Proposed Modifications to Accreditation Activities
for Programs with Inactive Status
June 2020

Overview

This report presents information for discussion and approval by the Committee on Accreditation regarding proposed modifications to the required accreditation activities for programs with Inactive status. These proposed modifications are specific to Preconditions responses and Program Review Submissions.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the information presented in this item be discussed and the proposed policy changes be approved.

Background

For a variety of reasons, an institution or program sponsor may decide to declare a Commission approved program 'Inactive'. As part of a program sponsor's request to move to Inactive status, they must provide information on the number of existing candidates and the plan to ensure those candidates will have the opportunity to complete the program. In order to move a program to inactive status, a program may have no more than 15 candidates.

Once a program is granted Inactive program status, a program sponsor is not permitted to operate the specified preparation program or admit new candidates. The Committee on Accreditation (COA) has defined five years as the maximum amount of time a program may be inactive before either reactivating or being moved to Withdrawn status. All requests to reactivate an inactive program must be approved by the COA.

During the time a program is inactive (up to five years) it is expected to participate in accreditation activities in a modified manner, as specified in the [Accreditation Handbook]. This includes submitting responses to [Preconditions] during Years 1 and 4 of the seven year accreditation cycle and Program Review submissions in Year 5. It is a common occurrence for sponsors of inactive programs with zero candidates to presume that they are not required to respond to preconditions. Commission staff spend a substantial amount of time reaching out to inactive programs who do not submit preconditions, and even more time on reviewing the preconditions for inactive programs once they are submitted. For the active and inactive preconditions due on May 15, 2020, staff will review preconditions for 64 institutions (Green and Violet cohorts) for a total of 768 general preconditions and 1,247 program-specific preconditions. Last year, 2019, staff reviewed preconditions for 68 institutions (Red and Blue cohorts) for a total of 816 general preconditions and 2,435 program specific preconditions. Each institution must respond to the general preconditions as well as all other applicable program specific preconditions; thus, for each reviewed inactive program preconditions, there are general preconditions to be read.

It can also be confusing, difficult, and time consuming for sponsors of inactive programs to prepare Program Review submissions for these programs and even more confusing and difficult for the reviewers of these submissions. Included in the 19 specific exhibits required for Program Review submissions are a program summary, course matrix identifying where program competencies/performance expectations are introduced, practiced, and assessed (with links to specific evidence), and vitae for all full-time, part-time, and adjunct program faculty. Of the four color cohorts mentioned in the previous paragraph, the Red cohort submitted Program Review last October and the Violet cohort will submit this October. In the Red cohort, five Program Review submissions were prepared by institutions for inactive programs. Two reviewers are assigned to read each submission so approximately 10 reviewers were recruited and scheduled for the five or so hours of Program Review (not including any pre-work they might have done or their travel time). Staff has identified three inactive programs in the Violet cohort. Given the limited resources and reviewers available to review documents, staff proposes reconsideration of accreditation requirements for inactive programs with no candidates.

Proposal for Consideration
In an effort to ease the burden on both Commission staff and institutional staff, staff suggests that inactive programs with no candidates not be included in the requirement to submit preconditions and program review documents. Staff is proposing that if a program is inactive **and** has no candidates currently enrolled in the program, then the inactive program does not have to submit preconditions responses in Years 1 and 4 or a Program Review submission in Year 5. However, if the sponsor has one or more candidates in an inactive program, they would still be required to provide preconditions responses, as scheduled, and a Program Review submission, as determined on a case by case basis.

Current practice for programs requesting to reactivate an inactive program is to submit documentation that was required during the period the program was inactive and in line with what makes sense for the activities of the accreditation cycle. This always includes preconditions submissions and, in many cases, program documentation/program review as well as any other relevant documents depending on several factors as indicated in the Accreditation Handbook. These factors include changes the Commission may have made to standards, transition plans that were or are due, and where in the cycle the institution is as a whole.

If the COA were to suspend the requirement that programs submit Preconditions responses for those programs that are inactive and have zero candidates, it would not change the practice of requiring Preconditions responses when a program seeks reactivation. Preconditions responses would be reviewed and approved by staff, as is the current process.

Additionally, if the COA were to allow inactive programs with zero candidates to forgo the submission of Program Review documentation, the Administrator of Accreditation would, on a case by case basis and using the factors mentioned previously, assess what documentation – up to a full Program Review submission – is needed. If it were to be decided that a Program

Review submission should be required, it would either be reviewed during one of the scheduled Program Review sessions in the fall/winter or Commission staff would recruit a pair of reviewers to review and respond with any feedback.