

Proposed Revision to Accreditation Decision Guidance Table in the Accreditation Handbook January 2024

Overview

This agenda item presents a clarification needed to a chart in Chapter Eight: Accreditation Decisions: Options and Implications of the *Accreditation Handbook*.

Background

[Chapter Eight](#) of the *Accreditation Handbook* contains a table at the end of the chapter that provides general guidance for site visit team recommendations based on the findings around the Common Standards. In using the chart recently, staff noticed the need to adjust the chart as well as the language preceding the chart. The error listed indicates that there could be findings of six or more Common Standards, when in fact, there are only five Common Standards.

Proposed Edit to the Accreditation Handbook

The following is an excerpt from the *Accreditation Handbook*, Chapter 8, pages 12-14 beginning with the II. Guidance for the Team Recommendation section. The proposed revisions are indicated below in underline and strike through. The changes are needed because there are currently only five Common Standards and yet the chart erroneously refers to six. Staff proposed to also make non-substantive changes to capitalization, and these are included below in the text but not indicated.

Excerpt from Accreditation Handbook, Chapter 8

II. Guidance for the Team Recommendation

The site visit team must use its collective professional judgment to reach an accreditation recommendation for an institution. The site visit team’s recommendation for an accreditation decision is a holistic decision based on the Common Standards findings, and on the number and severity of Met with Concerns or Not Met findings for the specific programs offered at the institution. The COA makes one accreditation decision for the institution and all of its approved educator preparation programs. This accreditation decision reflects, to a great degree, the team’s findings on the Common Standards. However, if one or more programs are found to have significant issues, it is likely that one or more related Common Standards will reflect findings of Met with Concerns or Not Met. If a specific program is determined to have significant concerns that are not reflected in the Common Standards or in other education preparation programs at the institution, the team has the option of making an accreditation decision with the added stipulation that the specific program be closed. The table below provides general guidance to site visit teams as they discuss which accreditation recommendation is appropriate for the institution.

Table 2: General Guidance for ~~Initial~~ Site Visit Team Recommendations*

Common Standards that are less than fully met will be listed in the first two columns. The range of all Accreditation Recommendations are listed from Column 3-7. ~~Note there are 50 empty cells listed in the table below.~~

# Met with concerns	# Not met	Accreditation	With stipulations	With Major stipulations	With Probationary stipulations	*Denial of Accreditation
0	0	✓				
1-2	0	✓	✓			
3-4	0		✓	✓		
5-6	0		✓	✓	✓	
0	1-2		✓	✓	✓	
1-2	1-2			✓	✓	
3-4	1-2			✓	✓	
1-2	3-4				✓	
0	5				✓	
6 or more	6 or more				✓	

** Denial of accreditation is used only in extreme situations in accordance with the provisions in this Handbook*

** Findings on program standards must be considered by the team in making the accreditation recommendation, and those findings play an integral role in helping the team reach consensus on its recommendation.*

When teams are deliberating about the accreditation recommendation, they must consider the findings on the Common Standards, as well as the number and severity of standard findings for the programs. The table identifies the range of likely accreditation recommendations for an institution based on the number of Common Standards that are Met with Concerns or Not Met, but these should not be considered without also taking into consideration the findings of the team on Program Standards. If an institution has only a couple of Common Standards found to be Met with Concerns or Not Met, then the accreditation recommendation would likely be Accreditation or Accreditation with Stipulations which are on the left side of the range shown on the table. If, on the other hand, there are numerous Common Standards found to be Met with Concerns or Not Met, then the team's accreditation recommendation would likely be in the middle or towards the right side of the range identified in Table 2.

In its determination of an appropriate accreditation recommendation, the site visit team must also take into consideration the number of educator preparation programs an institution offers. If an institution offers a small number of programs, then a small number of Program Standards found to be less than fully met becomes significant. On the other hand, if an institution offers a large number of programs, then a few Program Standards found to be less than fully met might not be as significant a factor in the accreditation recommendation.

The information provided in Table 2 is only a general reference tool for teams as they consider the impact of the findings on all Common and Program Standards to determine an accreditation recommendation. It does not replace the critically important professional judgment that team members bring to discussions about the degree to which an institution and its programs align with the adopted standards. Similarly, it does not replace the team's assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of an institution and its programs, nor of the team's judgment about the impact of the institution on candidates or the quality of the institution's offerings. By the end of the site visit, team members have a great deal of information about an institution, its unique characteristics, and the quality of its programs. That knowledge, as supported by evidence, is used by the team to generate and justify an accreditation recommendation.

In like fashion, Table 2 serves as a reference tool for the COA, who must consider information from the accreditation report, the team lead, and the institution to render a single accreditation decision. The table is not a substitute for the professional judgment, nuances around the issues identified, and experience of the COA members, nor is it a substitute for the deliberations that take place at the COA meeting where the accreditation report is presented.

Recommendation

That the COA discuss and adopt the proposed revisions to Chapter Eight of the *Accreditation Handbook* as proposed by staff.

Next Steps

Staff will update the language in the *Accreditation Handbook* and repost the *Handbook* on the Commission webpage.