

The ACCJC leadership team is preparing a proposal for a significant change in the structure of our comprehensive reviews. We anticipate that this initiative will be a concrete expression of the Commission's mission to be a collaborative, value-adding partner in our members' pursuit of excellence. For reasons that will become clear in the following paragraphs, in our internal conversations we are calling this the "formative/summative model" of review.

Classroom teachers are embracing a concept of assessment of learning in which the assessment activity is itself a learning experience. In this model, the teacher provides **formative** feedback to students at various stages in their completion of an assignment. The student has time to incorporate this feedback prior to turning in the assignment to receive a **summative** assessment by the teacher. For example, the teacher may review early outlines or drafts of a paper and give helpful advice that clarifies expectations so that students might improve their work. The student has both time and insight to make improvements. The final paper is then assessed for the purpose of assigning a **summative** grade.

Informed in part by what we have learned from other regional accrediting agencies that have deployed versions of this concept, the ACCJC team envisions implementing a formative and a summative stage to our comprehensive reviews. Continuing the classroom analogy, the institution completes its "assignment" in the form of its self-study report. The peer review team carefully examines this report in an off-site review (OSR) without making conclusive findings about compliance. The team concludes the OSR by providing formative feedback to the institution on both the completeness of the report and on aspects of the institution's operations described in the report. The team may request additional documentation or provide Standards-based advice on areas of the college's operations that need further development. They may also specify areas of operations where no concerns remain, thus need not be addressed during the subsequent site visit. The team then narrows the focus of the site visit by providing lines of inquiry that the team will pursue when on location. These communications are confidential to the institution and are not made public. No additional self-study report is required.

After a set period of time, typically one semester, the institution prepares for an onsite visit by the team. (The team may request for this time to be extended if it is deemed beneficial to the institution.) At the time of the visit, the institution will have produced additional required supporting evidence and, as specified, will have documented the continued maturation of its structures or processes in order to demonstrate compliance with the agency's standards. The team's interviews while on the campus are guided by the lines of inquiry previously communicated. There should be no surprises about the team's areas of inquiry. Its evaluative report to the Commission is based on the status of the institution at the time of this visit, reflecting any progress achieved in the interval following the off-site review. The report is forwarded to the Commission to inform its summative decisions about the accredited status of the institution.

When fully deployed, this two-stage process will achieve the following goals:

1. To minimize the element of fear or surprise by the college that often accompanies a comprehensive review
2. To underscore the importance of the accreditation review as an occasion to foster and guide institutional improvement
3. To structure the onsite visit to focus on core accreditation issues by having already confirmed compliance on operational matters demonstrated in the self-study

4. To more fully utilize the wisdom of the peer review team by providing time for an institution to consider and adopt its advice as an integral part of a comprehensive review – and while the issues are current and the advice is relevant.

Other considerations:

- With the focus of the site visit being more narrowly defined at the time of the OSR, it is possible that shorter visits will accomplish the required compliance verification. This will reduce the logistics planning and costs for the institution.
- Over time, our cadre of peer reviewers will become even more discerning in their judgments about what are the core issues in accreditation and what are the perhaps less crucial operational components that can be readily verified at the time of the OSR.