

DRAFT Accreditation Framework

During the review of the accreditation system by the Committee on Accreditation and the Accreditation Study Work Group, staff has attempted to revise the *Accreditation Framework* in alignment with the proposed revisions. At the August 2006 COA meeting, groups reviewed and suggested edits to the draft Framework. Staff has integrated the suggested edits into this draft.

Now that the Commission has taken action on eleven of the recommendations made by the COA and the Work Group, it seems to be an appropriate time to revisit the draft framework language. Included in this agenda item is the draft *Accreditation Framework* for your review. Section 7, National Accreditation, has not been updated since the discussions on national accreditation have not yet been completed.

It is anticipated that at the November-December 2006 Commission meeting, the draft *Accreditation Framework* could be presented to the Commission, for information.

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The Accreditation Framework

Educator Preparation for California

This Framework addresses the accreditation of colleges, universities and local education agencies that prepare teachers and other educators for state certification and professional practice in California public schools. Accreditation is the primary assurance of quality in the preparation of professional educators, and as such is an essential purpose of the Commission. It provides an important quality assurance to the education profession, the general public, and the accredited institutions. This Introduction to the Framework articulates the purposes of the accreditation system in the field of educator preparation.

The Purposes of Professional Educator Program Accreditation

Professional accreditation is the process of ascertaining and verifying the quality of each program that prepares individuals for state certification. In this context, state certification is the process of ascertaining and verifying the qualifications of each future member of the education profession. These two processes -- professional accreditation and state certification share a common overarching objective – ensuring that those who teach in California’s public school system have the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to be effective classroom teachers. Accreditation of educator preparation in California serves to achieve the four primary purposes articulated below. It is the intent of this accreditation system to have an articulated accreditation and program review process across all educator preparation programs in California.

A primary purpose of the professional accreditation system is to ensure accountability to the public, the students and the education profession that educator preparation programs are responsive to the educational needs of current and future students. Only an accredited teacher preparation program may recommend a candidate for a license to teach in California. The general public has a compelling interest in accreditation decisions that are part of the public education system in California, so do professionals whose work is judged by the accreditation system, or whose future success depends on its results and effectiveness. The expertise and

experience of the accreditors should be credible to the general public and the education profession in California.

A second purpose of accreditation is to ensure that educator preparation programs are high quality and effective and provide education and experiences consistent with the knowledge and skills required of an educator serving the needs of the diverse population in the California public schools. The Commission has statutory responsibility for adopting accreditation standards which describe levels of quality that it deems to be acceptable for quality assurance. Standards should not focus on purely technical or operational aspects of educator preparation, but should enable trained reviewers with professional expertise to find out whether educator preparation in an institution is characterized by acceptable levels of quality as defined in the standards.

The Accreditation system is oriented to issues of quality. During a review, reviewers obtain evidence that relates to the educational quality of preparation programs and policies within the institution. Through experience, expertise and training, the reviewers are skilled at discerning the important from the unimportant in educator preparation. The findings and recommendations of accreditation reviewers focus on important matters of quality in the preparation of educators. Accreditation decisions hinge on findings that are [evidence-based](#), educationally significant and clearly related to quality-oriented standards.

A third purpose of the accreditation system is to ensure adherence to standards. The standards are designed to ensure that each educator's preparation is appropriate to the requirements of professional service in public schools. California's educator preparation programs are designed to meet the appropriate Commission approved program standards, which are aligned with the state adopted academic content and performance standards for K-12 students. Through the accreditation system, [sponsors of](#) educator preparation programs must provide evidence that their programs meet all standards.

Finally, the fourth purpose of the accreditation system is to support program improvement. Accreditation standards, reviews and decisions contribute to improvements in the preparation of educators. The quality of an institution's policies, practices and outcomes improve as its faculty, administrators and students strive to meet accreditation standards. The institution's offerings also benefit from the quality orientation of the accreditation system. When these effects of

accreditation fall short, however, specific accreditation decisions provoke needed improvements in educator preparation institutions. For improvements to occur, the accreditation system must identify and describe weaknesses in the quality of an institution's offerings in preparing professionals to serve the needs of California's diverse student population.

Key Attributes of Accreditation of California's Educator Preparation Programs

The key attributes described below function within the four purposes of accreditation. These attributes pertain to the development of program standards, the initial program approval process, and the subsequent reviews and accreditation of educator preparation programs.

First Attribute: The Professional Character of Accreditation. Professional educators should hold themselves and their peers accountable for the quality of professional education. Professionals should be involved intensively in the entire accreditation process. They should create accreditation standards, conduct accreditation reviews, and make accreditation decisions. Participants in these aspects of accreditation should have experience, expertise and training that are appropriate for their specific roles in accreditation. In each step of accreditation, decisions should emerge from consultative procedures, and should reflect the consensus of the professional participants.

Second Attribute: Knowledgeable Participants. The effectiveness of the accreditation system relies on the quality of the decision making at each step in the process. Quality assurances are provided initially through the participation of individuals who possess knowledge, skills and broad expertise and who participate in the system in various roles, including policy development, policy implementation, program review, system support and technical management, and professional preparation. In order to fulfill these roles effectively, participants must receive appropriate, targeted training that enables them to understand the underlying principles and purposes of the system as well as how to enact each of these roles effectively in meeting the needs of all learners in California's schools.

Third Attribute: Breadth and Flexibility. For institutions to be effective in a dynamic state like California, they must be creative and responsive to the changing needs of prospective

educators. In a society as diverse as California, universities and colleges often vary substantially in their missions and philosophies. Accreditation should not force institutions to conform to prescribed patterns unless these conventions have a firm basis in principles of educational quality, effectiveness and equity. The accreditation system should accommodate breadth and flexibility within and among institutions to support program improvement.

Accreditation standards should be drawn so different institutions can meet them in a variety of acceptable ways. There are ~~acceptable~~ effective and ~~unacceptable~~ ineffective forms of educator preparation; accreditation should differentiate between them. There are also multiple ways of ~~effectively~~ educating prospective educators acceptably; accreditation should not favor any of these over the others. Standards should describe levels of quality and effectiveness without stipulating how institutions are to comply. Explanations of the standards should clarify their meaning without making the standards overly restrictive. The training of accreditation reviewers should, moreover, emphasize the importance of acknowledging institutional diversity and creativity.

Fourth Attribute: Intensity in Accreditation. Accreditation should focus with intensity on key aspects of educational quality and effectiveness. While allowing and encouraging divergence among programs and institutions, the process should also be exacting in assembling key information about critical aspects of educational quality and effectiveness. The scope of accreditation should be comprehensive, and the information generated by the review processes should be sufficient to yield reliable judgments by professional educators.

Accreditation standards should encompass the critical dimensions of educator preparation. In order to recommend an institution for accreditation, experienced professional reviewers should be satisfied that the institution provides a comprehensive array of excellent learning opportunities and assurances that future educators have demonstrated that they have attained the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to be effective professionals..

Accreditation decisions should be based on information that is sufficient in breadth and depth for the results to be credible and dependable. Accreditation reviewers should understand the components of the program under review and the types of standards-based evidence that substantiate its overall quality and effectiveness. To find out if broad, quality-oriented standards

are met, and to make reliable judgments and sound recommendations, reviewers need to assemble a considerable body of data that is collectively significant.

Fifth Attribute: Efficiency and Cost-Effectiveness. An accreditation system should fulfill its purposes efficiently and cost-effectively. Review procedures, decision processes and reporting relationships should be streamlined and economical. Participants' roles should be clearly defined, and communications should be efficient.

There are costs associated with establishing standards, training reviewers, assembling information, preparing reports, conducting meetings and checking the accuracy of data and the fairness of decisions. Containing these costs is an essential attribute of accreditation, but efficiency must not undermine the capacity of accreditors to fulfill their responsibilities to the public and the profession. Accreditation costs, which are borne by institutions, individual accreditors and the accrediting body, should be reviewed periodically by the Commission in relation to the key purposes of accreditation.

Section 1

Authority and Responsibilities of the Commission on Teacher Credentialing

Pertaining to the accreditation of educator preparation, the authority and responsibilities of the Commission on Teacher Credentialing include the following.

A. Responsibilities Related to Accreditation Policies

1. **Adopt and Modify the *Accreditation Framework*.** The Commission has the authority and responsibility to adopt an *Accreditation Framework*, “which sets forth the policies of the Commission regarding the accreditation of educator preparation in California” (Education Code Section 44372-a). The present document is the adopted *Accreditation Framework*. The Commission may modify the *Framework* in accordance with Section 8 of the *Framework*. Modifications occur in public meetings after the Commission considers relevant information provided by the Committee on Accreditation, institutions, accreditation team members, the Commission’s staff, and other concerned individuals. The Commission determines when a policy modification takes effect.
2. **Establish and Modify Standards for Educator Preparation.** Pursuant to Education Code Section 44372-b, the Commission has the authority and responsibility to establish and modify standards for educator preparation in California.

B. Responsibilities Related to the Accreditation System

1. **Initial Recognition (Approval) of Institutions.** In accordance with Education Code Sections 44227-a and 44372-c and Section 4 of this *Framework*, the Commission determines the eligibility of an institution that applies for initial recognition (approval) and that has not previously prepared educators for state certification in California. The Commission recognizes institutions that meet the Commission established criteria that

have been adopted for that purpose. Institutional recognition by the Commission establishes the eligibility of an institution to submit specific program proposals to the Committee on Accreditation.

- 2. Hear and Resolve Accreditation Appeals.** The Commission hears appeals of accreditation decisions, which must be based on evidence that accreditation procedures or decisions were “arbitrary, capricious, unfair, or contrary to the policies of the Commission or the procedural guidelines of the Committee on Accreditation” (Education Code Section 44374-e). The Commission resolves each appeal, and the Executive Director communicates the Commission’s decision to the Committee on Accreditation, the accreditation team, and the affected institution.

C. Responsibilities Related to the Committee on Accreditation

- 1. Establish a Nominating Panel.** In collaboration with the Committee on Accreditation, the Commission establishes a Nominating Panel to solicit and screen nominations and recommend educators to serve on the Committee on Accreditation.
- 2. Appoint the Committee on Accreditation.** Pursuant to Education Code 44372-d and Section 2 of this *Framework*, the Commission appoints members and alternate members of the Committee on Accreditation for specific terms. The Commission selects the Committee members and alternate members from nominees submitted by the Nominating Panel. The Commission ensures that the Committee on Accreditation is professionally distinguished and balanced in its composition, but does not appoint members to represent particular institutions, organizations or constituencies.
- 3. Address Issues and Refer Concerns Related to Accreditation.** The Commission considers issues and concerns related to accreditation that it identifies, as well as those brought to the Commission’s attention by the Committee on Accreditation, postsecondary institutions, the Commission's staff, or other concerned individuals or

organizations. At its discretion, the Commission may refer accreditation issues and concerns to the Committee on Accreditation for examination and response.

4. **Review Annual Reports by the Committee on Accreditation.** The Commission reviews *Annual Accreditation Reports* submitted by the Committee on Accreditation. *Annual Reports* include standard information about the dimensions and results of the accreditation process. *Annual Reports* may also identify the Committee's issues and concerns, but these may be presented to the Commission separately from the *Annual Reports*.

D. Responsibilities Related to the Accreditation System

1. **Allocate Resources Annually for Accreditation Operations.** The Commission annually allocates resources for accreditation operations to implement this *Accreditation Framework*. Consistent with the Commission's general practice, staff assignments to accreditation operations are made by the Executive Director, in accordance with state budgets, laws and regulations.
2. **Review and Sponsor Legislation Related to Accreditation.** The Commission reviews legislative proposals to amend the Education Code related to the accreditation of educator preparation institutions. As the need arises, the Commission sponsors legislation related to accreditation, after considering the advice of the Commission's professional staff, the Committee on Accreditation, educational institutions and professional organizations.

Section 2

Functions of the Committee on Accreditation

The functions, membership and appointment of the Committee on Accreditation are set forth in Education Code Section 44373 and this section.

A. Functions of the Committee on Accreditation

- 1. Comparability of Standards.** In accordance with Section 3 of this *Framework*, the Committee determines whether standards submitted by institutions under Option 2 (National or Professional Program Standards) or Option 3 (Alternative Program Standards), taken as a whole, provide a level of program quality comparable to standards adopted by the Commission under Option 1 (California Program Standards). If the Committee determines that the proposed standards are collectively comparable in breadth and depth, when taken as a whole, to the Commission-adopted standards, the Committee on Accreditation may approve the proposed standards as Program Standards in California.

- 2. Initial Approval of Programs.** The Committee on Accreditation reviews proposals for the initial accreditation of programs submitted by institutions that have been determined to be eligible by the Commission. New programs of educator preparation may be submitted under Options One, Two, or Three **as defined** in Section 3 **of this Framework**. If the Committee on Accreditation determines that a program meets all applicable standards, the Committee on Accreditation grants initial approval to the program.

- 3. Continuing Accreditation Decisions.** After reviewing the recommendations of accreditation teams and the responses of institutions, the Committee makes decisions about the continuing accreditation of educator preparation institutions and programs, consistent with Section 5 of this *Framework*. Pertaining to each institution, the

Committee makes one of three decisions: Accreditation, Accreditation with Stipulations, or Denial of Accreditation.

4. **Accreditation Procedures.** Consistent with the terms of Section 5, the Committee recommends appropriate guidelines for self-study reports and other accreditation materials and exhibits to be prepared by institutions. The Committee also adopts guidelines for accreditation team reports, which emphasize the use of narrative, qualitative explanations of team recommendations. The Committee may provide additional guidance to institutions, teams and the Executive Director regarding accreditation visit procedures. The procedural guidelines of the Committee are published by the Commission as an *Accreditation Handbook*.
5. **Monitor the Accreditation System.** The Committee monitors the performance of accreditation teams and oversees other activities associated with the accreditation system.
6. **Communication with and reporting to the Commission. ~~Annual Reports, Recommendations and Responses.~~** The Committee presents *Annual Accreditation Reports* to the Commission. *Annual Reports* include standard information about the dimensions and results of the accreditation process. The Committee also advises the Commission about policy changes to improve the quality and integrity of the accreditation process. (Adjust this language once the COA decides what to present to Commission).
7. **Meet in Public Sessions.** The Committee conducts its business and makes its decisions in meetings that are open to the public, except as provided by statute.
8. **Evaluation of Accreditation Policies and Practices.** The Committee shares responsibility with the Commission for the on going evaluation and monitoring of the effectiveness of the accreditation system. Evaluation and monitoring of the system as

well as modification to that system will be conducted in a manner consistent with Section 8 of this Framework.

B. Membership of the Committee on Accreditation

- 1. Membership Composition.** The Committee consists of twelve members. Six members are from postsecondary education institutions, and six are certificated professionals in public schools, school districts, or county offices of education in California. Selection of members is based on the breadth of their experience, the diversity of their perspectives, and "their distinguished records of accomplishment in education" (Education Code Section 44373-a). All members serve as members-at-large. No member serves on the Committee as a representative of any organization, institution, or constituency. To the maximum extent possible, Committee membership is balanced according to ethnicity, gender, geographic regions and across credentials awarded by the Commission. The Committee includes members from elementary and secondary schools, and from public and private postsecondary institutions. The elementary and secondary school members include certificated administrators, teachers, and at least one member involved in a professional educator preparation program. The postsecondary members include administrators and faculty members, both of whom must be involved in professional educator programs.
- 2. Membership Criteria.** The criteria for membership on the Committee are: evidence of achievement in the education profession; recognized professional or scholarly contributions in the field of education; recognition of excellence by peers; experience with and sensitivity to issues of human diversity; distinguished service in the field of educator preparation; knowledge of issues related to the preparation and licensing of education professionals; length of professional service; and possession of appropriate educational degrees and professional credentials.
- 3. Membership Orientation and Training.** Members of the Committee will receive an orientation and training to adequately prepare them to effectively carry out their roles and responsibilities on the Committee on Accreditation.

C. Appointment of the Committee on Accreditation

- 1. Nominating Panel.** A Nominating Panel of four distinguished members of the education profession in California identifies and nominates individuals to serve on the Committee on Accreditation. The Nominating Panel is comprised of two educators appointed by the Committee on Accreditation and two educators appointed by the Commission. Each entity will appoint one college or university member and one elementary or secondary school member to the Nominating Panel. The terms of Nominating Panel members are four years long. Members of the Panel may not serve more than one term.
- 2. Nomination of Committee Members.** To select members for the Committee on Accreditation, a vacancy notice is posted on the Commission website and nominations are solicited, in writing, from a broad base of professional organizations, agencies, institutions, and individuals in education. Each nomination must be submitted with the consent of the individual. A written endorsement from the nominee's **employer** confirming understanding of and agreement to the nominee's participation on the Committee must be submitted (Commission provides travel, per diem, and substitute reimbursement, if needed). The nominee's professional resume must be submitted. Self-nominations are not accepted.
- 3. Selection of Committee Members.** Based on the membership criteria and the principles of balanced composition set forth in this section, the Nominating Panel **screens the professional qualifications of each nominee and** recommends for appointment at least two highly qualified nominees for each vacant seat on the Commission. ~~The Nominating Panel submits twice as many nominees as the number of pending vacancies on the Committee.~~ The Commission selects and appoints the members and alternate members of the Committee by selecting from the nominations submitted by the Panel.
- 4. Terms of Appointment.** The Commission appoints members of the Committee on Accreditation to four-year terms. A member may be renominated and reappointed to a second term of four years. A member may serve a maximum of two terms on the Committee. **Terms of appointment shall commence on July 1, or the date of the appointment, whichever is later, and shall expire on June 30.**

5. **Committee Vacancies.** When a seat on the Committee becomes vacant prior to the conclusion of the member's term, the Executive Director fills the seat for the remainder of the term by appointing a replacement from the list of alternate members.

6. **Transition from *Accreditation Framework (1995)* to the revised Framework (2007) as it applies to Committee membership.** In the first year of the implementation of the revised Framework, three new members will be appointed to the Committee for four year terms. Nine members of the prior Committee will continue to serve, three for one additional year, three for two additional years, and three for three additional years. Each subsequent year, three additional members will be appointed to the Committee.

Section 3

Accreditation Standards

There are two categories of accreditation standards for institutions that prepare professional educators in California. An accredited institution is expected to satisfy the standards in both categories.

Category I. Common Standards relate to aspects of program quality that are the same for all educator preparation programs. This category includes standards **relevant to** ~~regarding~~ the overall leadership and climate for educator preparation at an institution, as well as standards pertaining to quality features that are common to all programs. ~~such as resources, coordination, admissions and advisement.~~ An institution responds to each Common Standard by providing pertinent information, including information about individual programs. ~~The Common Standards are in Appendix 2 of this Framework.~~

Category II. Program Standards address the quality of program features that are specific to a credential, such as curriculum, field experiences, and knowledge and skills to be demonstrated by candidates in the specific credential area. When institutions prepare for continuing accreditation reviews, they may consider the following options for program-specific standards. Different options may be exercised by different credential programs at an institution. Options that are selected will be the basis for the review of specific programs and will guide the selection and orientation of program reviewers. Pertaining to each program, the institution responds to each standard in the selected option by providing program-specific information for review by the program reviewers.

- **Option 1. California Program Standards.** The Commission relies on panels of experts from colleges, universities and schools to develop standards for specific credential programs. These panels are guided by current research findings in the field of the credential and the California K-12 academic content standards. They also consider standards developed by appropriate national and statewide professional organizations. If the national or professional standards are found to be appropriate for California, a panel may recommend that the

Commission adopt them in lieu of developing new standards or revising the Commission's existing standards. After reviewing the recommendations of advisory panels and other experts, the Commission adopts California Program Standards for the initial and continuing accreditation of credential preparation programs. The Commission may require institutions that offer credential preparation programs to meet the new set of California Program Standards.

- **Option 2. National or Professional Program Standards.** California institutions may propose program standards that have been developed by national or state professional organizations. Such a proposal may be submitted to the Committee on Accreditation with a statement of the institution's reasons for selecting this option and recommending the proposed standards. If the Committee determines that the recommended standards, taken as a whole, provide a level of professional quality comparable to the standards adopted by the Commission under Option 1 (California Program Standards), the Committee approves the proposed standards for use as Program Standards in the initial or continuing accreditation of credential program.

- **Option 3. Experimental ~~Alternate Program~~ Standards.**

A) Experimental Program Standards. For initial accreditation, an institution may present an experimental, pilot, or exploratory program that meets the Experimental Program Standards adopted by the Commission pursuant to Education Code Section 44273. Experimental, pilot, or exploratory programs are designed to allow for the examination of focused research questions intended to contribute to the body of knowledge around key aspects of the field of education including the identification of model strategies, delivery methods, and programs that lead to improved teaching and learning. Institutions that sponsor experimental, pilot, or exploratory programs must have a research component that examines how the program contributes to the development of quality teaching and specifically, the acquisition and mastery by teacher candidates of appropriate performance expectations, such as the Teaching Performance Expectations for the Multiple and Single Subject Credentials. In addition, experimental, pilot, or

exploratory programs are required to report their findings on a biennial basis to the Commission. Upon consultation with the institution and with the Committee on Accreditation, the Commission retains the authority to determine whether the findings support continuance of the experimental, pilot, or exploratory program under the experimental standards. (Determine what needs changing depending on direction of COA).

~~**B) Alternative Standards.** An institution may develop Alternative Standards for initial and continuing accreditation of a credential program. The institution must submit a sound rationale for the alternative standards. If the Committee on Accreditation determines that the proposed standards, taken as a whole, provide a level of program quality comparable to the standards adopted by the Commission under Option 1 (California Program Standards), the Committee approves the Alternative Standards for use as Program Standards by the institution that proposed them.~~

Section 4

Initial Accreditation Policies

This section governs the initial recognition of institutions and approval of programs.

A. Responsibility for Two Phases of Initial Accreditation

- 1. Initial Recognition Eligibility of Institutions/Program Sponsors.** A postsecondary education institution or school district that is not currently preparing educators for California's public schools must submit an application to the Commission for initial ~~recognition~~ **eligibility**. Institutional accreditation by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) or another of the six regional accrediting bodies or evidence of the entity's governance board's approval or sponsorship of the program is required for initial ~~recognition~~ **eligibility** by the Commission establishing eligibility to submit programs for further consideration. The Commission may establish additional procedures and criteria for the initial recognition of institutions to prepare and recommend candidates for state credentials in education.
- 2. Initial Approval of Programs.** New credential **or certificate** program proposals by institutions that have been determined to be eligible by the Commission must fulfill preconditions established by state law and the Commission, the Common Standards, and the appropriate set of Program Standards. Descriptions of new programs include evidence of involvement in program design and planning by elementary and secondary school practitioners and members of diverse local communities. The Committee on Accreditation decides the initial approval of new credential **or certificate** programs at an eligible institution/sponsor.

B. Policies for Initial Approval of Programs

1. **Review of New Programs.** Prior to being presented to the Committee on Accreditation for action, new programs proposed by eligible program sponsors are reviewed in relation to the Common Standards in Appendix 2 and the selected Program Standards as specified in Section 3 of this *Framework*. The Committee on Accreditation considers recommendations by the staff and/or the external reviewers regarding the approval of each proposed program.

2. **Institutional Standards.** An institution/program sponsor that selects National or Professional Program Standards (Option 2) or utilizes Alternative Program Standards (Option 3) submits the standards to the Committee on Accreditation for initial approval prior to developing a program proposal. The acceptability of the standards must be assured before the sponsor prepares a program proposal.

3. **Experimental Programs.** The Committee on Accreditation approves experimental programs by applying standards adopted by the Commission. . *Specific procedures for submission and approval of the Experimental and Alternate Programs is set forth in the Accreditation Handbook. (This section needs work depending on the direction of the group on the Experimental Program Standards).*
 - submission of research questions, hypotheses or objectives related to the selection, preparation or assessment of prospective professional educators;
 - submission of a research design applicable to the research questions, hypotheses or objectives being investigated; and
 - demonstration of the potential effectiveness of the proposed program in generally improving the quality of service authorized by the credential.

4. ~~**Alternate Programs.** The Committee on Accreditation approves alternate programs by applying standards adopted by the Commission relating to:~~
 - ~~• the overall quality of alternate standards developed by the institution, which must have educational merit generally equivalent or superior to standards set by the Commission as Option 1;~~

- ~~• the requirement that extended alternate programs adhere to standards of professional competence that exceed those set by the Commission for conventional teacher education programs; and~~
- ~~• a recommendation that alternate programs that lead to Multiple or Single Subject Teaching credentials be designed to integrate the delivery of subject matter preparation and pedagogical preparation over the entire period of each candidate's initial preparation as a teacher.~~

Section 5

Continuing Accreditation Policies

This section outlines the Commission’s policies for institutions that have been approved to offer educator preparation credential programs and are seeking continuing accreditation. The specific procedures and requirements for implementing these policies are included in the *Accreditation Handbook*.

Overview of the Accreditation Cycle.

Contained in this *Framework* are the goals for the Commission’s accreditation system. Under this system, accreditation is an on-going process that fosters greater public accountability, continuous attention to program improvement, adherence to standards, and high quality programs. The accreditation system and its interrelated set of activities of biennial reporting, program document reviews, site visits, and follow up throughout the 7 year cycle – is designed to support these goals. Below is a general description of each of the components of the 7 year cycle.

The major components of the 7 year accreditation cycle include:

- 1) Annual Data Gathering and Analysis by the Institution
- 2) Continuing (Biennial) Program Reports in Years 1, 3, and 5.
- 3) Program Document Review in Year 4
- 4) Institutional Site Visit in Year 6
- 5) Follow Up on areas of concern in Year 7 and beyond, if necessary

The following chart illustrates the various activities in the 7 year accreditation cycle.