

**Council on Accreditation for Parks, Recreation, Tourism
and Related Professions**



**Council on
Accreditation**

Parks, Recreation, Tourism
and Related Professions

Accreditation Handbook

2013 Standards

Sponsored by

National Recreation and Park Association

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Section 1

Introduction to the Council on Accreditation for Parks, Recreation, Tourism, and Related Professions

The Council on Accreditation for Parks, Recreation, Tourism and Related Professions (hereafter, “the Council”) administers a voluntary peer review process to evaluate compliance of academic programs with standards for accreditation of baccalaureate programs in parks, recreation, tourism, sport management, event management, therapeutic recreation, and leisure studies. The review is based on standards established by the Council, with input from educators and practitioners in all areas of the profession. The accreditation process consists of completion of a self-study, an initial review by the Council, a site visit from a team of academic and practitioner peers, a final Council review and decision, and annual progress reporting by the program to the Council. The Council is recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), and is sponsored through the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA).

This handbook is for use by individuals who are working with the Council’s accreditation process. It also is for use in training sessions designed to help these individuals become more knowledgeable and effective regarding the accreditation process. This handbook is designed to be used in conjunction with the document, *Council on Accreditation of Parks, Recreation, Tourism and Related Professions (COAPRT) Learning Outcomes Standards and Assessment (2013)*.

Council Mission

Through formal review and accreditation of higher education curricula, the Council on Accreditation for Parks, Recreation, Tourism and Related Professions protects students, families, sponsoring bodies, colleges, universities, employers, and the public by ensuring that those enrolled in accredited programs are provided a quality education that empowers them to succeed in parks, recreation, tourism and related specialization professions.

Council Vision

The Council on Accreditation of Parks, Recreation, Tourism and Related Professions (COAPRT) accredits baccalaureate programs in parks, recreation, tourism, sport management, event management, therapeutic recreation, and leisure studies, within the United States and its territories, Canada, and Mexico.

Council Core Values

The Council adheres to the following core values:

- Rigorous and consistent review
- Timely and relevant standards
- Continual improvement through self-assessment by both the Council and academic programs
- Diverse, experienced, and committed Committee members
- Reliable, valid, and unbiased information

- Qualified and well-trained reviewers
- Accountability to the profession and the public
- Highest ethical standards
- Innovation and experimentation

Non-Discrimination Policy

The Council shall not discriminate on the basis of race, disability, religion, color, national origin, age, gender, covered veterans status, marital status, personal appearance, sexual orientation, family responsibilities, political affiliation, source of income, place of business or residence, pregnancy, childbirth, or any other unlawful basis. This policy is in compliance with Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the Age Discrimination in Employment Act.

A Brief History of the Council

The Council held its first meeting at the NRPA Congress in Denver, Colorado on October 25, 1974. Recreation and park educators and practitioners had been studying the matter of accreditation and working on the development of a plan and evaluative criteria for many years prior to that time. This development included a trial-run and evaluation of the process at four institutions across the country. On January 1, 1976, the Council began to accept applications for accreditation from colleges and universities. The first program to be accredited was North Carolina State University's Department of Recreation Resources Administration in 1977. By 1992 the list of accredited programs included more than 90 institutions. By 2004, approximately 100 recreation, park resources, and leisure programs had been accredited.

In 2008, Council accepted learner outcome standards to become effective in 2013. In 2009, documents were prepared to create affiliate relationships with specialization professions, and the Council's name was changed from the Council on Accreditation for Recreation, Park Resources, and Leisure Services to the Council on Accreditation for Parks, Recreation, Tourism and Related Professions.

Recognition by National Accrediting Bodies

In 1986, the Council was officially recognized and accepted into membership by the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA). COPA was the recognition body for accrediting bodies, as well as the national association for the advancement of professional education and collegial interaction for its member organizations. These member organizations included both regional accreditors of entire institutions as well as accrediting organizations for professional schools and specializations such as the field of recreation, park resources, and leisure services. COPA included such bodies as the Association of American Law Schools, the American Council on Pharmaceutical Education, the American Psychological Association, the Society of American Foresters, the National Architectural Accrediting Board, and the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. In 1986 COPA evolved into CHEA, the Council for Higher Education Accreditation. The Council continues to be recognized CHEA.

Administration

The Council is administered with the assistance of the National Recreation and Park Association, which supports a staff liaison position in its offices. The Council is funded primarily through fees of accredited programs, with additional support from NRPA.

Professional association(s) in parks, recreation, tourism and related professions formally collaborate with the Council to accredit programs in professional specialization areas. These associations develop and recommend adoption of learner outcomes in the respective professional specialization, and they also participate in the review and accreditation decision process for specialization areas. The mission, policies and procedures of the affiliates are consistent with those of the Council.

Council Personnel

Council Members

The Council is comprised of ten (10) members. Each member serves a three year term, and, with approval by the Council, her or his appointment is renewable for a second three year term. The terms are staggered to provide continuity. Members of the Council include five educators from accredited institutions, three practitioners, one college/university administrator, and one public representative. The Council appoints the public and the administrator members. Individuals who are members of NRPA and its affiliates are nominated for five educator and three practitioner positions. Annually in the fall, from the nominees the Council makes appointments to fill each vacant position. Each year in the fall the Council elects the executive committee, which includes the Chair, Vice-Chair, and Past-Chair/Second Vice Chair.

Meetings

The Council meets annually in the fall to conduct hearings on programs being reviewed for accreditation, to consider affiliate matters, and to attend to other business matters. Business matters generally include policy and procedure issues, and elections of officers. A review of COAPRT standards is completed every seven years; the next scheduled review will be completed in 2020.

The dual meanings of “Program”

In documents and correspondence about accreditation by the Council, the term *Program may* refer to both the academic unit and the set of courses it offers. The professional preparation program of a parks, recreation, tourism, and/or related professional unit in a college or university includes the curriculum and associated activities and services offered by the unit. The curriculum focuses on program support criteria and learning outcomes. Programs seeking accreditation must meet standards in both of these areas.

When a Program (administrative unit such as a department) conducts a self-assessment and develops its Self-Study Report, it demonstrates compliance with the standards as appropriate to its specific situation. During the visit to the campus, the Visitation Team collects data and seeks to verify that the Program is meeting standards as the Self-Study Report indicates. The Council grants accreditation, or defers or denies it, on the basis of the Program’s compliance with standards.

Notification to the Public

Program Accreditation Status

All accreditation actions are posted on the National Recreation and Park Association's (NRPA) website, which includes a list (with explanation) of each possible accreditation decision. Each program is listed with their current accreditation status that refers back to the accreditation decision descriptions listed at the top of the page, as well as any standards in which they are non-compliant.

The Harm of Degree and Accreditation Mills

Degree mills offer academic credentials for a fee. Similarly, accreditation mills provide degree mills with accreditation for a fee without subjecting the degree provider to a rigorous review of non-existent academic programs.

Degree mills harm students and society. Students who are unknowing victims of degree mills are harmed when they invest a considerable amount of money for credits or credentials that cannot be used for, e.g., transfer to another institution, entry to graduate school or employment. Society is harmed when fraudulent credentials are issued in areas that put public health and safety at risk, e.g., engineering or the health-related professions. The international work of legitimate higher education providers – reliable evaluation of credentials, successful transfer of credit, reconciling differences in degree structure – is undermined by degree mills. (CHEA, *Toward Effective Practice: Discouraging Degree Mills in Higher Education*) COAPRT endeavors to provide the public with a basic understanding of degree and accreditation mills, along with harm they may inflict by posting text and videos on its website. For information on degree mills visit www.nrpa.org/COAPRT.

Section 2

Steps in the Accreditation Process

This section describes the general steps involved in accreditation of higher education programs in parks, recreation, tourism and related profession by the Council.

CHEA Statement of Good Practices and Shared Responsibility in the Conduct of Specialized and Professional Accreditation Review, Part I: Institutions and Programs are Responsible for:

1. Providing clear, accurate and complete information for an accrediting review.
2. Emphasizing the importance of having key faculty and administrators appropriately involved in the accrediting review.
3. Informing accrediting organizations of the desired purpose and expected results of the review in relation to institutional and program purpose and strategic direction.
4. Providing constructive information in a timely manner to accrediting organizations if there are concerns or difficulties that emerge during the accrediting review.
5. Understanding the standards, policies and procedures of the accrediting organizations with which institutions and programs are working.
http://www.chea.org/pdf/2000.01_good_practices.pdf#search=%22Conduct%20of%20Specialized%22

Steps in becoming accredited

1. A Program (parks, recreation, tourism, and or related professional academic unit hereafter referred to as “Program”) evaluates its eligibility for accreditation by the Council. Fee information is located at <http://www.nrpa.org/Professional-Development/Accreditation/COAPRT/COAPRT-Accreditation-Fee-List/>

Accreditation is open to Programs that meet the following criteria:

- a. The academic unit and curriculum concerned with parks, recreation, tourism, or a related profession has been in operation for at least three years and is clearly identifiable to the public.
- b. The institution is currently accredited by the appropriate regional accrediting association recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) or by the current national accrediting body (United States). Canadian institutions must be authorized by the provincial government. Mexican institutions must have approval from the Secretary of Public Education (La Secretaría de Educación Pública) in the form of an Official Validity of Studies (Validez Oficial de Estudios).

All institutions seeking accreditation or reaccreditation will be subject to policies and procedures set forth in COAPRT’s by-law and handbook, as well as the standards in effect at the time the program’s self-study is prepared.

- c. A minimum of two full time faculty members and a minimum of one additional full time equivalent faculty position (FTE), which may be comprised of multiple individuals, shall be assigned to and instruct in the Program.
 - d. A minimum of two full-time faculty members shall hold a degree of masters or higher, and a degree of bachelors or above in parks, recreation, tourism, or the appropriate related profession. All individuals instructing in the programs shall have competence and credentials in the subject matter for which they are responsible.
 - e. Each Program seeking accreditation shall employ at least one individual as a faculty member who has completed formal COAPRT training no less than five years prior to submission of the self-study.
2. The Program files a Notice of Intent to Pursue Accreditation with the Council, using the form found online at www.nrpa.org/COAPRT. For initial applicants, this completed form and payment of the appropriate fee is submitted to the Council Staff Liaison.
 - a. If an institution seeks accreditation for more than one program where all programs seeking accreditation are within the same department, only one Notice of Intent to Pursue Accreditation form and applicable fees must be submitted. On the other hand, if the programs seeking accreditation are in separate departments, a Notice of Intent to Pursue Accreditation form and applicable fees must be submitted for each program.
 - b. In addition to submitting the Notice of Intent to Pursue Accreditation identifying each of the programs for which accreditation is being sought, the self-study must include separate learning outcomes for each that are consistent with the 7.0 Series of Standards. Council will create separate action reports indicating compliance or non-compliance with the 7.0 Series of Standards for each program. One certificate will be issued to each accredited program, the website will identify all accredited programs, and notification letters sent to the university/college president will acknowledge all accredited programs. For programs seeking continuing accreditation, the Notice of Intent to Pursue Accreditation form will be submitted without the fee. The Review Fee will be invoiced in January of the year of the review.
 3. The Council Chair screens the Notice of Intent to Pursue Accreditation forms to ensure eligibility. This review leads to one of the following actions. If an institution and Program meet the eligibility criteria, the Staff Liaison notifies the Program Administrator to proceed with the Formal Application. This notification usually is given within two weeks of receipt of the Notice of Intent. If the Council Chair has questions or concerns about an institution's eligibility, the Notice of Intent will be referred to the Council Executive Committee for action. If the Council Executive Committee approves the Notice of Intent, the Staff Liaison will notify the Program Administrator to proceed with the Formal Application. If the Council Chair or Council Executive Committee does not approve the Notice of Intent the Council Chair will notify the institution in writing, identifying the criteria that were not met.
 4. The Program conducts an assessment of its compliance with accreditation standards and reports the results of that assessment in a self-study report. Council values innovative and experimental approaches to addressing the standards.
 5. From a list of qualified individuals, and in communication with the Program seeking accreditation, the Council selects a Visitation Team of 2-3 members.

6. The Visitation Team visits the campus to confirm information in that document.
7. The Visitation Team submits a written Visitation Report to the Council on its findings. The Council reviews, modifies (if necessary), and transmits this report to the Program, which then has the option of preparing a written response to the Visitation Report.
8. The Council reviews the Visitation Report and the Program's Response, referring to the self-study as needed.
9. The Council conducts a hearing at its next formal meeting and acts on the question of accreditation. Council members, representative(s) of the Program, and the Visitation Team Chair attend the hearing. The hearing may occur with full or one-half of the Council membership. Program representatives and the Visitation Team Chair may participate via telecommunication. Based on the information provided, the Council grants accreditation, establishes conditions for accreditation, defers action, or denies accreditation. Deferral or denial must be on the basis of the Program's failure to meet the established standards or to provide compelling evidence that standards are met.
10. The accredited Program submits Annual Progress Reports and fees to the Council.
11. The accredited Program normally is periodically revisited and reviewed for continuing accreditation. The review period following initial accreditation is five (5) years, and the subsequent review period is seven (7) years. More frequent evaluation may be required by the Council or requested by the program. Eighteen (18) months in advance, the Council Staff Liaison sends a written reminder to the Program Administrator that a review of the program is due within a specified period. The procedures for continuing accreditation are similar to those for initial accreditation. The program completes the continuing accreditation application process, including the development of a subsequent Self-Study, and pays the required fees.

Optional Mid-Cycle Accreditation for Additional Programs

1. Programs residing in units with one or more COAPRT accredited academic programs that is/are in good standing may seek accreditation for additional academic programs in Parks, Recreation, Tourism or Related Professions during the Standard Review Cycle (SRC – 7 years).
2. Programs seeking mid-cycle accreditation must submit the "Intent to Pursue Accreditation Form" found online at www.nrpa.org/COAPRT, along with a self-study evidencing program compliance with Standards 1.01, 1.03, 1.04, 1.06 and Series 7.00. An application fee of \$500 must accompany these documents.
3. The self-study will be reviewed and a one-person visitation conducted consistent with existing Council practices.
4. The self-study and visitation report will be considered at the regularly-scheduled Council hearing.

5. Successfully accredited programs will undergo reaccreditation on the SRC of the originally accredited program(s).

Maintenance of Accreditation

Once a program/specialization has been accredited, maintenance of accreditation is contingent upon fulfilling the following requirements:

1. Being reviewed and approved by the Council on a continuing basis every seven years or as often as required by the Council.
2. Compliance with the eligibility criteria and standards set by the Council for the duration of the seven-year period between reviews.
3. Submitting an Annual Progress Report providing statistics for the previous academic year, specifying improvements made, reporting any significant changes and reporting on status of the 1.0 series standards and standards 2.05.05, 3.06, 3.07, and the 7.0 series. Institutions with multiple accredited programs will be required to report on the 7.0 series for each individually accredited program. An answer of “no” to questions involving the 1.0 series, 2.05.05, 3.06, and 3.07 standards would constitute non-compliance. For the 7.0 series, failure to report the use of three assessment measures (two of which must be direct) would constitute non-compliance. If non-compliance is noted, Council will impose Conditions and the program will have until August 1 prior to the Council’s Fall Meeting to bring the identified standard(s) into compliance. Part of the reporting requirement is to provide the program’s graduation rate. COAPRT recognizes the definition from the National Center for Education Statistics: <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/glossary/index.asp?id=812>. The expectation is that the graduation rate reported on will be at the program level; however, if the program does not have access to that information it is recommended that they consult with the institution’s research office. If the institution does not have a research office and still requires guidance on their graduation rate they should contact the Council. Annual Progress Reports are required for all programs regardless of their review cycle.
4. Council member review of Annual Progress Reports. Each Council member will review Annual Progress Reports from programs to which they have been assigned, verify submitted information, and make a preliminary determination of program compliance with standards 1.02 through 1.05, 2.05.05, 3.06, and 3.07. Similarly, the Council member will make a preliminary determination regarding compliance with reporting expectations for the 7.0 series. Council review will conclude by the end of April, with Council members submitting reports on their assigned programs to the Executive Committee and the Staff Liaison. In those cases where preliminary determinations indicated programs may be out of compliance with one or more standards, Council Executive Committee will conduct further assessments to be concluded no later than the end of May. An Executive Committee determination of non-compliance will result in conditions being placed on the program which will have until August 1 prior to the Council’s Fall Meeting to bring the identified standard(s) into compliance. The COAPRT website will be updated to include conditions placed on programs resulting from the review of annual reports. If satisfactory remediation has not been made, the program may be placed on Warning at the Fall Meeting. Failure to remedy the issues resulting in Warning(s) by the specified date may result in withdrawal of accreditation due to noncompliance with the relevant standard(s).

5. Paying an annual maintenance fee as designated by the Council. This fee is paid for the current calendar year (January 1 – December 31). No maintenance fee is assessed during the calendar year in which the Program undergoes an accreditation review hearing. Thus, during the course of a standard continuing accreditation cycle, a Program will submit annual progress reports, pay the maintenance fee six times, and pay one review fee. Fee information is available at <http://www.nrpa.org/Professional-Development/Accreditation/COAPRT/COAPRT-Accreditation-Fee-List>
6.
 - a. Annual progress reports and fees are due by March 1 of each submittal year. If a program fails to submit a report and/or the fee by March 1, the Council will charge the program a late fee. The Council also will send a warning that failure to submit the delinquent report and fee, including the late fee, will lead to withdrawal of accreditation. If administrative factors beyond the control of the Program preclude timely payment, an explanation and evidence must be submitted by the deadline.
 - b. In addition, if Requirements 1 and 2 are not met, the Program will receive a warning with a specified time limit for compliance. Failure to respond satisfactorily to the warning by the stated deadline will lead to withdrawal of accreditation.
7. A currently accredited Program may voluntarily withdraw from its accredited status by notifying the Council of its intent in writing on official letterhead. The letter must indicate that copies have been sent to the Department Chair/Head, Dean, Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs, and the college or university's President/Chancellor.

Section 3

Accreditation Standards and Curriculum Requirements

Accreditation is a process that involves the use of standards, which are found in a document titled, *Learning Outcomes Standards and Assessment (2013)* (available on-line at www.nrpa.org/COAPRT). Standards are criteria for evaluating the quality of a Program. They define Program characteristics as well as student outcomes of the Program that are related directly and indirectly to student acquisition of knowledge, skills, and the ability to apply concepts fundamental to the profession, and that result from effective instruction. For example, one of the standards related to the administration of the Program reads this way:

3.02 The program administrator of the academic unit shall hold a full-time appointment in his or her academic unit with the rank of associate or full professor with tenure, with appropriate academic credentials in the unit being considered for accreditation.

This standard is fairly specific. Others are more general; for example:

4.02 Faculty development activities shall impact Program quality, consistent with the missions of the institution and the academic unit

Some standards, like the following example from the instructional resources section, use practices that are common on a campus as a basis for evaluation:

6.01 Administrative support services shall be sufficient to enable the Program to accomplish its mission and operate in a manner consistent with its values.

Organization and Content of Standards

The standards and evaluative criteria are concerned with the following topics, organized as shown below.

1.00 Eligibility Criteria-6 standards

2.00 Mission, Vision, Values and Planning-5 standards

3.00 Administration-7 standards

4.00 Faculty-7 standards

5.00 Students-5 standards

6.00 Instructional Resources-8 standards

7.00 Learning Outcomes-4 standards

The learning outcomes presented in this series of standards are designed to elicit evidence of student learning in the Program's foundation areas including, a) historical, scientific, and philosophical foundations; b) design, implementation and evaluation of park, recreation and human service experiences; and, c) operational and strategic management of organizations in parks, recreation, tourism and related professions.

Assessment of COAPRT Standards

Assessment of Standards in the 1.0-6.0 Series. Standards in the series 1.0-6.0 may generally be categorized as facts about the program under review. It is the responsibility of the program to identify specific, compelling evidence that the features required by each standard are in place, describe that evidence in the Self-Study, including any innovative or experimental approaches, and share that evidence with the site visit team, as appropriate. As an example, Standard 4.05 reads as follows:

4.05 Salaries, promotion and tenure privileges, university services, sabbatical leaves, leaves of absence, workload assignments, and financial support for faculty shall be sufficient to enable the program to accomplish its mission and operate in a manner consistent with its values.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: *A copy of pertinent policies or specific URL locations, evidence of policy adherence, and an evaluation of the adequacy of those resources in terms of the mission and values of the academic unit.*

Note that the evidence to be provided is explicitly stated following each standard. In this example, the suggested evidence includes “**a copy of pertinent policies or URL locations and evidence of policy adherence.**”

Tables are often effective in reducing large amounts of data and providing comparative evidence, as in the following illustration.

Travel Funds for Faculty for 2009-2010

Department	Travel Budget	Number of Faculty	Travel Budget per Faculty Member
Accounting	2,500.00	5	500.00
Emergency Management	8,249.00	6	1,375.00
Parks/Recreation/Tourism	2,095.00	7	299.00

Assessment of Standards in the 7.0 Series. The 7.0 series standards are distinctly different from the Standards in the 1.0-6.0 series. In contrast to the “facts about the program” that are embedded in the 1.0-6.0 standards, the 7.0 series standards address the “*Learning Outcomes.*” Learning outcomes are the goals of student learning for professional preparation in parks, recreation, tourism, and related professions.

In the case of these 7.0 Series learning outcomes standards, **programs shall devise their own assessment programs**, and they shall include their own choice of metrics that explicitly indicate student performance on target standards. The COAPRT does not mandate that any particular metrics or approaches be used, but it does require evidence of *validity*. The metrics chosen by the program shall yield data from which inferences about student learning, in terms of the target learning outcomes, are justifiable. Programs can use a suggested template (<http://www.nrpa.org/coaprt/Procedures/>) to present their 7.0 series assessment information.

Programs seeking to accredit programs for which accreditation standards have been established or to accredit track or emphases within their program will use the 7.00 series template format.

A great diversity of evidence types may be provided. For outcomes related to the planning dimension of management, for example, Programs might provide actual plans students have developed as part of their course work. Evidence of outcomes being achieved may be provided through a variety of means—student portfolios, exit examinations, sample products developed to meet course requirements, senior capstone experiences, and internship performance evaluations.

The standards specify that at least two measures of each learning outcomes must be used. One of these must be a direct measure of the learning outcome (e.g., test scores, scores on embedded assignments, standardized test pass rates, ratings of observed performance by appropriate raters). The second measure can be either a direct or an indirect measure of the learning outcome. Examples of direct and indirect measures are included in Table 1.

In combination with the Annual Progress Report, each program is required to report on learning outcomes - one each from the 7.01, 7.02, and 7.03 standards (for a total of three measures for each individually accredited program) of student learning and the related outcomes. Two outcomes must have direct measures. These outcomes must be identified in the program’s annual assessment plan required by COAPRT standard 2.05. These learning outcomes reports will be published on the COAPRT Program List webpage for access to the public in compliance with CHEA Recognition Standards.

Learning outcomes assessment is expected to be a continuous process. Council expects to see year-to-year (or semester-to-semester) results from the implementation of the 2013 standards through the most current self-study. Programs having yet to undergo re-accreditation under the 2013 standards should have results from January 2013 through the preparation of the self-study at a minimum.

Table 1

Examples of Direct and Indirect Measures of Learning Outcomes

Direct Measures of Learning Outcomes	Indirect Measures of Learning Outcomes
Capstone assignment quality	Advisory Board Evaluation
Comprehensive Examination Performance	Alumni Survey
Internship evaluation	Benchmarking
Performance of relevant skills	Curriculum Review Results
Portfolio Evaluations	Employer Survey Results
Pre/Post Test Results	Exit Interview Results
Presentation Quality	Focus Group Results
Project Quality	Graduate School Acceptance Rates
Standardized Test Results	Honors/Awards Received by the Program
Thesis/Project Quality	Placement Data
Video/Audiotape Production	Satisfaction
Written Assignment Evaluations	School Performance
Writing Exam Results	Student Evaluations of their Learning
	Transfer Acceptance Rates

Curriculum Requirements

The standards do not set forth specific courses that must be taught. Rather, the 7.0 series standards describe *learning outcomes* that students must achieve through educational experiences in the Program. Programs can organize their courses in whatever fashion functions best for their particular situations. Programs provide evidence that affirms that specific learning outcomes have resulted from study in the Program.

Section 4

The Self-Study Report

Development of the Self-Study Report is the first and arguably most important step in the accreditation process. It serves as an opportunity for a Program to engage in a process of rigorous self-assessment and improvement against nationally recognized quality indicators.

The self-study process is a major undertaking rather than a cursory review of the Program. The resulting self-study is used by the visitation team as the primary document in the Council's evaluation of the Program. The self-study is thus pivotal to the success and efficiency of the entire review process. The self-study must include clear and compelling evidence of compliance with each of the standards.

Purposes

Two basic purposes exist for conducting and preparing the self-study:

1. To evaluate curricula and infrastructure associated with the program. As a result of the self-study, the unit can clearly identify all aspects of its academic major and can recognize what may be inherent strengths and weaknesses, as well as areas in which changes may be needed. The self-study process provides the opportunity to involve all relevant parties (e.g., faculty, students, administrators, alumni, field agency personnel, and others) in the assessment of the Program.
2. To provide written documentation that a Program is meeting nationally recognized standards and learner outcomes. The Visitation Team assesses the documentation indicating the ways in which the standards and outcome criteria are being met. Using the Self-Study Report, Visitation Report, and Program Response, the Council makes its decisions on the question of accreditation.

Time Considerations

The academic unit (Program) will collect, compile, and summarize compelling evidence that standards and learner outcomes are being achieved. Thus, it is extremely important that the self-study be written carefully and accurately. Data will be gathered from several different offices on campus, from faculty, department records, internship supervisors, advisory boards, and other sources. Faculty members, staff, and students will be involved in this process. Because of the complexity involved, it is not uncommon for the data collection and preparation of early draft reports to take 8 to 12 months to complete. This preparation phase is one of the most valuable parts of the entire process because it is here that the academic unit comes to know itself better. This provides opportunities for clarity, improvement, and a unified approach to change.

Length of the Self-Study

The body of the Self-Study (not including appendices) should be concise, yet thorough. A greater number of pages may be required for programs that seek accreditation of Professional Specializations. Templates (<http://www.nrpa.org/Professional-Development/Accreditation/COAPRT/COAPRT-Policies-Procedures-Forms/>) for many of the

tables are available on the Council website to assist with the presentation of information. Much of the supporting material that might go into an appendix may be made available using web-links. In this case, a URL indicating such should be made in the appropriate sections of the Self-Study.

Addressing On-Going Changes

Curriculum and staffing changes may occur during the time period in which the self-study is being written. Generally, a Program will be accredited on the material that is current at the time of the visitation. While past or future aspects of the Program may not appear in the self-study itself, supplementary materials may be added to document the changes. For instance, no Program is expected to re-write the entire report if faculty leave and vacancies are filled, or if courses are dropped or added just before, during or after the visit is made. Making a note of these changes and their anticipated impact on specific standards and learner outcomes is appropriate. The Council should be made aware of any such changes, in writing, at least 30 days prior to a Program's scheduled hearing or within a program's annual progress report, whichever comes first.

Costs of Preparing the Self-Study

Direct and indirect costs are incurred in preparing of the self-study document. Examples include faculty/staff time for the research, preparation and production of the document, and costs for supplies and postage. These costs are the responsibility of the institution seeking accreditation.

Preparing the Self-Study

While there are many ways to approach the preparation of a Self-Study document, the following suggestions may be helpful, especially to those who have not completed a Self-Study previously. The preparation of a Self-Study is time-consuming and these suggestions are given in the interest of efficiency.

1. Assign responsibilities and set dates

This practice varies from assigning responsibility for the entire document to one individual such as the unit head (least preferred approach), to assigning each member of the unit a portion of it with one person serving as the self-study coordinator. Some units work by committees and others work by individual assignments. While staff and student involvement (particularly doctoral students) can be beneficial to the process, we recommend that faculty serve as the primary developers and coordinators for the self-study. Involving all Program faculty in the self-study facilitates commitment from the entire unit as well as an awareness of the accreditation process and requirements. In addition, with the active involvement of the entire academic unit (including the unit head) comes the opportunity to consider changes that will enhance the program. When utilizing several persons in the process, it will be important to ensure that each portion of the document is in the same format for the final presentation, and that each portion is equally complete.

2. Study the Standards Carefully

Develop an outline showing the types of evidence that will be used to demonstrate compliance with each standard. Note that standards presented in *Learning Outcomes Standards and Assessment effective 2013* provide specific examples of evidence that might be used to demonstrate compliance. Programs may find these examples applicable and/or can consider other evidence that is unique to their programs. Innovative and/or experimental approaches are valued and should be highlighted. All documentation should provide compelling evidence that standards are being met

3. Gather evidence

Prior to or concurrent with the development of the document, gather the evidence (Step 2) that demonstrates compliance with standards.

4. Write the Report

To assist the Visitors and the Council members in their reviews, it is important to employ a stand outline in writing the self-study. Thus, the Self-Study Report must utilize the following format:

(a) Outside Cover and Title Page specifying:

1. Name of the Institution
2. Name and contact information for the CEO of the Institution
3. Name of the Parks, Recreation, Tourism and Related Professional Specializations Program
4. Title of the Report
5. Date of the Report

(b) Table of Contents

(c) Foreword

The Foreword includes a description of the process used in the development of the self-study (e.g., who was involved, how evidentiary artifacts were identified and collected); the scope of the program offerings and specializations for which accreditation is being sought; and if the Self-Study Report is for continuing accreditation, briefly mention significant events since the previous accreditation.

(d) Body of the report

In the body, each major section of the standards must be clearly delineated (e.g., 1.00 Eligibility Criteria). Further, the document should list each standard by number and written description; then describe the evidence that demonstrates that the standard is being met. In many cases, hyperlinks may be used to point the reader to specific information that is published online. Self-study authors may also establish websites on which appendices and supporting documents are published.

The electronic version of the self-study and all appended/supplementary materials are to be submitted on a flash drive or CD. Furthermore, the self-study must contain valid hyperlinks to the appended/supplementary materials found on the same flash drive or CD. Programs are responsible for assurance that all links are functional.

Additionally, programs are expected to adopt appropriate naming conventions for all appended/supplementary materials, such that reviewers can access materials from the flash drive or CD root directory. For example, file names for syllabi might be as follows: REC100.Orientation.2012Fall.pdf. The hyperlink might read Drive:\Syllabi\REC100.Orientation.2012Fall.pdf, where “Syllabi” is the folder on the drive where all syllabi are found. Similarly, names of assignment files are to be consistent with those found in the syllabus. If students’ work is included, the file name should be consistent with the assignment found in the syllabus with an additional identifier making it evident that it is a sample of a completed assignment. For example, REC100.Orientation.Assignment.Resume.Student1.2012Fall.pdf. Using “Student#” allows inclusion of multiple examples of completed assignments while differentiating between them without revealing identities.

Thoughtful naming of files and links within the self-study expedites reviews significantly. Campus information technology staff may be of assistance when working on this aspect of the self-study.

Tables. For efficiency and readability, whenever appropriate present information in table form. These are important elements of the self-study and should be completed according to the provided format. See table examples document (<http://www.nrpa.org/Professional-Development/Accreditation/COAPRT/COAPRT-Policies-Procedures-Forms/>).

(e) Appendices Website

Create a website to include such documents and resources as the following:

- Degree requirements for all Programs being considered for accreditation
- Assessment plan—written assessment plan and associated assessment reports and or internal Program review documents.
 - Assessment plans are dynamic documents that are updated frequently per Standard 2.05 and are compatible with the expectations of the regional accrediting association and the institution (Standard 2.05.01). An assessment plan identifies learning outcomes established by the program, how students are provided with opportunities to learn the requisite information and/or skills, the measures used to assess the learning and their rigor, the frequency with which and how the assessment measures are implemented, and the performance target indicating successful outcome achievement. An assessment report restates all of the information in the assessment plan then reports on the assessment results.
- Faculty Vitae

- **Course Syllabi and Outlines**—course outlines for all courses that aid in meeting one or more standards must be provided. Please note, however, that the Council does not recommend any particular format for course outlines. We do recommend that the format be consistent and the outlines be clear, comprehensive, and clearly reflect the evidence for achievement of student outcomes. A topical outline and tentative class schedule showing material covered throughout the semester should be included with each course syllabus. If a course has associated web-based pages (e.g., Blackboard, Desire2Learn), providing complete URL information and/or bookmarked access (for the Visitation Team on-site) should be considered.

Submitting the Self-Study

The Program Administrator (of the institution seeking accreditation) is responsible for sending a complete electronic copy of the Self-Study Report, including appendices, to 1) the Council Chair, 2) the Council Staff Liaison, 3) the Council Lead, and 4) the Council Second, and 5) individual copies to each of the Visitation Team members. Programs should have at least one paper copy of the Self-Study Report on hand when preparing for the visit, hearing, continuing accreditation cycles, and for use by future visitors.

The Council Chair and the Staff Liaison must receive the Self-Study Report at least eight (8) weeks before the scheduled date of the visit. Failure to meet this deadline will result in the assessment of a late fee and may result in cancellation of the visit.

7.0 Series for Multiple Programs

In addition to submitting the Notice of Intent to Pursue Accreditation identifying each of the programs for which accreditation is being sought, the self-study must include separate learning outcomes for each that are consistent with the 7.0 Series of Standards. Council will create separate action reports indicating compliance or non-compliance with the 7.0 Series of Standards for each program. One certificate will be issued to each accredited program, the website will identify all accredited programs, and notification letters sent to the university will acknowledge all accredited programs.

Confidentiality

Self-Study Reports are for the official use of the Council and its representatives only. Individuals seeking access to such reports must make direct contact with the institution for permission and access.

Section 5

The Site Visit

A critical component of the accreditation process is an on-site visit to the institution by a team of individuals with expertise appropriate to the program being reviewed. The visit is scheduled for a three-day period between October and April. The site visit is a fact-finding evaluation to ensure a clear and complete picture of the degree to which the Program is in compliance with the standards. It is the responsibility of the Visitation Team to clarify and verify the Self-Study Report, to seek additional information that may be pertinent to the Council's evaluation, and to write a summary report of its findings.

Purposes

The specific purposes of the site visit are to:

1. Verify and clarify information and evidence in the Self-Study Report,
2. Evaluate the Program's status in light of the Council accreditation standards,
3. Report findings and recommendations to the Council, and
4. Suggest any appropriate revisions in the content or use of the accreditation documents to the Council.

Visitation Team Members do not act as curricular consultants, and they are expected to refrain from providing advice to Programs on how standards might be met. Visitation Team Members may, however, discuss strengths and weaknesses of the Program as related to specific standards for which evidence is provided.

For initial accreditation visits and for continuing accreditation visits, the Visitation Team typically is composed of two members. Additional members may be added if the complexity of the setting and the diversity of the program to be reviewed warrant. In the case of continuing accreditation visits that occur on the standard review cycle, two individuals usually conduct the visit. A three-person Visitation Team includes two educators and one practitioner; a two-person team must include one educator.

Expenses

The Program under review covers expenses of all visitors. Site Visitors receive reimbursement for transportation and living expenses (e.g., meals and lodging) incurred during the on-site visit. In addition, when an in-person hearing is conducted, the institution is responsible for expenses of the Visitation Team Chair or his/her designee to attend the Council hearing at which the Program is reviewed. No honoraria are given to members of the Visitation Team.

Length and Timing of the Visit

Site Visitor(s) usually have the equivalent of three full days to complete their responsibilities on campus. It is important that the visit be scheduled while classes are in session; thus, visits will be scheduled during October through April. A typical visit would have the Site Visitors arriving on a Sunday afternoon, with a Visitation Team meeting and a faculty social/meal that evening. Monday and Tuesday would be full days, starting with an initial meeting with the chief administrative officers. The exit interview would be held Wednesday morning, followed by the final Visitation Team meeting. The schedule might be set up differently to accommodate schedules of individuals who are involved in the process, because of major institution events, or to take advantage of more favorable airfares on different days of the week. See a sample agenda here: <http://www.nrpa.org/Professional-Development/Accreditation/COAPRT/COAPRT-Policies-Procedures-Forms/>

Section 6

Site Visitors

Visitor Selection

The Council maintains a list of approved Site Visitors who have met education and experience criteria and completed a training workshop conducted by the Council in cooperation with its affiliate(s). Only individuals who have been approved are eligible to serve on Visitation Teams. While all educator and professional members of the Council are qualified as site visitors, only in exigent circumstances will a sitting Council member serve as a Visitation Team member.

To minimize conflicts of interest and the appearance of potential conflicts of interest, the following policies exist:

1. Visitors to a particular institution must come from outside of the state in which the institution being reviewed is located;
2. An individual may not serve as a Visitor to an institution at which he/she attended as a student;
3. An individual may not serve as a Visitor to an institution at which he/she has been employed;
4. At least two visitation cycles must have passed before a Visitor may return to that institution as a Visitor; and
5. Visitors must sign and submit a confidentiality and conflict of interest statement prior to each visit they undertake.

When a Program files its formal application for accreditation, the dates for the completion of the institution's Self-Study Report and range of visitation dates are specified. The Council Staff Liaison identifies individuals from the approved list of visitors affirmed by the Council who are available to serve on the respective visit, and submits these names to the Council Executive Committee for approval. The Staff Liaison then sends the list of individuals comprising the proposed Visitation Team to the program for confirmation. The program may indicate objections to any name on the list, giving reasons for doing so; however, the Council reserves the right to determine the Visitation Team. Following receipt of the institution's comments regarding the list and with Council affirmation, the Staff Liaison invites the selected individuals to serve and requests that the Visitation Team Chair make specific arrangements for the visit directly with the program and his/her Team Members.

Qualifications To Be A Visitor

All COAPRT Visitors must meet the following Core Requirements; additional requirements are identified for practitioners and educators.

Core Requirements

1. Current full-time employment in parks, recreation, tourism, and related professions or if retired, no more than five (5) years outside full-time employment in parks, recreation, tourism, and a related profession.
2. At least one academic degree (bachelor's, master's, or doctorate) in parks, recreation, tourism, and or a related professional specialization.
3. Seven (7) years or more of full-time professional experience in parks, recreation, tourism, and or a related professional specialization.
4. Participation in an approved Accreditation training within the past five years on the current version of the standards.
5. Maintenance of updated credentials and renewal forms.
6. Positive peer and institutional evaluations from involvement with previous visits, if applicable.
7. Membership in NRPA or other related national or international professional association.

Additional Requirement for Visitation Chairs

1. The doctorate is required to be eligible to serve as Visitation Team Chair.
2. Participation on at least three (3) prior visitations.
3. Satisfactory evaluations from all prior visitations.

Additional Requirements for Practitioners

1. A working relationship with higher education in the last three (3) years as evidenced by involvement such as:
 - a) Supervision of fieldwork and/or internship students enrolled in parks, recreation, tourism, and or related professional specialization curricula;
 - b) Service on a planning committee or an advisory group to a university program in parks, recreation, tourism, and or related professional specialization; and
 - c) Teaching experiences in a program on a full- or part-time basis.

Petitioning to Become a Visitor

Any individual who does not meet the stated visitor requirements may petition for visitor status based upon professional credentials and expertise. The petition is made to the Executive Committee of the Council via the Staff Liaison. Any educator appointed as a visitor through the petition process may not serve as the Visitation Team Chair.

Visitor Commitments

COAPRT relies on prospective visitors making a commitment for the full range of dates submitted to the liaison. Acceptance of a visitation invitation requires participation for all scheduled days. Council understands that extenuating circumstances may alter one's availability; however, it is critical that the liaison be advised of changes well in advance of a scheduled visit in order to arrange for an alternate visitor.

Site Visitor Evaluations

At the conclusion of each visit, all members of the Visitation Team will be evaluated. The institution will be asked to evaluate the professionalism and competence of all members of the Visitation Team. The Visitation Team Chair will evaluate the other team members who will, in turn, evaluate the Visitation Team Chair on these same dimensions. Successful evaluations are necessary to maintain one's status as an Accreditation Visitor. If concerns are identified for any Visitor, that individual may be asked to complete additional Visitor training sessions prior to continuation as a COAPRT Visitor. Completed evaluations are completed via an online form provided by the Council Staff Liaison.

Visitor Response to Council Chair, Lead/Second Reviewer Questions

Self-study documents are reviewed by the Council chair, and the Council Lead and Second. Each level of initial review results in specific questions that must be addressed by the visitation team. Such questions typically appear in the comment section of the visitation template. Visitors may find the related standard as being met and so indicate in the report; however, answers to any questions generated by Council reviewers must be provided. Responses to these questions are an essential component of Council deliberations.

Visitor Travel Arrangements

Visitor travel arrangements may be finalized ONLY after receiving approval from the Council Chair that the visit may proceed. The Visit Chair and program contact must also approve all travel arrangements prior to finalization. Costs related to travel changes resulting from a visitor's failure to observe this policy will be the responsibility of the visitor.

Section 7

Preparing for the Site Visit

When the invited individuals accept the assignment to serve as site visitors, the Council Staff Liaison sends Visitation Team members the following information:

1. Visitation Team member vitae;
2. A link to the COAPRT Accreditation Handbook and Standards document (available on the Council website);
3. A conflict of interest and confidentiality statement to be signed by the visitor and returned to the Council Staff Liaison; and
4. Copies of the institution's application materials (Notice of Intent/Formal/Continuing) of the Program to be visited.
5. For continuing accreditation, the previous accreditation Visitation Report, institutional response, Council actions, follow-up on Council actions (e.g., conditions, recommendations), final Council action, and intervening Annual Progress Reports are also sent.

In addition to the materials provided by the Staff Liaison, at least 8 weeks prior to the scheduled visitation the program sends the Self-Study (electronic copy) to the Staff Liaison who will forward it to the Council Chair. The Chair is responsible for reviewing all self-studies, prior to reviews by the Site Visitation Team Members and designated Council Reviewers, and the receipt by the Staff Liaison of electronic copies. Failure to do so will result in late fees, and may result in cancellation of the scheduled visit. Any expenses incurred up to this point (e.g., prepaid Visitor travel expenses) are the responsibility of the institution.

6. Visitation team's initial meetings with administrators:

The intent and general purpose of the initial meetings is largely a courtesy with the following additional purposes.

- It provides information relative to administrative support for the accreditation process;
- It provides a sense of central administration's perceptions of the parks, recreation, tourism and related professional specializations program;
- It provides information about the structure and programs of the institution;
- It sets the stage for later procedures related to the visit; and
- It provides an opportunity for the Visitation Team Members to answer questions about Council accreditation processes.

Initial meetings are neither the time nor place for visitors to discuss any findings based on their initial review of the self-study and related documents. The visitation may well produce

evidence contradictory to visitors' initial interpretations and understandings. Accordingly, visitors are advised to avoid discussions of substantive matters related to their findings during initial meetings with administrators. In the event that an administrator initiates discussions specific to the self-study or preliminary findings, visitors may engage in such conversations, clearly establishing an understanding that changes may occur over the course of the visitation.

Shared Logistics

The Visitation Team Chair and Program Administrator work together to set firm dates for the visit. The Program hosts the Visitation Team on campus at least 14 weeks prior to the Council meeting at which the Program will be reviewed. The institution arranges for housing, meals, work space, materials, clerical assistance, and interview schedules. The Visitation Team Chair and Program Administrator jointly develop the on-site visit agenda.

If possible, the host institution should make transportation arrangements for Visitors. In some cases it is necessary or desirable for the Visitor(s) to make their own travel arrangements. In either case, all arrangements should be made in close consultation between Visitors and the host institution. If any Visitor makes his/her own travel arrangements, the institution must be prepared to reimburse the individual(s) either in advance of the visit or during the visit. In no situation should a Visitor incur credit card interest expenses waiting for reimbursement. As early as possible, the Visitation Team Chair and Program Administrator should be apprised of the details of all Visitation Team Member arrival and departure schedules.

Responsibilities of Program Personnel

The institution must make arrangements to prepare both for the Visitation Team's arrival and for the time the team is on campus. Some of these are related to needs such as housing and meals; others are related to schedules and meetings with various persons and groups.

Arranging for Transportation

Depending upon proximity to the institution, Visitors may travel to the institution by personal vehicle or plane. Most commonly, Visitors will travel by air to the airport nearest the campus. Typically, the Program assumes responsibility to meet the Visitors at the airport and provide transportation to the hotel or motel. The Program Administrator should communicate with individual Visitors to coordinate arrival times and locations. Frequently, it will be possible to pick all the Visitors up at the same time. The administrator also will need to make arrangements for returning Visitors to the airport at the conclusion of the visit. There may be times when it is more efficient and cost effective to provide the Visitation Team with a rental car for transport to and from the airport.

Another transportation consideration is the matter of the Visitation Team traveling to and from the lodging site and the campus, and from one campus location to another. If distances are not far and conditions permit, people may prefer to walk; however, transportation must be arranged in many cases. This can be handled in various ways. Faculty members or students authorized to drive university vehicles might pick up the visitors and deliver them, according to a pre-determined schedule. These arrangements have the advantages of providing additional

opportunities for Visitors and faculty or students to interact and to help keep Visitors on schedule.

Arranging for Housing

Typically, the Program Administrator makes arrangements for housing. The administrator will know what is available and is in a much better position to select the site and make reservations than individual Visitors. It can be especially convenient for Visitors if appropriate housing is available on campus (for example, in the Student Union or an equivalent facility). An individual room should be reserved for each Visitor. In addition to privacy, this provides the opportunity for individuals to spend time working on individual assignments before and after a day full of meetings. In selecting lodging, it also will be important to consider proximity to eating establishments.

Arranging for Meals

On some occasions during the visit, the Visitation Team will have dinner or lunch with faculty members, students, fieldwork supervisors, or others with whom they wish to speak as part of the visit. Other times, they will want to eat on their own, as a group. Visitors need time together to coordinate their activities and share their perceptions as the visit progresses. Too many planned meals or social events become a burden for both the Visitation Team and the institution. It is important for the Program Administrator and Visitation Team Chair to work together to determine meal preferences.

Handling Expenses

The Program Administrator should determine how Visitor expenses will be handled. Typically, this will depend on institutional policies and procedures and oftentimes, reimbursement will be required. The Program Administrator should obtain whatever information is required by the institution from each Team Member (e.g., identification numbers, receipts, statements of related expenses) prior to the conclusion of the visit. In some cases, the institution will set up a pre-arranged institutional charge for meals. In other cases Team Members pay for their own meals and the institution reimburses individuals for these. Lodging can be handled either by the Program arranging with the hotel to pay directly; or individuals can pay for their own expenses and be reimbursed. Again, the Program Administrator should inform Team Members as to what documentation or receipts are needed to ensure timely reimbursement.

Reimbursements (or all arrangements for reimbursement) should be made before the Team leaves the campus, if possible. If institutional policies or procedures do not permit this arrangement, reimbursements should be mailed within two weeks after the visit if at all possible, but must be received by the visitors within thirty days of incurring the expenses.

Other Physical and Support Arrangements

Team Members will require access to and use of some Program facilities. The Team will need a workspace (that can be secured) to meet together, review materials, and work on their Report. Supplemental materials that may be helpful to the Team should be available here (e.g., the institution's General Catalog, degree plans, assessment plans, evidence of student performance, instruments used in data collection, relevant policy statements not included in the Self-Study,

textbooks). Access to a telephone, a computer with Internet access, and a printer in the secured workspace also is helpful.

In some cases, Teams may require occasional clerical assistance. This might include help with answering routine questions, providing directions to campus locations, and accessing student folders and other relevant materials filed in the unit office. Identifying an individual to assist the Team with these types of needs is helpful.

Section 8

The Site Visit

Initial On-site Team Meeting

Visitation Team Members typically arrive at the campus the day before the formal visit begins and arrange to meet as a team. This time is utilized to talk through the process and anticipated timetable, finalize each member's responsibilities, and confirm procedures.

Social Meeting

Typically, the Program will arrange an informal social gathering with institutional faculty and the Visitation Team, usually on the first evening. This provides an opportunity to get acquainted and sets the tone for the upcoming Program review.

Initial Interviews with Administrators

On the first day of the visit, Team Members meet with the Chief Administrative Officer (or his or her delegate), and other designated administrators as deemed appropriate by the institution. The Provost or Academic Vice-President, and sometimes the Dean of the College in which the Program is housed, are involved. The Program Administrator might attend this meeting as well, but it is more common to meet individually with this person later on the first day. If the Dean does not attend the first meeting, the Team should meet with this individual at some point on the first day.

In addition to being a professional courtesy, the visit with central administrators important function in obtaining information on the following items to be reported in the visitation report:

- An assessment of the administration's support of the accreditation process;
- The of administration's perceptions of the program(s) in parks, recreation, tourism and related professional specializations
- The philosophy, structure, and programs of the institution; and
- Visiting with central administrators also provides an opportunity for the visitation team to answer questions about the COAPRT accreditation process.

Evidence Review and Data Collection

Remembering that the primary purpose of an on-site visit is to verify and confirm what is found in the written Self-Study, Visitation Team Members will be actively engaged in evidence review and data collection during their visit. During this process Team Members will be engaged in document review, interviews, classroom visits, and meetings.

The data collecting activities identified in the following sections describe the tasks of a three-person Visitation Team. In the case of a mid-cycle review, the team will be selective (i.e., may not visit all identified support centers) due to time constraints. A mid-cycle review may be required by Council when a program falls out of compliance as indicated by the annual report.

Specific review activities will be determined by the situation as well as a review of the Program's prior accreditation status, progress toward measurement of student outcomes, and annual progress reports.

Review Documents

A review of supporting documents and evidence aids the Team in verifying information reported in the Self-Study. Common types of documents provided in the work room are examples of student research and portfolios, assessment instruments and results, trend data, annual Program review reports, national certification reports, course outline addenda, complete faculty vitae, administrative manuals for the Program, university affirmative action procedures, promotion procedures, evidence of faculty professional endeavors, a course catalog, textbooks, and so on. Where much of this information may be available online, the Program may wish to provide a computer through which the Team can access a centralized webpage and find relevant information via bookmarked URLs, or a computer with URLs bookmarked in a web browser.

Interview Faculty

It is important for Visitors to meet with all instructional staff (e.g., full-time, part-time, adjunct, and clinical faculty members; graduate teaching assistants) who serve the Program under review. In larger programs, the Team might meet with small groups of faculty representing different professional specialties.

Interview Students

Students are a direct source of evidence; thus, it is desirable for Visitation Team Members to visit with students. This is commonly accomplished by visiting pre-identified classes. In these instances, faculty are typically asked to leave the room so Visitors may freely interact with and interview students. Further, if specialization accreditation is being sought, Visitors will wish to visit students in courses specific to the Specialization under review.

In addition to visiting classes to meet with students, Visitation Team Members may also interview other students who represent the Program under review. While these are often student leaders, it is important to ensure that the breadth of student majors have an opportunity to meet with Visitation Team Members. Often, this is done during a luncheon or late afternoon meeting with snacks.

Visit Support Centers/Resources

Several standards address support resources such as facilities, the library, computer labs, and other physical and programmatic services for students and faculty. Thus, Team Members may wish to visit a wide range of campus support centers such as the advising center, library, computer centers, instructional technology, services for students with disabilities, and the career center. Campus individuals associated with the institution's assessment process and data management also might have access to valuable Program evidence. These visits are pre-arranged and some time is allotted to speak with affiliated staff for information and clarification.

Explore Student Files

To ensure confidentiality of record-keeping, consistency in work with students, and Program integrity, the Visitation Team will want to review student records. Typically, once on site one or more Team Members will request access to student advising files. They will randomly pull and examine several student files, examine the information found, and return the file. If such records are maintained electronically, this will require online access. This access is in compliance with FERPA regulations.

Interview Fieldwork Supervisors and Alumni

Fieldwork Supervisors and alumni can offer unique perspectives on the Program under review; thus, Visitors will want to make contact with such individuals. This may be arranged during a mealtime, afternoon meeting, or any other time convenient for those traveling to campus. If, due to long distances, face-to-face contact is not possible, teleconferences or video-conferences may be arranged. In any case, these interviews typically occur without Program faculty in attendance.

An Exit Interview with Program Faculty

At the conclusion of the visit, Team Members often will meet with the Program faculty to share information regarding Program strengths and weaknesses, outline major concerns, correct misinformation, and provide new information related to the learning outcomes and assessment standards. This information is on a courtesy basis-only. No statements should be made about the determination of accreditation status for the program. Visitors make a report to the Council, and at the subsequent hearing a determination is made regarding accreditation. Thus, at the exit interview, the Visitation Team Chair may remind the faculty of the remaining steps in the process: the Team makes a report to Council; the Council reviews, approves, then submits the report to the Program, and the university provides a written response; a hearing is held; and accreditation status is determined.

The Formal Exit Interview

At the conclusion of the visit and prior to departure, Team Members will meet again with the institution's chief administrative officer and/or his or her representative(s). Typically, and at the request of the chief administrative officer, the Dean and Department Head will attend this meeting. The purpose of this exit interview is to discuss Program strengths and weaknesses, outline major concerns, correct misinformation, and provide new information related to the learning outcomes and assessment standards.

No statements should be made about the determination of accreditation status for the program. Visitors make a report to the Council, and at the hearing a determination is made regarding accreditation and any conditions. Thus, at the exit interview the Team Chair may remind the institutional representatives of the remaining steps in the process: the Team makes a report to Council; the university provides a written response; a hearing is held; and accreditation status is determined.

Unsolicited Information

The purpose of an accreditation visit is fact-finding—to verify information provided in the Self-Study. Thus, information is gathered from a wide range of sources during the visit. Occasionally, unsolicited information is shared with visitors; some of this is directly related to learning

outcomes standards, some information may relate to internal matters that are unrelated to learning outcomes or assessment standards.

Visitors are cautioned to accept and utilize this information wisely. If the information is submitted anonymously and/or unrelated to accreditation standards, it should be ignored and not shared with any of those involved in the process. If the source of the information is identifiable and the information is related to accreditation standards, the individual may be invited to meet with the Visitation Team during the visit to provide complete information. If such information is received after an on-site visit is made, it shall be ignored unless the Council Executive Committee finds it so compelling that they initiate further action.

Responsibilities of Visitation Team Members

Visitation Team Members must undertake several tasks before they arrive to the campus of the Program under review. The Visitation Team Chair takes the lead with Team Members and is the contact person for the Program and the Council Liaison.

Guidelines for the Visitation Team Chair

The effectiveness of a Visitation Team rests heavily upon the ability of the Visitation Team Chair to plan the Team's work and organize the members into a working unit. The following are some suggestions for doing this.

1. After receiving Team Member names, addresses, emails and telephone numbers, contact them to:
 - a. Become acquainted.
 - b. Make sure they have received a copy of the Self-Study and Council materials.
 - c. Determine individual preferences for conducting interviews, visiting campus support services, and assign members areas of primary responsibility.
 - d. Remind each Team Member to evaluate the Self-Study against the learner outcomes, standard by standard.
 - e. As much as possible, coordinate the arrival and departure plans of Team Members. Members may choose to deal directly with the Program Administrator for specific arrangements (e.g., purchasing the ticket), but the Visitation Team Chair should ensure that Team Members work together to determine the most efficient travel schedules.
2. Develop an acceptable timetable and on-site agenda with the Program Administrator. Once the agenda is established, the Team should follow it as closely as possible unless unusual circumstances arise.
3. Ask the Program Administrator to arrange for on-site logistics (e.g., lodging, meals, work area, computer, printer, anticipated secretarial assistance).

Guidelines for All Visitation Team Members

Visitation Team Members will receive a copy of the Program's Self Study Report at least six (6) weeks before the visit date. The intent is to provide enough time for Team Members to study the document, make initial assessments about the extent to which each standard is met, and note areas for which clarification is desired. All standards for the Program must be evaluated. The

Team also reviews any non-accredited emphases or career tracks offered by the Program as a part of looking at the learning outcomes of the overall curriculum.

Council members, particularly the Council Chair and Council Lead and Second (Council Reviewers) also review the Self-Study. Any of these individuals might suggest areas of specific inquiry to the Visitation Team Chair prior to the visit. Visitors are expected to respond to such specific inquires in the body of the visitation report. In general, the Council Chair, Lead and the Visitation Team Chair work together to note any areas requiring additional information.

Responsibilities of the Council Chair, Lead/Second Reviewers, and Staff Liaison

1. The program submits their self-study to the Council Chair and Staff Liaison at least 8 weeks prior to their scheduled visit.
2. The Council Chair reviews and authorizes the release of the self-study to the Council Lead and Second. The Council Chair provides the Staff Liaison with the authorization as well as the Council Chair's review of the self-study.
3. The Staff Liaison sends an email to the program contact, visitation team, and Council Reviewers notifying all that the visit can proceed and requesting the program send their self-study to the Council Reviewers and visitation team.
4. The Staff Liaison sends a separate email to the Council Reviewers only that includes the Council Chair's review of the self-study. This report is not to be shared with the visitation team or the program.
5. The Council Reviewers will then begin their review of the self-study. Once they complete their review they will communicate with one another and then reach out to the visitation team with any comments they wish to share with them about the report - such as items to double check or look for on-site. Even if there are no comments, the Council Reviewers must be in communication with the visitation team.
6. After the visit takes place, the visit team prepares the visitation report and submits it to the Council Reviewers and to the Staff Liaison within two weeks of the conclusion of the visit.
7. The Council Reviewers review the visitation report taking no longer than two weeks. If they approve the report they will notify the Staff Liaison. If they have concerns/questions/comments about the report that need to be addressed, they will contact the visitation team with instructions and copy the Staff Liaison on the email containing their instructions to the Visitation team.
8. Once the report is approved by both Council Reviewers, the Staff Liaison prepares the report and letter to send to the university/college president, with a copy to the program administrator.

9. The program has 30 days from the receipt of the report to submit their acknowledgement of receipt of the report. Programs have until August 1st to submit a detailed response, including evidence they desire the Council to consider. Please note, a visitation report does not convey accreditation status. Only the fully assembled Council is authorized to make accreditation findings.
10. The program response and supplemental evidence will be sent to the Staff Liaison who will forward the response to the Council Reviewers to begin their review.
11. The program's self-study, visitation report, and response will be discussed at the hearing in October, at which time Council will release its findings.

Visitor Response to Council Chair, Lead/Second Reviewer Questions

Self-study documents are reviewed by the Council chair and the Council Lead and Second. Each level of initial review results in specific questions that must be addressed by the visitation team. Such questions typically appear in the comment section of the visitation template. Visitors may find the related standard as being met and so indicate in the report; however, answers to any questions generated by Council reviewers must be provided. Responses to these questions are an essential component of Council deliberations.

Visitor Presence

As representatives of the Council, all Visitors should maintain a helpful and humble attitude. A positive and professional attitude with administrators, support staff, students, alumni, and local professionals enhances the tenor of the visit and creates an overall positive impression of the profession. Council expectations with respect to professionalism include attire and demeanor. Meetings will be scheduled with administrators who will be dressed for business and likely expect the same from visitors. Furthermore, interactions with university or community administrators are to reflect all due respect for the positions they hold.

In some institutions, the accreditation process may be viewed as disruptive; by maintaining the highest ethical and professional standards, Visitors can minimize this perception.

Visitors are encouraged to emphasize their role as the 'eyes and ears' of the Council whose job it is to focus solely on fact-finding as related to the evidence presented for the learning outcomes standards. This helps to minimize the likelihood of getting caught up in internal politics or making inappropriate judgments, recommendations, or suggestions for improvement that are outside the scope of the standards or the charge of the Visitation Team. It is particularly important to avoid making comparisons with either one's home institution or other institutions with which a Visitor is familiar.

In appreciation for the work of the Visitation Team an institution may wish to offer a small token of thanks (e.g., university t-shirt, coffee mug) to Team Members. While this may be a kind gesture, it can put Team Members in an awkward position. Thus, the position of the Council is that Council members and Visitors may not accept gifts of any kind from institutions under review.

Division of Tasks by the Team

While the Visitation Team Chair might take the lead in any particular meeting, the entire Visitation Team is involved in the information gathering with faculty, the initial meeting with central administrators, and the exit interview. The Team may choose to divide its tasks for related data gathering efforts among the Members. The Team Members will work with the Team Chair to make decisions regarding division of tasks such as visiting campus support centers, visiting classes, and meeting with specific faculty. The Team Chair assures, if a professional specialization is reviewed, the team member representing the specialization is assigned to review evidence pertinent to the respective 8.00 series and any other appropriate standards.

The Final On-Site Team Meeting

A major purpose of this Team meeting is to review and agree upon a preliminary draft of the written report. The Team should complete this draft before departing from the institution. This is often done the night before the exit interview and ensures that the Team is in agreement with regard to its findings. In addition to preparing the draft report, Team Members will need to finalize individual responsibilities before returning home. For example, each Member may be assigned to revise a section of the written report to be returned to the Visitation Team Chair at a designated date.

Visitation Report Spelling/Grammar/Formatting

Visitors are responsible for submitting visitation reports reflecting the professionalism valued by Council. The document must be checked thoroughly for spelling, grammar, and formatting before submission to the Council liaison. Lead visitors are responsible for this aspect of the visitation report as well as the overall tone of the report.

Confidentiality, Courtesy, and Collegiality

Visiting Team Members participate as agents of the Council. Ordinarily all official contacts with the institution should be made through the Council Staff Liaison or the Team Chair. The Self-Study materials and the Visitation Report to the Council must be held in confidence. The results of the Council deliberations should be reported to members of the institution only through the Chairperson of the Council or Staff Liaison. Breach of confidentiality on the part of any Team or Council member may endanger the entire accreditation program. Acceptance of membership on a Visitation Team constitutes a contractual agreement to safeguard the confidentiality of information acquired in this capacity.

Team members sign a statement of confidentiality and conflict of interest when they agree to participate on a Visitation Team. On campus, Visitation Team members are obligated to avoid any situation where any perception of conflict of interest might arise. Such perceptions might arise if a Visitation Team member were to offer consulting (post-visit) services, accept gifts, or otherwise appear to curry the favor of institutional members.

Section 9

The Visitation Report and Program Response

The Written Report

The Visitation Report is a report to the Council and generally is from ten to fifteen pages, single-spaced and should be submitted electronically using the required template at <http://www.nrpa.org/coaprt/Procedures/>. Its purpose is to communicate to the Council the Team's perceptions of the degree to which the program meets the learning outcomes standards. Typically, the Visitation Report includes the following sections:

Cover Sheet

The cover sheet identifies the institution and identifies the Chief Executive Officer's name, title and address. It lists the title of the recreation, park resources and/or leisure services program; the name, title and address of the Program Administrator; the dates of the visit; and the names of the Visitation Team.

Introduction

A brief introduction includes the overall context in which the Visitation Team members approached their task. This might include the types of data gathering processes undertaken, the types of individuals interviewed, and materials reviewed. In addition, the Introduction includes a notation about the specific Program and Specialization under review.

Evaluation of Compliance with Standards

The Visitation Report must address each standard (i.e., Series 1.00 through 7.00, plus Specialization criteria if applicable). The standards are the basis for all evaluations. Each standard should be addressed in such a manner that the Council needs no further reference other than the Program's Self-Study. Any reference to members of the institution should be by academic title, rather than by name. The Visitation Report will indicate the program's compliance with each standard in the 1.00-6.00 series on the basis of the following ratings:

- a) Substantially exceeded (briefly explain why)
- b) Met (no explanation necessary)
- c) Partially met (briefly explain why)
- d) Not met (briefly explain why)

Format for 1.00-6.00 Standards

The Visitation Report will present the information by major sections (e.g., 4.00 Faculty), in the same order as shown in the Standards document. At the end of each section, the Team will write a short paragraph presenting their overall evaluation of the degree to which the Program meets the criteria for the entire section, and note any special circumstances.

A Format Example

The following is an example of the format to be used. Please note that the illustration shows only four of the seven (7) standards in the 4.00 series; in the actual Report the Team would address each of the seven (7) standards.

4.00 Faculty		
Standard	Evaluation	Explanation
4.02 Faculty development activities shall impact Program quality, consistent with the missions of the institution and the academic unit.	Substantially exceeded	The university provides excellent financial support for professional development activities; all faculty participate.
4.03 The Program shall utilize strategic hiring practices intended to result in a faculty that varies in education, training, institutions attended, gender, ethnicity, race, age, and other elements of diversity.	Partially met	There is limited diversity with respect to age, gender, and ethnicity. Further, all but two of the faculty have at least one of their degrees from the same institution
4.04 The policy used to determine academic unit faculty workloads shall be consistent with that applied to other academic units.	Met	
4.05 Salaries, promotion and tenure privileges, university services, sabbatical leaves, leaves of absence, workload assignments, and financial support for faculty shall be sufficient to enable the Program to accomplish its mission and operate in a manner consistent with its values.	Not Met	Salaries for faculty in the program are somewhat lower than comparable faculty in the institution (by \$1,000 to \$2,000 annually)
Overall evaluation of Section 4.00. In general, the standards in this section have been met. Overall, the faculty are well qualified and dedicated. Of special note is the University's financial support for professional development and sabbatical leaves. Two areas of concern are the apparent salary inequity and the lack of diversity; most of the faculty members are older males who have at least one degree from the same institution.		

Treatment of 7.00

The visitor report assesses each learning outcome in the 7.00 series through review of curricular and co-curricular artifacts and interviews. For the learning outcomes, the visitors develop a written response to each of the criteria:

- .01 Are students provided with sufficient opportunities to achieve the outcomes identified in Program's responses to the standards in the 7.00?
- .02 What evidence is provided to demonstrate the existence of quality assessment measures to assess the outcomes stated in Program's responses to the standards in the 7.00?
- .03 What do the results of the assessment measures indicate with respect to students' achievements of outcomes identified in the Program's responses to the standards in the 7.00 series?
- .04 How does the Program use the assessment results for continuous program improvement?

In addition, the visitor report includes a rating of the learning outcome assessment measures employed by the Program. A rubric format is used for this purpose. A copy of the rubric used for the 7.0 Series is available at www.nrpa.org/COAPRT.

Summary Section

The Summary Section provides a succinct synopsis of the Visitation Report. It includes the following elements, typically offered in bullet-format.

- a) Strengths of the Program. Areas that substantially exceed standards and which point to the quality of the Program and associated support services related to the learning outcomes standards.
- b) Major Concerns. Significant weaknesses as directly related to any of the standards, with particular focus on learning outcomes and assessment.
- c) Secondary Concerns. Relatively minor concerns that are directly related to any of the standards.

Team Signatures

At the end of the report, each Visitation Team member must sign (and date) his or her name below the following statement:

The following individuals, members of the accreditation Visitation Team for (name of the institution and title of the program), approve of this written report.

The Final Section

This section comes at the end of the written report, on a separate page or pages. The section is treated confidentially, and is for the Council only. It contains the following elements:

- a) Recommendations for Program improvement. The Team should state specific recommendations for the improvement of the Program, using standards as the basis. The Council will evaluate these and submit appropriate recommendations to the institution.
- b) Recommendations related to the accreditation process. The Council asks Team Members to comment on internal procedures and standards. Based on their experiences, the Team comments and makes recommendations related to the accreditation process, the visitation process, internal communication, and other internal issues of interest to the COUNCIL.
- c) Team Signatures. Each Team Member will sign and date this last section of the report and the Visit Chair will ensure the Team Signature page is submitted to the Staff Liaison immediately following the submission of the report.

Submitting the Visitation Report

It is important to note that the Visitation Report is a report to the Council; when approved, the Council sends the Report, along with a cover letter, to the institution representatives. Thus, within two weeks of the completion of the visit and after all members have signed the Report the Visitation Team Chair sends an electronic copy of the Visitation Report to the Staff Liaison, and the Council Lead and Second (the individuals who have primary responsibilities for reviewing the Program's application)..

Because Visitors are representatives of the Council all communications officially are between the Council and the institution. Thus, it is important to resolve any questions related to the Visitation Report before the Report is forwarded to the institution. Any Council Member who has questions

about the content or tone of the Report should immediately contact the Council Chair or Lead. The Council Chair or Lead will then contact the Visitation Team Chair to discuss the matter and make appropriate changes to the Report prior to submission to the institution.

Once approved, the Council (via the Staff Liaison) will send a cover letter and the Visitation Report to the Program Administrator and institution CEO. The institution must acknowledge the Report within 30 days of receiving it and may elect to initiate changes based on the Report.

Institutional Acknowledgement

As noted previously, the institution has 30 days from receipt of the Visitation Report to acknowledge receipt of the Visitation Report and to respond to any errors of substance and/or fact identified therein. This includes correcting factual errors (e.g., spelling, addresses) The Acknowledgement should be sent to the Staff Liaison, the Council Lead and Second, and to the Council Chair and Vice-Chair. The Acknowledgement should be provided as an electronic copy.

In addition to the acknowledgement, the program must provide a written response no later than August 1st specifically addressing standards noted as being partially met or not met or for inadequate assessment information. The response should also address major and secondary concerns (if any) as noted in the Visitation Report. The response should include the following types of information:

- an executive summary of the information provided in the response,
- a narrative that addresses each standard identified as being unmet or partially met in the Visitation Report, inadequate assessment information, and any major or secondary concerns noted in the Report.
- additional documentation that may help the Council understand the response, and
- appendices, as necessary.

Section 10

The Council Hearing

Council Review and Decision

The Program Administrator and Visitation Team Chair participate in a hearing before the Council. This participation may be in-person, or a Program may choose to participate in the hearing through use of communication technology (e.g., telephone or video).

At the meeting the Council may (a) accredit the Program, (b) accredit the Program with recommendations, (c) accredit the Program with conditions to be met within a specific time period, (d) place the Program on warning, (e) defer action, or (f) deny accreditation.

The Program is informed verbally by the Council Chair or designee of the decision at the meeting, and within 30 days the institution's chief administrative officer is notified in writing, with copy to the Program Administrator.

If accreditation is deferred or denied, the Program may appeal the decision and request a meeting with the Council at its next scheduled business meeting. An appeal, if any, must be made within 30 days of notification of decision; documentation supporting appeal must be sent to the Staff Liaison within 60 days of this notification.

The Council and its affiliates publish annually a list of accredited programs, formal applicants, and withdrawals and denials of accreditation, except for cases under appeal.

Attendance at Council Hearing

The Council meets once in the fall to evaluate Programs. The Council evaluates those programs visited during the preceding period and considers any progress reports, documentation of conditions, or special requests that have been submitted since its previous meeting.

For initial accreditation and subsequent reviews, the Visitation Team Chair (or designee from the Team) attends (in person or teleconference) the Council meeting at which the Program's application is reviewed. The other members of the Team are welcome to attend, and will be responsible for their own expenses. The institution is responsible for expenses of the Visitation Team Chair or his/her designee to attend (in person) the Council meeting at which the Program is reviewed. The Program Administrator, and/or other institutional representatives, also will be at the hearing. Hearings are typically 45-60 minutes in duration

At the Council's discretion, hearings of particular cases may be conducted before the entire Council or before Council subcommittees. When the hearing is conducted by Council subcommittee members of the Executive committee will preside. In the event that an Executive committee member is unable to preside the Chair will appoint a Council member to preside. Regardless of whether the hearing is before the entire Council or a Council subcommittee the following agenda is followed:

1. Welcome and summary of the hearing agenda (Council Chair, Past-Chair, or Vice-Chair)
2. Introductions of Program representatives, site visitor(s), and Council members
3. Questions from Council Lead and Second
4. The Council subcommittee shall enter into executive session to deliberate and prepare a motion for the full Council's consideration.
5. Full Council will convene in executive session for deliberations at the conclusion of the no more than four consecutive Council Subcommittee hearings. Council action will be announced at the conclusion of each full Council executive session.
6. Announcements of Council Actions are limited to a Program's representatives and invited guests.

After appropriate introductory remarks by the Council Chair, Past Chair, or Vice-Chair and Lead, the Visitation Team Chair and Program Administrator will be invited to share any relevant updates that have occurred since the Visit, however, no new or additional documentation may be provided at this time. If the Program has new information or has made changes since the visit, the Program Administrator may refer to the information in response to questions. The Council Lead and Second will lead the discussion. Following the discussion, the subcommittee adjourns to executive session at which time a motion is prepared for full Council consideration. The Council adheres to Robert's Rules of Order in all conduct of business.

If a program is seeking accreditation for more than one program, the Council will create separate action reports indicating compliance or non-compliance with the 7.0 Series of Standards for each program. One certificate will be issued to each accredited program; however, the website will identify all accredited programs and notification letters sent to the university will acknowledge all accredited programs.

Section 11

Council Actions: Considerations for Accreditation

Votes Required for Council Action

Any action taken by the Council on initial accreditation or continuing accreditation must be approved by a majority of eligible Council members. To maintain the highest ethical standards several policies exist with regard to voting rights on accreditation matters. A Council member may **NOT** vote in the following circumstances:

1. If he/she resides in the same state as the institution being reviewed;
2. If he/she attends or attended the institution as a student;
3. If he/she is or was employed by the institution; and
4. If he/she served as an Accreditation Visitor at the institution within the past seven (7) years.

Program Status

Council action on the issue of accreditation of Programs will result in one of three outcomes for the applicant:

1. Accredited professional program (accreditation may include commendations, recommendations, a request for information and/or revisions, conditions, or warning),
2. Accredited professional program and professional specialization (s) (accreditation may include commendations, recommendations, a request for information and/or revisions, conditions, or warning),
3. Not accredited. Specialization(s) may not be accredited unless the 1.00-7.00 criteria are met.

Initial Accreditation

Initial accreditation is granted after a Program/Specialization meet(s) prescribed standards and procedures for the first time. Initial applicants have two years from the date of this application to submit their Self-Study Report. The initial applicant can request a one-year extension if they have a bonafide reason for being unable to meet the two-year deadline. Requests must be submitted to the Accreditation Manager at COAPRT@nrpa.org. If the extension request is approved, the initial applicant must submit their Self-Study Report by the new deadline. If the Self-Study Report is not submitted by the new deadline, the initial applicant must resubmit the Initial Application Form and Application Fee for review and approval by the Council.

Accreditation Not Granted

When a Program that has applied for initial accreditation does not present compelling evidence of compliance with standards, and the lack of compliance cannot be eliminated in a prescribed period of time, accreditation is not granted. In special circumstances the Council may at its discretion (and the Program's expense), require an additional on-campus visit or a meeting of a Program representative with a Council member.

Continuing Accreditation

A Program is granted continuing accreditation on standard cycles, starting from the date of the initial accreditation. Extensions to the standard review cycle are not available; however, Programs have the option of requesting an exception to policy. All such requests must be accompanied by the appropriate, non-refundable fees to be determined by Council. Exceptions to policy delaying visitations and reaccreditation hearings will result in no changes to the review cycle in future years. The program will be held to the reaccreditation dates based on the year of initial accreditation or the dates mandated by the Council based on findings requiring a shorter review cycle.

Accreditation Withdrawn

When an accredited Program fail(s) to satisfy conditions imposed by the Council or to make improvements related to a warning, the Council may withdraw accreditation. An accredited Program also may withdraw voluntarily from accredited status. If a Program chooses to withdraw voluntarily, the institution must submit this action in writing on official letterhead, with all appropriate signatures.

Motions

During the formal accreditation hearing, the Visitation Team Chair and the Program representative respond to Council or Subcommittee questions and comments. After this time, the subcommittee enters executive session to make a motion for full Council consideration relative to the action at hand (initial or continuing accreditation). Employing Robert's Rules of Order, the following motions constitute the choices of action that may be taken with regard to each Program, and Specialization:

Motion 1, Approval

Accreditation or re-accreditation is granted:

- With commendations: Council may recognize exemplary performance with reference to specific standards and learning outcomes through commendations.
- With or without recommendations: Based on the Visitation Report and directly relating to the standards, the Council may suggest non-binding recommendations, which Programs/Specializations may choose to implement. Recommendations are considered minor in nature; they are not grounds for conditional accreditation, or for deferral or denial of accreditation. These suggestions often emanate from "secondary concerns" identified in the Visitation Report.
- With or without requirement of additional information and/or minor revisions. Accreditation or reaccreditation will be contingent upon Program's response to specific, minor concerns about one or more standards by a date specified in the motion. Failure to provide the requested information and/or revisions within the time period will result in placement of the Program on Conditional status.

Motion 2, Extension

Extend current accreditation and defer action on reaccreditation with

- **Conditions:** (This motion may not be used for initial accreditation). Conditions are based on noncompliance with specific standards or failure to provide sufficient evidence to document compliance with the standards. Reaccreditation will be contingent upon Program's response by a date specified in the motion. Conditions are more serious than Recommendations and Requests for additional information and/or revisions, and may arise from "major concerns" noted by Site Visitors. In the case that a Program/Specialization fails to address conditions by the designated deadline, fails to address the conditions to the satisfaction of the Council, or submits no response to conditions by the established deadline, a warning is issued that withdrawal of accreditation is imminent. Upon receipt of a written petition from the institution and at its discretion, Council may extend conditions for an additional specified period of time.
- **Warning:** (This motion may not be used for initial accreditation). The Program is placed on warning. Warnings are formal statements issued by the Council that signal serious concerns about lack of evidence supporting compliance with standards and the imminent withdrawal of accreditation if issues are not addressed. Warnings are given when an accredited Program/Specialization is shown to have fallen significantly and/or consistently below standards, or has submitted materials that inadequately document compliance with conditions. It should be noted that the Council may issue a warning to a Program/Specialization that has not previously received one or more conditions. The Program/Specialization is warned that accreditation will be withdrawn if specific improvements are not made within a prescribed time.

Motion 3, Deferral

Deferral refers to the act of delaying the decision on accreditation. Deferrals may occur only on initial accreditation reviews. A deferral may be issued when compelling evidence indicates that Program/Specialization weaknesses can be minimized or eliminated in a short period of time.

Motion 4 Denial

Accreditation not granted/withdrawn

Responses to Requests for additional information and/or revisions, Conditions, and Warnings, and Deferrals

Programs/Specializations receiving requests for additional information and/or revisions, conditions, warnings, or deferrals, will be given full opportunity to make the required improvements. Evidence that a Program/Specialization has responded satisfactorily to requests for additional information and/or revisions, circumstances leading to conditions, deferral or warning will be based on one or more of the following:

- a. A written report indicating improvements made accompanied by relevant documentation, as appropriate.
- b. A supplementary visit (at institution expense). The number of visitors and number of days scheduled will be determined by the Council.

- c. A meeting of Program/Specialization representatives with Council-designated representatives. The institution is responsible for expenses incurred by Council members.
- d. Combinations of the above or other specified evidence.

The Program Administrator will send written documentation of compliance with conditions or specific actions taken in response to deferrals or warnings to the Council Chair and Staff Liaison. Depending upon the nature of the documentation, the Council may require verification from the institution's chief executive officer (or her or his delegate). In the case of compliance with conditions, documentation also will be forwarded to the Council Lead and Second designated for the Program in question.

Progress Reports

With reference to a motion issued, the Council may request a progress report. A progress report forms the basis for a Council decision on a subsequent review (including a revisit or a meeting, if needed). When a progress report is requested, the Council will ask the Program/Specialization to respond to specific questions. The date for submission of the report is related to the reason or reasons for the request. The Self-Study and Visitation Reports are used in conjunction with the progress report to form a basis for further Council action, including possible modification of the previously scheduled date.

In cases of deferrals, if the program does not satisfactorily meet the Council's request for additional evidence by the specified time, the Program's application shall be considered void and the Program must reapply for accreditation.

Institutional Notification

The Staff Liaison will send a written report of Council's actions regarding accreditation of the Program and Specialization(s) under consideration to the institution's chief executive officer and Program Administrator within 30 days following the Council meeting at which action is taken. The Council Chair assists the Staff Liaison in preparing the Action Letters that will be sent to the Chief Executive Officer of programs under consideration to assure consistency among the programs. The institution may make a written request for further clarification within 30 days after receipt of the Council decision. Only the Council Chair or Staff Liaison is authorized to disseminate information prior to official notification of action by the Council to the institution.

If more than one program has become accredited, one certificate will be issued to the academic unit; however, the website will identify all accredited programs and notification letters sent to the university will acknowledge all accredited programs.

Program Response

A Program/Specialization whose accreditation has been deferred or denied may appeal the decision and request a conference with the Council Chair and/or a representative designated by the Council. The institution must make the request in writing to the Staff Liaison within 30 days following notification of action by the Council. The purpose of such a conference, which is held by telephone, video, or at an agreed upon location, is to interpret the evaluation process and the Council's decision. Cost for the conference will be borne by the institution. The same procedure will be followed if a Program wishes to question conditions set by the Council.

Effective Dates

Initial accreditation or continuing accreditation of a Program becomes effective on the date of approval by the Council. If more than one date is involved in Council action (i.e., later approval of Program actions to comply with conditions or additional program(s) accredited at different times), the renewal date is based on the first Council action.

Section 12

Appeals, Complaints, and Feedback to the Council

An institution may appeal an accreditation decision made by the Council. Such an appeal must be in writing and submitted within 30 days of Council notification of final action. Supporting documentation must be received by the Council within 60 days of this notification. Following are acceptable bases for appeal: (1) arbitrary, capricious, or unfair action by the Council, (2) inaccurate or inappropriate evidence having been considered in rendering a decision, and, (3) procedural error by the Council or its representatives, in terms of compliance with Council policies. The Request for Appeal Form is available at <http://www.nrpa.org/coaprt/Procedures/>

The Appeals Process

1. The Chief Executive Officer of the Institution files the Appeal Form and pays the appeals fee; the institution is responsible for all costs associated with the proceeding. If the Council is found to be in error and the request embedded in the appeal is granted, all expenses will be refunded to the Institution.
2. The Executive Committee of the Council considers the appeal, takes action, and communicates that action to the Institution and to the Council.
3. If the Institution does not accept the Executive Committee's action, it may request further review by an Appeals Panel. The Appeals Panel will be comprised of three persons, none of whom shall be members of the Council. Panel members will include a previous Council member (who will serve as chair of the Appeals Panel), a currently approved visitor, and a university representative from an accredited program selected by the Council and approved by the Institution. Appeals Panel members are subject to the COUNCIL conflict of interest policy.
4. The Appeals Panel may either affirm the Council's decision or recommend to the Council that it reconsider the decision, giving reasons in either case. The Council takes final action.
5. The status of the Program shall remain unchanged during the appeal. There shall be no public notices related to the matter until the review is completed and the Council has made its final decision. The final action of the Council shall be forwarded to the Institution's chief executive officer, with a copy to the program administrator.

Complaints

The Council, in fulfillment of its public responsibility assuring the quality and integrity of academic preparation in parks, recreation, tourism, and related professional specializations has established a process for reviewing complaints against the COUNCIL, accredited programs, and/or visitors. Any individual, (e.g. student, faculty member, practitioner, and/or responsible public citizen) may submit a written complaint concerning the COUNCIL, an accredited program or specialization, and/or a visitation team member. The COUNCIL will act only upon a signed allegation that a Program/Specialization, visitor representing the COUNCIL, or the COUNCIL and/or its members appears to be out of compliance or adherence with the accreditation standards or policies. The COUNCIL will not intervene on behalf of individuals, nor will it act as a court of appeal for individuals in matters of admissions, appointment, promotion, or dismissal of faculty or students. This policy addresses three distinct procedures: 1)

complaints against an accredited program/professional specialization; 2) complaints against the COUNCIL/COUNCIL members, and; 3) complaints against an approved visitor representing the COUNCIL. The Complaint Policy and Procedures is available on the web at www.nrpa.org/COAPRT

Feedback to the Council

Within 30 days following final action by the Council, the Program Administrator is requested to submit a written report to the Council Chair, with a copy to the Staff Liaison, providing feedback related to the accreditation process. Elements of that evaluation include the following information.

1. Evaluation of the work of the visitor(s).
2. Recommendations for specific changes and improvements related to the accreditation process, including both standards and procedures.
3. Comments regarding the role of the Council in the process, as perceived by Program/Specialization faculty, staff and administrators; reactions to assistance given by the Council, and so on.
4. Other comments.

General Feedback to the Council

Any person(s) wishing to provide feedback to the Council on any council related matter(s), including program accreditation decisions, may do so at any time by emailing their comment(s) to the NRPA Staff Liaison at COAPRT@nrpa.org. The liaison will share the feedback with the Council Chair and/or other Council members as appropriate.

Section 13

Confidentiality of Accreditation Information

The minutes of Council and SAC meetings (excluding minutes of Executive Sessions), including accreditation review decisions, are available to the public upon request. All other data, observations, conversations, reports, and working documents related to the Council's dealings with Programs and Specializations are confidential. Acceptance of membership on the Council, SAC, or on a Visitation Team constitutes a contractual agreement to safeguard the confidentiality of information acquired in these capacities.

As a matter of policy, accreditation decisions on individual Programs are made in executive sessions. Attendance at these sessions is limited to members of the Council and those persons specifically invited to attend by the Council.

No member of the Council or SAC whose institution is being evaluated may participate in any discussions or decisions with respect to that institution. Further, current Council and SAC members shall not provide private consultation services to any Program unless acting on behalf of the Council. The Council shall not recommend consultants, but upon request will provide a list of past Council and SAC members with dates of service on the Council/SAC. If an institution requests and receives assistance from an individual on this list, the consultation does not constitute an action by or on behalf of the Council/SAC.

Final action on all applications and appeals, affirmative and negative, shall be public information subsequent to official written notification to Programs/Specializations of Council actions. The Council retains the right to release a full report, or parts thereof, when necessary to correct or clarify inaccurate information released by the institution or other sources.

Section 14

Amendments to Handbook and Standards

This Handbook may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the Council. Proposed substantive changes under consideration by the Council shall be submitted for comment to Program Administrators and the chief executive officers of both currently accredited institutions and institutions applying for accreditation. In addition, the Council/SAC shall publicize proposed major revisions through appropriate channels. The Council/SAC shall invite comments related to these revisions, so as to permit sufficient time for interested individuals and organizations to respond prior to final SAC recommendations to Council and action by the Council. The Council/SAC shall follow similar procedures for proposed major revisions to the standards under consideration.

Section 15

Logo Usage Guidelines

PURPOSE

The logo for COAPRT is copyrighted through the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) as COAPRT's graphic identity. The COAPRT identity is characterized by dedicated educators and industry professionals who administer a national accreditation program setting the benchmark for program achievement. All board members, staff, associated professionals and participating program are united graphically by the COAPRT logo. The COAPRT logo deserves the same care and protection that is provided any asset. These guidelines are to ensure that the COAPRT logo is accurately and consistently expressed wherever it appears. The logo shall only be used on official COAPRT projects, for official COAPRT business, or by accredited programs unless otherwise approved by the Council.

Use of the COAPRT logo must comply with the herein specific usage guidelines. Failure to strictly adhere to the guidelines within this document shall result in immediate revocation of authorization to use the logo.

COAPRT BRAND SIGNATURE

The COAPRT logo with full name application will be used as the primary signature. The logo mark can be used for promotion items and as a design element. Examples of uses may include but are not limited to; decals, embroidery on clothing, signage, signature tags, stationary and on websites.

USAGE ELIGIBILITY

1. Authorization for use of the logo is automatic upon a program's initial accreditation, and all subsequent re-accreditations, once it has been conferred by vote of the Council. Accredited programs are encouraged to use the logo to promote and market the achievement.
2. The Council must give written authorization to other eligible parties prior to any use of the logo. Individuals requesting permission to use to the COAPRT logo must complete the "Logo Usage Agreement" form (see below).
3. Council members or visitors may use the logo in any official capacity but may not use it to represent any individual interests.
4. The logo shall not be used for the following:
 - in political campaign messages or other materials of a partisan nature;
 - in a manner that is misleading, defamatory, libelous, obscene, or sexually suggestive;
 - in a manner that would disparage or damage the image of COAPRT;

- in a manner that suggests that editorial content has been authored by, or represents the views or opinions of COAPRT;
 - on food items, health-related items, or alcoholic beverages;
 - in connection with any material that infringes the trademark, copyright, or any other rights of any third party;
 - in advertisements, marketing, or endorsements of any product, service, or business that is not related to COAPRT; or
 - in a manner that infringes, derogates, dilutes, or impairs the rights of COAPRT in such logo.
5. Alteration of the logo in any way is strictly prohibited. Examples of alteration include changing any of the constituent colors or fonts, adding additional text or other graphic elements, removing, relocating, or modifying any element of the design, disproportionately scaling any element of the design, tilting at an angle, or adding borders around the logo or elements of the design, or applying other effects and filters.
 6. The COAPRT logo shall remain the exclusive property of COAPRT and NRPA.
 7. Any uses associated with the logo shall be in compliance with any applicable local, state, or federal law.
 8. Users agree that all uses of the COAPRT logo will support to the benefit of the Council.
 9. Users shall not register any logo that is identical to or confusingly similar to the COAPRT logo in any jurisdiction, domestic, or foreign.
 10. COAPRT may modify these guidelines from time to time and users will be bound to comply with the material contained in the updated guidelines immediately upon receipt of, or posting of, the new guidelines.

LOGO USAGE

The COAPRT logo is a valuable asset; as such, it is important to closely monitor the way in which the brand identity is displayed. The logo is the basis of the identity and a critical component of the overall branding and strategic message. Computer alterations to the logo, such as drop shadows and outlines, are unacceptable.

**NATIONAL RECREATION AND PARK ASSOCIATION
COAPRT LOGO USAGE AGREEMENT**

THIS AGREEMENT is made and entered into by and between the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), Council on Accreditation for Parks, Recreation, Tourism and Related Professions (COAPRT), and _____, hereinafter referred to as User. During the term of this agreement, NRPA authorizes the User to use the COAPRT logo (hereinafter referred to as “the logo”) only in the manner submitted for approval by NRPA. The User will not permit the use of the logo in any other form or manner on any other of its products, materials, either manufactured or electronic.

Use of the logo is for display only purposes. Use is restricted to a period of time of no more than _____ from the date of this contract during which time the User will maintain active COAPRT accreditation. This use in no way implies endorsement of User or User’s corporation or agency or any products or services offered by the User.

User hereby indemnifies NRPA and agrees to hold NRPA harmless against any and all claims or suits solely arising out of the User’s unauthorized use of the logo during the term of this agreement. NRPA hereby indemnifies the User and agrees to hold User harmless against any and all claims or suits arising out of the use of the logo during the term of this agreement. NRPA may terminate this agreement upon thirty (30) days written notice to the User under the following circumstances, provided that during the thirty (30) days period, the User fails to cure the breach:

- User employs the logo without having obtained prior written approval of NRPA.
- User employs the logo in manner other than that previously submitted to and approved by NRPA.
- User employs the logo beyond original term of contract.

This agreement is renewable upon written consent of both parties.

Review, print, and sign this document and return it either by fax, mail, or electronically using an electronic format demonstrating appropriate signature. Upon signature from NRPA, a copy of the fully executed agreement will be sent to the User and the original will remain in the possession of the National Recreation and Park Association.

National Recreation and Park Association

User

Signature and Date

Signature and Date