determining compliance with all IERs institution completes Application and IER Checklist.
- 2.b. Institution submits to the TRACS Office, one hard copy and one electronic copy of Application, IER Checklist, and all documents, along with the Application Fee (see *Fee Schedule*).

3. Application Review Committee (ARC) Procedures

- 3.a. Institution is assigned to a TRACS representative.
- 3.b. ARC makes initial review of Application and requests additional materials as necessary.

4. Staff Visit, Review, And Report

- 4.a. Visit conducted to verify all submissions and documentation.
- 4.b. Staff Visit Report with recommendations and suggestions is prepared.

5. Review Committee Determination

- 5.a. ARC completes final review.
- 5.b. ARC Recommends:
 - 5.b.i. Approval of Application and institution may proceed with Self-Study process.
 - 5.b.ii. Defer institution with recommendations.
 - 5.b.iii. Reject institution as an Applicant with rationale.

6. Notification by TRACS

- 6.a. Letter notifying institution of determination sent by the President of TRACS.

APPLICANT TO CANDIDATE STATUS

APPLICANT TO CANDIDATE STATUS

Categories for Accreditation

Applicant Status: an institution which has an Application approved by the Applicant Review Committee (ARC) after hosting a successful staff visit and responding positively to the staff report recommendations.

Candidate (Pre-Accredited) Status: indicates that the institution is in *basic compliance*. This means that the institution has met all the Standards and Criteria related to the TRACS Institutional Eligibility Requirements (IERs), has been evaluated by an on-site evaluation team, and in the professional judgment of the evaluation team and the Accreditation Commission, has provided the basic level of quality in instruction and student services required of a pre-accredited institution of higher education.

Explanation of Candidate (Pre-Accredited) Status

Candidate Status offers institutions the opportunity to establish an initial, formal, and publicly recognized pre-accredited status with TRACS. An institution seeking candidacy must provide evidence of sound planning, have adequate resources to implement these plans, and have the ability to achieve Accredited Status. This status does not guarantee the institution will become accredited.

The maximum time period for moving from Candidate Status to Accredited Status is five years. An institution that does not achieve Accredited Status within the five-year period will be removed from pre-accreditation and must wait a minimum of one year before reapplying.

An institution that has been deferred for Candidate Status may reappear before the Accreditation Commission when it can demonstrate that it has corrected any deficiencies in meeting the Standards and Criteria related to the TRACS IERs and any related conditions set by the Accreditation Commission.

Steps to Achieve Candidate Status

Institutions which are able to demonstrate basic compliance and have been approved for Applicant Status by the Application Review Committee may be considered for candidacy. After receiving Applicant Status, the TRACS staff will work with the institution on the remainder of the Accreditation Standards with the goal of strengthening any weak areas prior to moving forward to Candidate Status.

1. Initial Communication

- 1.a. Institution is notified that it has achieved Applicant Status and can proceed toward Candidate Status.
- 1.b. The institution downloads the TRACS *Steps Toward Accreditation* publication from the TRACS website at www.tracs.org under *Downloads*.

STEPS TOWARD ACCREDITATION

- 1.c. The institution completes and submits to the TRACS office the *Self-Study Proposal*, including a proposed timeline, any required documentation and the required Change of Status Review Fee (see Fee Schedule).

2. Institutional Review by the TRACS staff – Initial

- 2.a. Institution prepares documents for review at time of staff visit.
- 2.b. The TRACS staff visit takes place and all required documents are reviewed.
- 2.c. The *Self-Study Proposal* and timeline are reviewed and approved.

3. Self-Study Process

- 3.a. Institution completes the *Self-Study Report* according to the approved procedures and timelines.
- 3.b. At least six weeks prior to the scheduled Evaluation Team Visit the institution submits to the TRACS office:
 - i. Electronic copy of the Self-Study Report and supporting documents
 - ii. Travel Expense Advance for full team (see *Fee Schedule*)
- 3.c. The TRACS staff will review the *Self-Study Report* and make suggestions for any areas which require clarification, more review, or documentation. Any new or updated materials should be submitted to the TRACS office and electronic form.

4. On-Site Evaluation Team Visit

- 4.a. The Visit dates and team composition are confirmed.
- 4.b. After addressing items identified by the TRACS staff, at least four weeks prior to the scheduled Evaluation Team Visit, the institution will send the final *Self-Study Report* and supporting documents to the evaluation team members. It is the responsibility of the institution to contact each team member to determine whether he/she would prefer a hard or an electronic copy.
- 4.c. The Evaluation Team Visit is completed and draft *Team Report* is prepared.
- 4.d. The institution is given a copy of the draft *Team Report* and *Errors of Fact* sheet prior to the evaluation team exit interview.
- 4.e. Within 10 working days, the institution submits to the TRACS office any errors of fact which it finds in the draft copy of the *Team Report*.

5. Post Visit Follow-up

- 5.a. After the errors of fact are received, the final editing of the *Team Report* is completed by the TRACS staff and team chair.

- 5.b. The final *Team Report* is sent to the institution, along with the *Institutional Response Matrix*, with a date specified for the institution's required response.
- 5.c. An invoice for outstanding fees (including expenses incurred for the evaluation team visit) is sent to the institution for payment prior to appearance before the Accreditation Commission.

6. Institution Appears before the Accreditation Commission (April or October)

- 6.a. The Institution appears before the Accreditation Commission to give an update of the status of the institution since the Evaluation Team Visit and is given the opportunity to answer any questions which the Accreditation Commission may have.
- 6.b. The Accreditation Commission will make one of the following determinations:
 - 6.b.i. Grant Candidate Status without conditions
 - 6.b.ii. Grant Candidate Status with conditions
 - 6.b.iii. Defer Candidate Status to correct deficiencies (with or without conditions)
 - 6.b.iv. Deny Candidate Status
- 6.c. The President of TRACS sends a Commission Action Letter notifying the institution of the decision of the Accreditation Commission (including any conditions) and the *Staff Analysis Matrix* and the final billing for the full-year or half-year annual dues.

Denial of Candidate Status

After one year, an institution not approved for Candidate Status may reapply if it has substantially improved those major areas of concern identified in the Accreditation Commission decision.

Reference to Candidate Status in Institutional Publications

Institutions granted Candidate Status must follow the TRACS Policy for *Best Practices in Representation of TRACS Status* that is located in the TRACS ***Policies and Procedures***.

Progress Report for Candidate Institutions

Within five years from Accreditation Commission approval for Candidate Status, an institution must come into compliance with all recommendations identified in the Evaluation Team Report. A *Progress Report* is required regularly (usually February 15 and August 15 of each year) until full compliance is met. The *Progress Report* must be detailed with respect to each recommendation or condition and must be properly documented. The TRACS Staff prepares a review of the *Progress Report* with a recommendation for the Accreditation Commission at its next meeting. After reviewing an institution's *Progress Report* and the TRACS staff recommendation, the Accreditation Commission may take one of the following actions:

1. Accept the report and recommend continuing Candidate Status.
2. Request that the TRACS staff provide additional information.
3. Request that the TRACS staff notify the institution that sufficient progress has not been made and require a *Progress Report* at the next Accreditation Commission meeting.
4. Require the TRACS President to notify the institution that sufficient progress in working towards compliance with the Standards and Criteria has not been demonstrated and the institution will be scheduled for review at the next Commission meeting and may have Candidate Status removed. The institution may appeal this decision following the established Appeals Policy and Procedure.

Applicant to Candidate Checklist

1. Initial Communication

- 1.a. Institution notified of Applicant Status and approval to proceed toward Candidate Status.
- 1.b. Institution downloads *Steps Toward Accreditation* publication.
- 1.c. Institution prepares and submits an electronic copy of the *Self-Study Proposal* and proposed timelines along with the appropriate Change of Status Review Fee (see Fee Schedule).

2. Institutional Review by TRACS staff – Initial

- 2.a. Institution prepared documents for Staff Visit.
- 2.b. TRACS staff completed visit and review of documents.
- 2.c. *Self-Study Proposal* reviewed and approved.

3. Self-Study Process

- 3.a. Institution completed *Self-Study Report*.
- 3.b. Institution sends an electronic copy of *Self-Study Report* to TRACS (six weeks prior to team visit) along with the Travel Expense Advance for a Full Team (see *Fee Schedule*).
- 3.c. TRACS reviewed the *Self-Study Report* and identified any areas needing clarification, review or documentation.

4. On-Site Evaluation Team Visit

- 4.a. Visit dates and team composition confirmed.
- 4.b. Institution sent the final *Self-Study Report* and supporting documents to evaluation team members.
- 4.c. Evaluation Team Visit completed and draft *Team Report* prepared.
- 4.d. Draft *Team Report* and *Errors of Fact* sheet given to institution.
- 4.e. Institution submitted to the TRACS office any errors of fact (within 10 working days).

5. Post Visit Follow-up

- 5.a. Final editing of *Team Report* completed (after receipt and review of *Errors of Fact*).
- 5.b. Final *Team Report* and *Institutional Response Matrix* sent to institution.
- 5.c. Invoice sent to institution for outstanding fees (including Visiting Team expenses).

6. Institution Appears before the Accreditation Commission

- 6.a. Institution appeared before the Accreditation Commission.
- 6.b. Accreditation Commission made determination.
- 6.c. Letter notifying institution of Accreditation Commission determination sent by the President of TRACS.

CANDIDATE TO ACCREDITED STATUS

CANDIDATE TO ACCREDITED STATUS

Categories for Accreditation

Candidate (Pre-Accredited) Status: indicates that the institution is in *basic compliance*. This means that the institution has met all the Standards and Criteria related to the TRACS Institutional Eligibility Requirements (IERs), has been evaluated by an on-site evaluation team, and in the professional judgment of the evaluation team and the Accreditation Commission, has provided the basic level of quality in instruction and student services required of a pre-accredited institution of higher education.

Accredited Status: indicates that the institution is in *substantive compliance*. This means that the institution remains in compliance with all the IER related Standards and Criteria, has completed a comprehensive institutional self-study, has successfully hosted a peer evaluation team visit. Within a maximum of two years, the institution is required to come into compliance with all Standards related to the Recommendations of the visiting team, and in the professional judgment of the evaluation team and the Accreditation Commission, the institution has financial stability and provides the level of quality in instruction and student services required of an accredited institution of higher education.

Explanation of Accredited Status

Accreditation offers institutions the opportunity to continue an ongoing formal and publicly-recognized professional relationship with TRACS as a member institution. Accredited institutions have achieved this level of recognition through continuous self-study. They have provided evidence that they are accomplishing their mission and are providing quality educational programs.

Institutions, which choose to have accreditation with TRACS and have already achieved Candidate or Accredited Status with an accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education, will be evaluated on both the FOUNDATIONAL STANDARDS and OPERATIONAL STANDARDS. It is understood that the self-study data compiled for the nationally recognized accrediting agency can be used without unnecessary duplication of effort; however, the data must be presented using TRACS format. A staff and team visit are required to verify the contents of the documents submitted.

Steps To Achieve Accredited Status

Candidate institutions which have addressed all previous team recommendations satisfactorily may be considered for Accredited Status.

Initial Communication

- 1.a. TRACS staff notifies the institution that it has met all Recommendations from the Evaluation Team Visit for Candidate Status.
- 1.b. Institution notifies TRACS of its intention to move to Accredited Status.
- 1.c. The institution downloads the TRACS *Steps Toward Accreditation* publication from the TRACS website at www.tracs.org under *Downloads*.
- 1.d. The institution completes and submits to the TRACS office the *Self-Study Proposal*, including a proposed timeline, any required documentation and the required Change of Status Review Fee (see Fee Schedule).

2. Institutional Review by the TRACS staff - Initial

- 2.a. Institution prepares documents for review at time of staff visit.
- 2.b. The TRACS staff visit takes place and all required documents are reviewed.
- 2.c. The *Self-Study Proposal* and timeline are approved.

3. Self-Study Process

- 3.a. Institution prepares the *Self-Study Report* according to the approved procedures and timelines.
- 3.b. At least six weeks prior to the scheduled Evaluation Team Visit the institution submits to the TRACS office:
 - i. Electronic copy of the *Self-Study Report* and supporting documents
 - ii. Travel Expense Advance for Full Team (see *Fee Schedule*)
- 3.c. The TRACS staff will review the *Self-Study Report* and make suggestions for any areas which require clarification, more review, or documentation. Any new or updated materials should be sent to the TRACS office in an electronic form.

4. On-Site Evaluation Team Visit

- 4.a. The Visit dates and team composition are confirmed.
- 4.b. After addressing items identified by the TRACS staff, at least four weeks prior to the scheduled Evaluation Team Visit, the institution will send the final *Self-Study Report*

and supporting documents to the evaluation team members. It is the responsibility of the institution to contact each team member to determine whether he/she would prefer a hard or an electronic copy.

- 4.c. The Evaluation Team Visit is completed and draft *Team Report* is written.
- 4.d. The institution is given a draft copy of the *Team Report* and *Errors of Fact* sheet prior to the evaluation team exit interview.
- 4.e. Within 10 working days, the institution submits to the TRACS office and errors of fact which it finds in the draft copy of the *Team Report*.

5. Post Visit Follow-up

- 5.a. After the errors of fact are received, the final editing of the *Team Report* is completed by the TRACS staff and team chair.
- 5.b. The final *Team Report* is sent to the institution, along with the *Institutional Response Matrix*, with a date specified for the institution's required response.
- 5.c. An invoice for outstanding fees (including expenses incurred for the evaluation team visit) is sent to the institution for payment prior to appearance before the Accreditation Commission.

6. Institution Appears before the Accreditation Commission (April or October/November)

- 6.a. The Institution appears before the Accreditation Commission to give an update of the status of the institution since the Evaluation Team Visit and is given the opportunity to answer any questions which the Accreditation Commission may have.
- 6.b. The Accreditation Commission will make one of the following determinations:
 - 6.b.i. Grant Accredited Status without conditions
 - 6.b.ii. Grant Accredited Status with conditions
 - 6.b.iii. Defer Accredited Status to correct deficiencies (with or without conditions)
 - 6.b.iv. Deny Accredited Status
- 6.c. The President of TRACS sends a Commission Action Letter notifying the institution of the decision of the Accreditation Commission (including any conditions) and the *Staff Analysis Matrix* and the final billing for the full-year or half-year annual dues.

Denial of Accredited Status

After one year, an institution not approved for Accredited Status may reapply if it has substantially improved those major areas of concern identified in the Accreditation Commission decision.

Right to Appeal the Accreditation Commission Decision

In the event that the institution is denied accredited status, it may appeal the decision by following the procedure described in the TRACS Policy #219 which will be enclosed in the Notification Letter indicating the Accreditation Commission's action.

Reference to Accredited Status in Institutional Publications

Institutions granted Accredited Status must follow the TRACS Policy for *Best Practices in Representation of TRACS Status* that is located in the TRACS **Policies and Procedures**.

Status Report for Accredited Institutions

Within a maximum of two years from Accreditation Commission approval for Accredited Status, an institution must come into compliance with all recommendations identified in the Evaluation Team Report. A *Progress Report* is required regularly (usually February 15 and August 15 of each year) until full compliance is met. The *Progress Report* must be detailed with respect to each recommendation or condition and must be properly documented. The TRACS Staff prepares a review of the *Progress Report* with a recommendation for the Accreditation Commission at its next meeting. After reviewing an institution's *Progress Report* and the TRACS staff recommendation, the Accreditation Commission may take one of the following actions:

1. Accept the report and recommend continuing Accredited Status.
2. Request that the TRACS staff provide additional information.
3. Request that the TRACS staff notify the institution that sufficient progress has not been made and require a *Progress Report* at the next Accreditation Commission meeting.
4. Require the TRACS President to notify the institution that sufficient progress in working towards compliance with the Standards and Criteria has not been demonstrated and the institution will be scheduled for review at the next Commission meeting and may have Accredited Status removed. The institution may appeal this decision following the established Appeals Policy and Procedure.

Candidate to Accredited Checklist

1. Initial Communication

- 1.a. Institution notified of Candidate Status and approval to proceed toward Accredited Status.
- 1.b. Institution notified TRACS of its intention to move to Accredited Status.
- 1.c. The institution downloads the TRACS *Steps Toward Accreditation* publication from the TRACS website.
- 1.d. Institution prepares and submits an electronic copy of the *Self-Study Proposal* and proposed timelines along with the appropriate Change of Status Review Fee (see Fee Schedule).

2. Institutional Review by TRACS staff – Initial

- 2.a. Institution prepared documents for Staff Visit.
- 2.b. TRACS staff completed visit and review of documents.
- 2.c. *Self-Study Proposal* reviewed and approved.

3. Self-Study Process

- 3.a. Institution completed *Self-Study Report*.
- 3.b. Institution sends an electronic copy of *Self-Study Report* to TRACS (six weeks prior to team visit) along with the Travel Expense Advance for a Full Team (see *Fee Schedule*).
- 3.c. TRACS reviewed the *Self-Study Report* and identified any areas needing clarification, review or documentation.

4. On-Site Evaluation Team Visit

- 4.a. Visit dates and team composition confirmed.
- 4.b. Institution sent the final *Self-Study Report* and supporting documents to evaluation team members.
- 4.c. Evaluation Team Visit completed and draft *Team Report* prepared.
- 4.d. Draft *Team Report* and *Errors of Fact* sheet given to institution.
- 4.e. Institution submitted to the TRACS office any errors of fact (within 10 working days).

5. Post Visit Follow-up

- 5.a. Final editing of *Team Report* completed (after receipt and review of *Errors of Fact*).
- 5.b. Final *Team Report* and *Institutional Response Matrix* sent to institution.
- 5.c. Invoice sent to institution for outstanding fees (including Visiting Team expenses).

6. Institution Appears before the Accreditation Commission

- 6.a. Institution appeared before the Accreditation Commission.
- 6.b. Accreditation Commission made determination.
- 6.c. Letter notifying institution of Accreditation Commission determination sent by the President of TRACS.

REAFFIRMATION OF ACCREDITED STATUS

REAFFIRMATION OF ACCREDITED STATUS

Categories for Accreditation

Reaffirmation Status: indicates that the Institution has continued in substantive compliance since the last review for Accredited Status and has completed a successful self-study, hosted an on-site team evaluation, responded to the team Recommendations and appeared before the Accrediting Commission.

Periodic Review

Accredited Status is viewed by the Accreditation Commission as a continuous process of institutional improvement that, once conferred, is removed only for cause and then with careful observance of due process. TRACS includes periodic reviews of accredited institutions both for their benefit and for the fulfillment of the Accreditation Commission's accountability to the U.S. Department of Education (DOE), the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), the larger academic community, and the public.

After the initial five-year accreditation and prior to being considered for Reaffirmation an institution must complete a successful self-study, host an on-site team evaluation, respond to the team Recommendations and appear before the Accrediting Commission.

Beginning with Reaffirmation I accreditation will be granted for a maximum of ten years with a required Intern Fifth-Year Review (IFYR) to be submitted in the fifth year of the period. This Reaffirmation process will be repeated every tenth year.

Steps to Reaffirmation

After the initial five years of Accredited Status institutions are expected to reaffirm their accreditation through a full reaffirmation process comparable to that of achieving accreditation. This first reaffirmation is for a period of up to ten years and includes the required IFYR in the fifth year.

1. Initial Communication

- 1.a. TRACS informs the institution that it is coming for reaffirmation in two years and indicates the institution must confirm its intent to continue accreditation.
- 1.b. The institution notifies TRACS of its intention to continue accreditation.
- 1.c. The institution downloads the TRACS *Steps Toward Accreditation* publication from the TRACS website at www.tracs.org under *Downloads*.

STEPS TOWARD ACCREDITATION

- 1.d. The institution completes and submits to the TRACS office the *Self-Study Proposal*, including a proposed timeline, any required documentation and the required Change of Status Review Fee (see Fee Schedule).

2. Institutional Review by the TRACS staff - Initial

- 2.a. Institution prepares documents for review at time of staff visit.
- 2.b. The TRACS staff visit takes place and all required documents are reviewed.
- 2.c. The *Self-Study Proposal* and timeline are approved.

3. Self-Study Process

- 3.a. Institution completes the Self-Study according to the approved procedures and timelines.
- 3.b. At least six weeks prior to the scheduled Evaluation Team Visit the institution submit to the TRACS office:
 - i. Send an electronic copy of the Self-Study Report and supporting documents
 - ii. Travel Expense Advance for Full Team (see *Fee Schedule*)
- 3.c. The TRACS staff will review the *Self-Study Report* and make suggestions for any areas which require clarification, more review, or documentation. Any new or updated materials should be sent to the TRACS office in an electronic form.

4. On-Site Evaluation Team Visit

- 4.a. The Visit dates and team composition are confirmed.
- 4.b. After addressing items identified by the TRACS staff, at least four weeks prior to the scheduled Evaluation Team Visit, the institution will send the final *Self-Study Report* and supporting documents to the evaluation team members. It is the responsibility of the institution to contact each team member to determine whether he/she would prefer a hard or an electronic copy.
- 4.c. The Evaluation Team Visit is completed and draft *Team Report* is written.
- 4.d. The institution is given a draft copy of the *Team Report* and *Errors of Fact* sheet prior to the evaluation team exit interview.
- 4.e. Within 10 working days, the institution submits to the TRACS office any errors of fact which it finds in the draft copy of the *Team Report*.

5. Post Visit Follow-up

- 5.a. After the errors of fact are received, the final editing of the *Team Report* is completed by the TRACS staff and team chair.

- 5.b. The final *Team Report* is sent to the institution, along with the *Institutional Response Matrix*, with a date specified for the institution's required response.
- 5.c. An invoice for outstanding fees (including expenses incurred for the evaluation team visit) is sent to the institution for payment prior to appearance before the Accreditation Commission.

6. Institution Appears before the Accreditation Commission (April or October/November)

- 6.a. The Institution appears before the Accreditation Commission to give an update of the status of the institution since the Evaluation Team Visit and is given the opportunity to answer any questions which the Accreditation Commission may have.
- 6.b. The Accreditation Commission will make one of the following determinations:
 - 6.b.i. Grant Reaffirmation of Accredited Status without conditions
 - 6.b.ii. Grant Reaffirmation of Accredited Status with conditions
 - 6.b.iii. Defer Reaffirmation of Accredited Status to correct deficiencies (with or without conditions)
 - 6.b.iv. Deny Reaffirmation of Accredited Status
- 6.c. The President of TRACS sends a Commission Action Letter notifying the institution of the decision of the Accreditation Commission (including any conditions) and the *Staff Analysis Matrix* and the final billing for the full-year or half-year annual dues.

Denial of Reaffirmation

After one year, an institution not approved for reaffirmation of Accredited Status may reapply if it has substantially improved those major areas of concern identified in the Accreditation Commission decision.

Right to Appeal the Accreditation Commission Decision

In the event that the institution is denied reaffirmation of Accredited Status, it may appeal the decision by following the procedure described in the TRACS Policy #219 which will be enclosed in the Notification Letter indicating the Accreditation Commission's action.

Reference to Reaffirmed Status in Institutional Publications

Institutions granted reaffirmation must follow the TRACS Policy for *Best Practices in Representation of TRACS Status* that is located in the TRACS ***Policies and Procedures***.

Status Report for Reaffirmed Institutions

Within a maximum of two years from Accreditation Commission approval for reaffirmation, an institution must come into compliance with all recommendations identified in the Evaluation Team Report. A *Progress Report* is required regularly (usually February 15 and August 15 of each year) until full compliance is met. The *Progress Report* must be detailed with respect to each recommendation or condition and must be properly documented. The TRACS Staff prepares a review of the *Progress Report* with a recommendation for the Accreditation Commission at its next meeting. After reviewing an institution's *Progress Report* and the TRACS staff recommendation, the Accreditation Commission may take one of the following actions:

1. Accept the report and recommend continuing reaffirmation of Accredited Status.
2. Request that the TRACS staff provide additional information.
3. Request that the TRACS staff notify the institution that sufficient progress has not been made and require a *Progress Report* at the next Accreditation Commission meeting.
4. Require the TRACS President to notify the institution that sufficient progress in working towards compliance with the Standards and Criteria has not been demonstrated and the institution will be scheduled for review at the next Commission meeting and may have Accredited Status removed. The institution may appeal this decision following the established Appeals Policy and Procedure.

Interim Fifth-Year Review (IFYR)

TRACS institutions that have been granted a ten-year reaffirmation status are required to participate in the Interim Fifth-Year Review (IFYR) process. This process first occurs during the fifth year of the institution's reaffirmation status. The following components constitute the IFYR: (1) the completed Interim Fifth-Year Review Form, and (2) documentation in support of the data reported by the institution on the Interim Fifth-Year Review Form. The IFYR focuses on data compiled from the outcomes of assessment procedures which demonstrates the institution is accomplishing its stated mission. The accreditation status of the institution continues during this process.

Institutions participating in the IFYR process are required to submit the IFYR form, along with the supporting documentation, and the Interim Fifth-Year Status Review Fee (see *Fee Schedule*) according to the established timeline. All components of the IFYR should be submitted electronically. The IFYR process also involves a peer review process, a TRACS staff visit, and a report to the Accreditation Commission.

Institutions required to participate in the IFYR process will be notified by the TRACS Office and will be provided with detailed instructions and all of the forms necessary to complete the process. (See Appendix B)

Reaffirmation Checklist

1. Initial Communication

- 1.a. TRACS informed the institution that it is coming for reaffirmation in two years and confirmation of intent is required.
- 1.b. Institution notified TRACS of its intention to continue Accredited Status.
- 1.c. The institution downloaded the TRACS *Steps Toward Accreditation* publication from the TRACS website.
- 1.d. Institution prepares and submits an electronic copy of the *Self-Study Proposal* and proposed timelines along with the appropriate Change of Status Review Fee (see Fee Schedule).

2. Institutional Review by TRACS staff – Initial

- 2.a. Institution prepared documents for Staff Visit.
- 2.b. TRACS staff completed visit and review of documents.
- 2.c. *Self-Study Proposal* reviewed and approved.

3. Self-Study Process

- 3.a. Institution completed *Self-Study Report*.
- 3.b. Institution sends an electronic copy of *Self-Study Report* to TRACS (six weeks prior to team visit) along with the Travel Expense Advance for a Full Team (see *Fee Schedule*).
- 3.c. TRACS reviewed the *Self-Study Report* and identified any areas needing clarification, review or documentation.

4. On-Site Evaluation Team Visit

- 4.a. Visit dates and team composition confirmed.
- 4.b. Institution sent the final *Self-Study Report* and supporting documents to evaluation team members.
- 4.c. Evaluation Team Visit completed and draft *Team Report* prepared.
- 4.d. Draft *Team Report* and *Errors of Fact* sheet given to institution.
- 4.e. Institution submitted to the TRACS office any errors of fact (within 10 working days).

5. Post Visit Follow-up

- 5.a. Final editing of *Team Report* completed (after receipt and review of *Errors of Fact*).
- 5.b. Final *Team Report* and *Institutional Response Matrix* sent to institution.
- 5.c. Invoice sent to institution for outstanding fees (including Visiting Team expenses).

6. Institution Appears before the Accreditation Commission

- 6.a. Institution appeared before the Accreditation Commission.
- 6.b. Accreditation Commission made determination.
- 6.c. Letter notifying institution of Accreditation Commission determination sent by the President of TRACS.

APPENDIX A

Sample Timeline for Accreditation

APPENDIX B

Interim Fifth-Year Review

Interim Fifth-Year Review

Introduction:

TRACS institutions that have been granted a ten-year reaffirmation status are required to participate in the Interim Fifth-Year Review (IFYR) process. This process first occurs during the fifth year of the institution's reaffirmation status. The following components constitute the IFYR: (1) the completed Interim Fifth-Year Review Form, and (2) documentation in support of the data reported by the institution on the Interim Fifth-Year Review Form. The IFYR focuses on data compiled from the outcomes of assessment procedures which demonstrates the institution is accomplishing its stated mission. The IFYR confirms and completes the assessment and institutional improvement data submitted each year on the *Annual Operational Report* which includes a summary QCR. The accreditation status of the institution continues during this process.

Institutions participating in the IFYR process are required to submit the IFYR form, along with the supporting documentation, and the Interim Fifth-Year Status Review Fee (see *Fee Schedule*) according to the established timeline. All components of the IFYR should be submitted electronically. The IFYR process also involves a peer review process, a TRACS staff visit, and a report to the Accreditation Commission.

Institutions required to participate in the IFYR process will be notified by the TRACS Office and will be provided with detailed instructions and all of the forms necessary to complete the process.

1. Initial Communication

- 1.a. TRACS Office (Team/Staff Visit Clerk) sends out letter in January of each year to applicable institutions reminding them that the current year is the year of their required fifth-year Interim Fifth-Year Review (IFYR) and supplying them with the required forms and instructions. (Ex. Institutions which were granted reaffirmation in calendar year 2010 [either April or October], will receive the above mentioned letter in January of 2015)
- 1.b. Once the above letter has been mailed, TRACS Staff sends an email following up on the letter with the following attachments.
 - i. Instruction sheet for the IFYR process
 - ii. *Interim Fifth-Year Review Form*
- 1.c. In the letter and in the email, the institution is reminded of the July 1st deadline for submission of the IFYR and all validating documents. (If July 1st falls on a Saturday or Sunday, the deadline for submission will be on the first business day of the month.)

2. IFYR Processes

- 2.a. TRACS Staff identifies the peer reviewers and informs the institution of the reviewer's names and email addresses. The institution is informed that they are to send a digital copy of the IFYR to each of the reviewers. TRACS Staff ensures that all parties (the peer reviewers and the institution) have signed off on the appropriate IFYR *Conflict of Interest Form* before finalizing the peer reviewer assignments.
- 2.b. TRACS Staff will ensure that the institution sends a digital copy of the IFYR and all validating documents to the TRACS office and peer reviewers by July 1st.

3. Peer Review and Staff Visit

- 3.a. TRACS Staff ensures that the reviewers have the *Peer Review Report* template and inform them of the timeline for their review to be returned to TRACS.
- 3.b. Once the *Peer Review Reports* and completed *Interim Fifth Year Review Forms* are submitted to the TRACS Office, the TRACS Staff representative will (1) inform the TRACS finance office that the peer reviewers have completed the reviews and should receive the approved stipend, and (2) conduct a visit to the institution. The staff representative will inform the institution of the areas of concern noted by the reviewers in advance of the visit so the institution can begin and hopefully complete addressing them before the staff visit. This visit should take place before the end of the calendar year.
- 3.c. Prior to the visit, the TRACS staff representative will prepare a preliminary report based on the findings of the reviewers. The visit is intended to confirm or eliminate any concerns identified by the reviewers or identify any additional areas of non-compliance.

4. Post Visit Follow-Up

- 4.a. After the visit, TRACS Staff will submit a DRAFT copy of the staff report to the institution and will provide an opportunity for the institution to identify any "errors of fact" within the report.
- 4.b. Once any factual errors have been corrected, TRACS Staff will finalize the report, and details any Recommendations and Suggestions according to any areas of non-compliance.

- 4.c. The TRACS Office (Team/Staff Visit Clerk) will develop an *IFYR Matrix* based on the Recommendations and Suggestions in the *Staff Visit Report* and send it to the institution along with the finalized *Staff Visit Report*.
- 4.d. Once all staff visit related expenses have been submitted, the TRACS Finance Office will send an invoice to the institution.
- 4.e. The institution must respond to Recommendations and Suggestions on the *IFYR Matrix* and return the matrix to the TRACS Office by February 15th of the year following the staff visit. (Ex. If the staff visit takes place in 2015, the institution's responses on the *IFYR Matrix* will be due in the TRACS Office by February 15, 2016).
- 4.f. TRACS Staff will review the institution's responses on the *IFYR Matrix* and prepare a Staff Report / Recommendation for the April Accreditation Commission meeting.

5. Accreditation Commission Action

- 5.a. TRACS Staff will compile all relevant IFYR related materials for submission to the Accreditation Commission for their review.
- 5.b. The institution is notified of the actions of the Accreditation Commission and is expected to continue to respond, on the *IFYR Matrix*, to unresolved Recommendations and Suggestions until they are resolved. Any subsequent responses which are required will be due in the TRACS Office by August 15th and February 15th of each year.

Interim Fifth-Year Review Checklist

1. Initial Communication

- 1.a. TRACS Office (Team/Staff Visit Clerk) sends out IFYR letter in January of each year to applicable institutions, along with IFYR instructions and the required IFYR forms.
- 1.b. TRACS Staff sends an email following up on the letter with the necessary attachments.
- 1.c. The institution is reminded of the July 1st deadline for submission of the IFYR and all supporting documents.

2. IFYR Processes

- 2.a. The IFYR and the Interim Fifth-Year Status Review Fee (see Fee Schedule) are submitted to the TRACS office by July 1st along with all supporting documentation.
- 2.b. . TRACS staff identifies the peer reviewers and the institution sends a digital copy of the IFYR to each reviewer TRACS staff completed visit and review of documents.

3. Peer Review and Staff Visit

- 3.a. Using the *Peer Review Report* template, the peer reviewers will review the information submits and return their findings to TRACS.
- 3.b. TRACS will conduct a visit to the institution before the end of the calendar year.
- 3.c. Prior to the visit, the TRACS staff representative will prepare a preliminary report based on the findings of the reviewers.

4. Post Visit Follow-Up

- 4.a. After the visit, TRACS staff will submit a DRAFT copy of the staff report to the institution.
- 4.b. Once any factual errors have been corrected, TRACS Staff will finalize the report.
- 4.c. The TRACS Office will develop a *IFYR Matrix* and send it to the institution along with a finalized *Staff Visit Report*.
- 4.d. The Institution must respond to Recommendations and Suggestion on the *IFYR Matrix* and return the matrix to the TRACS Office by the subsequent February 15th.
- 4.e. TRACS staff will review the institution's responses on the *IFYR Matrix* and prepare a Staff Report/Recommendation for the April Accreditation Commission meeting.

5. Accreditation Commission Action Post Visit Follow-up

- 5.a. TRACS staff will compile all relevant IFYR related materials for submission to the Accreditation Commission for their review.
- 5.b. Letter notifying institution of Accreditation Commission determination sent by the President of TRACS.

