

Standards and Criteria



**Institutional
Accreditation and
Preaccreditation**

**The American Academy for Liberal
Education**

Washington, DC

Phone: 202-452-8611 Website: www.aale.org

STANDARDS AND CRITERIA

INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION AND PREACCREDITATION



Additional copies of the information regarding membership may be secured from:

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Readers of this handbook will note that the American Academy for Liberal Education differs from other accrediting agencies in significant ways. First, its scope is national, not regional. Second, *the Academy focuses on a specific kind of education: liberal arts education*. Membership may be institutional or programmatic and includes both colleges and universities. Membership is also open to general education and to arts and sciences programs within them.

Liberal learning generally understood as broad learning about the universe and nature, and also about humanity and human achievements - is needed now more than ever. While it is undoubtedly true that specialized knowledge and training will increase in importance as we move through the twenty-first century, highly specialized knowledge or technical expertise alone cannot provide an understanding of human powers, abilities, or aims, nor can it provide us with sound advice about the uses to which such specialized knowledge and technical expertise should be put. This is why reflective education about what is permanent and common to all, combined with rigorous preparation in the habits of learning, in the deepening of understanding, and in the skills of articulate expression, remains the central purpose of undergraduate education.

Accreditation by the American Academy for Liberal Education signifies institutional integrity and a strong commitment to undergraduate education. Membership attests to the fact that the institution meets or exceeds the Academy's independently established *Education Standards*. These standards require students to complete demanding studies in the arts and sciences taught by senior as well as junior faculty. Consequently, they provide interested parties - including parents and prospective students - a means of distinguishing between colleges and programs with focused, well-articulated goals for liberal learning in areas such as history, mathematics, science, literature, languages and philosophy, and those with lower expectations that fail to reflect a coherent approach to liberal education.

The American Academy welcomes inquiries from institutions and programs - traditional or innovative - that share its dedication to high standards of undergraduate teaching and learning

Jeff A. Martineau
President

MISSION STATEMENT

The American Academy for Liberal Education is a national association for the accreditation of institutions and programs offering outstanding general education in the liberal arts that meet the Academy's administrative, fiscal, and education criteria. The Academy employs specific *Education Standards* to evaluate an institution's academic requirements, practices and performance in the pursuit of excellence in liberal learning.

A distinguishing feature of the Academy's accreditation process is its two-tier system for reviewing applicants' academic quality. The Academy's *Council of Scholars* is comprised of distinguished teachers and scholars committed to the purposes of liberal arts education. The Council independently reviews the academic requirements and practices of each applicant institution or program, and reports its findings to the Academy's *Board of Trustees*, which is comprised of prominent educators and other public figures. The Board, which is charged with responsibility for all accreditation actions, then conducts its comprehensive review of applicants' educational, administrative, and fiscal performance. This system of dual review ensures that the educational performance of applicant institutions and programs receives the highest level of professional and independent appraisal.

The American Academy for Liberal Education is located in the nation's Capital and is non-profit, non-partisan, and non-sectarian. The Academy is listed by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education as a recognized national accrediting agency for the accreditation and preaccreditation of institutions of higher education and programs within them that offer liberal arts degrees up to the baccalaureate level.

Note on the use of these standards: While the Academy's natural focus is on the quality of instruction, standards dealing with resources, institutional procedures, finances and student support services are also important. All have a significant bearing on the quality of education and should be supportive of the college's mission.

Readers should note that all of the Academy's education standards are intended to establish that members and applicants take their missions seriously. AALE believes that educational **assessment, both qualitative and quantitative**, is an integral part of the teaching and learning processes, and that these are to be viewed as a way for the college to demonstrate both to itself and to others that it is actively fulfilling its mission.

Colleges preparing to write a self-study should also consult the Academy's *Self Study and Guide to Self-Study* manuals for guidance on appropriate ways to address the Academy's *Standards and Criteria*.

Part I. Education Standards

Forming liberally educated men and women has always been the leading aim of undergraduate programs in the liberal arts. For this reason the American Academy for Liberal Education believes that a program's demonstrated ability to instill and develop in its students the characteristics of liberally educate persons is the soundest basis for liberal arts accreditation. The Academy's *Education Standards* implement this principle in two distinct and complementary ways.

In Section A, programs are asked to reflect upon and then describe and document their success in developing in their students the characteristics of liberally educated persons. These characteristics include an ability to reason clearly and effectively about important questions and issues, the acquisition of a rich fund of meaningful knowledge, and an inclination for seeking out and acquiring knowledge and skills. The Academy's *Liberal Learning Assessment* standards (Appendices I and II) are intended to open or extend an institution-wide or program-wide dialogue on the goals for student learning, and also on appropriate means for determining whether those aims are being met. AALE believes there are a number of effective ways to deliver a good liberal education, and therefore its standards are designed to accommodate a variety of curricular models and approaches.

The *Education Standards* are also crafted to ensure that the cornerstones of a liberal arts program focus clearly and coherently on providing students with a comprehensive liberal education. Sections B through D of the *Education Standards* ask programs to describe their mission and educational aims, their conception and implementation of programs of study designed to fulfill those aims, their formation of a faculty well-qualified to carry out those programs of study, and their development of appropriate learning resources for those programs. These elements of an educational enterprise are the foundation and framework for student achievement in liberal learning.

The Academy's *Standards and Criteria for Institutional Accreditation and Preaccreditation* has been designed for use by institutions offering liberal arts education up to the baccalaureate level. Institutions preparing self-studies for accreditation should respond to each standard as well as to its associated criteria, always reflecting on the ways their mission, curriculum, teaching, learning resources, and learning assessment practices help to support and achieve the aim of forming liberally educated men and women.

A. Liberal Learning Assessment

The formation of liberally educated men and women has always served as the animating purpose of America's undergraduate liberal arts colleges. For this reason the American Academy for Liberal Education views demonstrable success in forming liberally educated men and women as the truest sign of excellence in undergraduate liberal arts education.

AALE expects members to develop and implement assessment plans for determining success in meeting their mission and educational aims. The Academy does not prescribe specific methods or instruments of assessment; rather, institutions are urged to develop assessment plans appropriate to their mission and to the character and context of their educational program. It is expected that assessment will be regular and comprehensive, and that it will be used to improve teaching and learning. Faculty should play a central role in developing this process and evaluating results. Please refer to the Academy's *Preface on Assessment* as well as the two appendices addressing qualitative and quantitative approaches.

The Academy's *Liberal Learning Assessment Standards* invite institutions to reflect and report on the ways their educational programs actually foster the growth and flourishing of key characteristics, such as the ability to reason and communicate effectively, possession of a certain breadth and depth of knowledge, and a well-founded love of learning. These characteristics are compatible with several approaches to liberal education.

Assessment should make use of multiple approaches and kinds of information; both qualitative and quantitative evaluations of student achievement should be considered, as appropriate. At root, the Academy asks its members to reflect on whether they are achieving their missions, and to demonstrate this in *verifiable ways*. Members and applicants are required to report on their regular practices and processes for assessing the effectiveness of their liberal arts programs.

Liberal Learning Assessment Standard One - Effective Reasoning

It is to be expected that a well educated person will possess a rich fund of meaningful knowledge and the ability to compare and integrate new and diverse areas of learning in fruitful ways. Along with this, liberal education seeks to develop the abilities to recognize and think clearly about important issues and questions, that is to say, to be able to reason effectively. This ability includes certain foundational skills or abilities (e.g., fluency in reading, writing, and oral communication, mastery of the basic principles of logical, mathematical, and scientific reasoning), as well as higher-order capacities for formulating, analyzing, integrating, and applying arguments and information.

Aspects of effective reasoning that institutions should seek to assess through appropriate means may include:

- Demonstrated attainment of the necessary foundational abilities of effective reasoning - e.g., fluency in reading, writing, and oral communication, and mastery of the basic principles of logical, mathematical, and scientific reasoning - during the first year of coursework or at the conclusion of the general education program.
- The ability to frame reasonable arguments, support them with relevant evidence, and anticipate likely counter-arguments, along with the complementary ability to analyze arguments rationally, evaluate the evidence supporting them, and frame reasonable and persuasive counter-arguments.
- The ability to recognize and evaluate new information, integrate that information into existing frameworks of knowledge, and adapt those frameworks as necessary or appropriate.
- The ability to identify and apply standards of intellectual rigor or precision appropriate to different kinds of subject matter.
- The ability to engage in reasoned and sustained discussions of important issues or questions. The ability to elucidate orally and in writing different or opposing perspectives evenhandedly and dispassionately.

Liberal Learning Assessment Standard Two - Broad and Deep Learning

An educated person should possess understanding as well as a rich fund of meaningful knowledge and the ability to assimilate, compare and integrate new and diverse ideas and facts. This requires both breadth and depth of learning, whether gained from a sustained and progressive exploration of the distinct modes of inquiry *that are* characteristic of one or more of the major disciplines, *or through a more integrated or holistic approach to learning, one not necessarily confined to majors and minors.* Through such studies or their equivalents, students acquire the ability to relate disparate areas of the arts and sciences to one another, as well as to integrate knowledge gained across different fields of study.

The acquisition of breadth and depth, as reflected through subject areas may be assessed in a variety of ways, including:

- A familiarity with the essential knowledge, principles, and methods proper to the various subject areas or disciplines represented in the general education requirements.
- The ability to relate the different subject areas or disciplines represented in the general education curriculum to one another in cogent and significant ways.
- A thorough grasp of the basic knowledge, principles, or methods proper to one or more of the major disciplines or their equivalent.

- The ability to relate and integrate the knowledge, principles, and methods of study and analysis acquired in the student's major field with the knowledge gained in the general education curriculum.
- Institutions that educate other than through the prisms of contemporary disciplines, such as great books institutions, should concentrate on developing ways of assessing such things as:

A broad understanding of the political and historical foundations of American government and society, together with a habit of bringing relevant knowledge of past thought and events to bear on contemporary questions.

A thoughtful grasp of the principles and history of liberal and democratic institutions and government generally, as well as of their practical workings, along with a proven ability to take up the responsibilities and privileges of liberal and democratic citizenship on campus, in one's immediate community, or in larger circles of human society.

An understanding of and an ability to discuss the political and cultural history of Western civilization, together with a habit of bringing relevant knowledge of past thought and events to bear on contemporary questions. The ability to communicate effectively in an appropriate foreign or non-native language is a natural gateway to such studies.

An understanding of, and an ability to discuss, the political and cultural history of a non-Western civilization (or in the case of students of non-Western origin, at least one non-native civilization), along with the ability to relate that history to the student's native culture in intellectually cogent and significant ways. The ability to communicate effectively in an appropriate foreign or non-native language is an ideal complement to such cross-cultural or comparative learning.

A substantial acquaintance with the various areas and salient issues of scientific and technological knowledge and research, along with a basic understanding of the ethical, philosophical, and cultural implications of scientific and technological research and development. This study should include a substantial experience with laboratory principles and methods.

Liberal Learning Assessment: Standard Three - The Inclination to Inquire

An education in the liberal arts and sciences is more than the mere accumulation of knowledge and skills. It fosters the student's desire for seeking out and acquiring important knowledge and skills, *both for their own sake and for the good they contribute to our common and individual lives*. For this reason, a disposition for asking incisive and

insightful questions and for pursuing enriching and useful knowledge and skills is perhaps the surest sign of a liberally educated mind.

Aspects of students' inclination to inquire that institutions *should seek to assess* through appropriate means may include:

- The development of a reflective and inquisitive turn of mind, one that actively weighs the judgments and information put to it by authorities, by peer groups, by conventional wisdom, or by the habit of its own convictions.
- The ability to question and assess one's own knowledge, abilities, and performance accurately and without self-deception, along with the willingness and initiative to seek out and acquire relevant knowledge and training in areas of weakness.
- The ability to bring to bear the knowledge and skills acquired in academic pursuits to important issues, questions, and endeavors outside the academy and the disposition to seek out new knowledge and skills in and beyond the classroom.
- The development of a personally significant and continually examined perspective on historically and philosophically important answers to the question, "What is the good life?"
- The development of a personally significant and continually examined perspective on historically and philosophically important answers to the questions, "What is the common good?" and "What is the best social order?"

Institutions should consult the Academy's ***Liberal Learning Assessment Standards: Suggested Areas for Inquiry and Investigation***, in the *Appendix II* (see also the *Preface* to that section) of this document for more on how an institution might fulfill the Liberal Learning Assessment section.

B. Mission

Most undergraduate liberal arts institutions share three broad educational aims: *introducing students to the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake and for the good it brings to self and society, cultivating thoughtful and responsible persons and citizens, and preparing young men and women for the world of work.* The Academy recognizes that liberal arts institutions will seek to achieve these aims in a great variety of ways, providing their students with similar, yet distinctive educations.

It is important that all colleges and universities define clearly their special character and traditions, as well as their educational programs and objectives. In the case of liberal arts colleges, their distinctive aims and characteristics should be communicated accurately and effectively to students, parents, educators, administrators and the general public.

The Academy's **Mission** standards invite institutions to reflect and report on the nature of their mission, traditions, and educational objectives, and on the ways they communicate these to the various communities they serve.

Mission: Standard Four – Relation of Mission to the Institution

The institution's mission statement reflects the importance and centrality of liberal education and states the institution's purposes and goals in a manner that corresponds to the way in which the curriculum is actually organized and taught.

Criteria for Standard Four

- 4.1 The institution's promotional and informational materials and activities are truthful, accurate, and current with regard to its educational mission and purposes. This statement is approved by the appropriate governance procedure, appropriately published and disseminated, and is understood by faculty, administrators, and students. The institution's mission statement or statement of purposes is made readily available to prospective applicants and to the general public.
- 4.2 The institution regularly reviews its mission statement or statement of purposes as part of its ongoing efforts to assess and improve its performance.
- 4.3 *The institution has well-defined educational objectives that are consistent with the institution's mission and appropriate to the degrees and certificates it awards. These educational objectives are stated clearly, published and disseminated appropriately, and govern expectations for student achievement. The institution regularly reviews its educational objectives as part of its ongoing efforts to assess and improve its performance.*

- 4.4 The institution agrees to inform the Academy in a timely manner of any substantive changes to its mission, organization, or educational objectives. The institution understands that any substantive changes must be evaluated and approved by the Academy. Substantive changes include, but are not limited to, changes in mission, ownership, governance structure, curriculum, degree programs and requirements, and general education requirements (if such changes affect compliance with AALE Education Standards Five and Six). Please consult the *AALE Policies and Procedures Manual* for a complete definition of substantive change.

Mission: Standard Five – Thought and Speech

Liberty of thought and freedom of speech are supported and protected, bound only by such rules of civility and order as to facilitate intellectual inquiry and the search for truth.

Criteria for Standard Five

- 5.1 The institution has a clear, published, and appropriately disseminated policy defining its commitment to liberty of thought and freedom of speech.
- 5.2 Any limitations on freedom of speech related to an institution's affirmation of particular religious principles or beliefs must be clearly specified, published, and appropriately disseminated. It is especially important that such limitations be clearly described in an institution's recruitment and informational materials for students, faculty, and administrative personnel.

C. General Education and Curriculum

Students at most institutions of higher learning receive a foundation in the diverse skills and subject areas of the arts and sciences through a *program of general education*. This broad foundation is usually complemented by a more focused exploration of the knowledge and methods of one disciplinary area or major.

The Academy's **General Education and Curriculum** standards invite institutions to reflect and report on the ways their curricula and degree programs acquaint students in rigorous and substantial ways with *both the breadth and depth of liberal learning*.

Variations from the particular academic norms described in these standards may be acceptable in cases where the demonstrated excellence of the general education program as a whole assures substantial fulfillment of them.

General Education and Curriculum: Standard Six

The institution defines and enforces academic entrance requirements that prepare students to take the required college-level general education courses. This applies to distance education as well as to on-campus education.

Criteria for Standard Six

- 6.1 The institution's catalogs, student handbooks, or other publications clearly and accurately describe:
- a. Admissions requirements;
 - b. Academic requirements and responsibilities for enrolled students;
 - c. Policies regarding academic dismissal, suspension, probation, and readmission;
 - d. Policies regarding the collection and retention of student academic records; and
 - e. Procedures for lodging appeals or complaints.

This information is made readily available to faculty, prospective students, and students enrolled at the institution.

- 6.2 The institution regularly reviews its admissions requirements and requirements for enrolled students as part of its ongoing efforts to assess and improve its performance.
- 6.3 The institution ensures that information concerning admissions requirements and requirements for enrolled students is truthfully and accurately communicated by the institution's admissions staff and representatives to prospective students.
- 6.4 The institution ensures that its promotional and informational materials and activities are clear, accurate, and current with regard to its admissions requirements and requirements for enrolled students, as well as its enrollment, retention, graduation, graduate acceptance, and job placement data. This information is made readily available to prospective students, to students enrolled at the institution, and to the general public.

General Education and Curriculum: Standard Seven

The baccalaureate requirements in the liberal arts and sciences call for *not less than a third of the student's course work to be taken within the general **education requirement***, except when equivalent attainment is proven by examination.

Criteria for Standard Seven

- 7.1 The institution's catalog, as well as its promotional and informational materials are clear, accurate, and current with regard to its general education requirements. They are also clear, accurate and current with regard to placement and exemption policies for particular courses within the general education requirement. This information is published and made readily available to prospective and enrolled students.
- 7.2 The institution has well-defined policies concerning the transfer of general education credit from other institutions. These policies ensure that incoming transfer students fulfill the requirement that not less than one third of a student's course work is taken within the general education requirement or equivalents. These policies are communicated clearly and accurately by the institution's admissions staff and representatives, as well as in its published informational material.

General Education and Curriculum: Standard Eight

General education requirements are intended to ensure a **basic knowledge of mathematics and the physical and biological sciences, including laboratory experience, intermediate knowledge of at least one foreign language, the study of literature and literary classics, the political, philosophical and cultural history of Western civilization, and the foundations and principles of American society.** Variations from these norms are acceptable in cases where the excellence of the general education program as a whole ensures substantial fulfillment of these standards or where Western or American components are obviously not warranted; e.g., for colleges outside the US.

Criteria for Standard Eight

- 8.1 The institution's catalog and promotional and informational materials are clear, accurate, and current with regard to its general education course and subject requirements. This information is published and made readily available to prospective and enrolled students.

- 8.2 The institution has a regular process for general education curriculum formation and review. The roles of the faculty, administration, and governing board in this process are clearly defined. Curricular offerings and programs not requiring governing board approval are subject to appropriate governance procedures.
- 8.3 The institution has well-defined policies concerning the transfer of general education credit from other institutions. These policies ensure that incoming transfer students fulfill the institution's general education course and subject requirements or reasonable equivalents. These policies are communicated clearly and accurately by the institution's admissions staff and representatives, as well as in its published informational material.
- 8.4 Traditionally, the purposes of general education have most often been met by a required course of study including, but not limited to, the arts and sciences noted in the above standard. Institutions that have adopted alternative approaches in constructing their general education programs should explain how their general education program fulfills this standard.
- 8.5 Should distance education be offered through a contractual relationship, the institution retains the responsibility for the academic elements of the program.

General Education and Curriculum: Standard Nine

The institution, or programs, evaluate student progress in learning the elements of general education taught under Standard Eight and ascertains how well it meets the educational goals it has set for itself, either by means of a general examination or some academic equivalent.

Criteria for Standard Nine

The Academy believes that student learning in the elements of general education should be *evaluated in verifiable and consistent ways*. The assessment methods and instruments used should emphasize the quality of knowledge acquired as well as the development of the intellectual abilities and characteristics associated with liberal education.

In addition to providing responses to the criteria below, institutions and programs should describe and document their approaches to the assessment of student learning in their comprehensive responses to the Academy's Liberal Learning Assessment Standards (See *Appendices I and II* of this document).

- 9.1 The institution (or program) conducts regular and on-going assessment of the effectiveness of its general education and degree programs, in light of the institution's *liberal arts mission and educational objectives*. Assessment processes are clearly defined, comprehensive and integrated into the overall

institutional planning and evaluation strategy. These assessment processes are consistent with the AALE Policy on Learning Assessment for Liberal Arts Institutions (or Programs) (See Appendix I).

- 9.2 The faculty is responsible for the evaluation of student achievement.
- 9.3 The institution (or program) identifies and publishes *learning aims for its general education and degree programs, including online or distance education courses*. Through regular assessment, the institution (or program) demonstrates that students who complete these programs have fulfilled these aims.
- 9.4 The institution (or program) provides evidence that its assessment activities are used *to improve teaching and learning effectiveness*.

General Education and Curriculum: Standard Ten

The curriculum's *prerequisite structure*, as defined and enforced, ensures an *orderly progression* from elementary to advanced levels of knowledge, and the course definitions in the catalogue distinguish clearly among those considered fundamental (either to a general education or to mastery of a major), those less so, and those that belong to specialized subjects.

Criteria for Standard Ten

- 10.1 *The institution regularly reviews its general education, and degree requirements in the light of its mission, educational objectives, and commonly accepted academic norms*. The roles of the faculty, administration, and governing board in this process are clearly defined. Activities and programs not requiring governing board approval are subject to appropriate governance procedures.
- 10.2 The institution ensures that students *and faculty have a clear understanding of the educational goals and requirements of its major programs*, as well as of the methods of evaluation used.
- 10.3 The institution ensures a reasonable correspondence between program length and degree awarded and between credit hours awarded and clock hours of instructional time, including lectures, laboratory, and other learning experiences. Distance education courses should reasonably comparable to on-campus courses.
- 10.4 *The faculty* determines residency requirements, number of courses or credit hours required for each degree or major program, minimum acceptable grade point averages, appropriate means of assessing student learning, and allowable time frames for degree completion.

- 10.5 For each major field there is at least one full-time, competent faculty member responsible for oversight and coordination.
- 10.6 The institution's promotional and informational materials and activities are clear, accurate, and current with regard to its curriculum content and structure, major requirements, and degree program requirements. This information is published and made readily available to prospective and enrolled students and is communicated clearly and accurately by the institution's admissions staff and representatives, as well as by its academic advisors.

General Education and Curriculum: Standard Eleven

Students write substantial essays during *every stage* of progress as undergraduates and thereby demonstrate their proficiency in written English or appropriate language.

Criteria for Standard Eleven

- 11.1 The institution ensures that students and faculty have a clear understanding of the educational purpose and goals of its English writing requirements.
- 11.2 The institution regularly reviews its requirements, instruction, and evidence of student learning in English writing as part of its ongoing efforts to assess and improve its performance.

D. Teaching and Educational Resources

The faculty is the body principally responsible for implementing the curriculum of a liberal arts college or program, as well as for ensuring that its educational objectives are met. The primary activity of a liberal arts faculty is teaching, understood both in the special sense of classroom instruction and more broadly, as the guidance and mentoring essential to the formation of liberally educated persons. In addition to the faculty, certain educational resources - the library and other information sources foremost among them - are vital to an institution's ability to achieve its educational objectives.

The Teaching and Educational Resources standards invite institutions to reflect and report on the ways its teaching faculty, pedagogical and advisement practices, and educational resources enable it to carry out its mission and achieve its educational objectives.

Teaching and Educational Resources: Standard Twelve

The importance of teaching is featured, supported and rewarded in the life of the institution or program.

Criteria for Standard Twelve

- 12.1 The institution employs faculty who are qualified to carry out its educational purposes and programs, are properly prepared to teach the courses to which they are assigned, and who demonstrate effective teaching.
- 12.2 The institution employs regular procedures for monitoring teaching effectiveness.
- 12.3 The institution observes regular procedures for recruitment, appointment, evaluation, and promotion of its faculty, both full and part-time. These procedures should honor excellence in teaching and, where appropriate, in scholarship as well. These procedures are published and appropriately disseminated.
- 12.4 The institution maintains *appropriate documentation of academic credentials* (e.g., certified copies of highest degree awarded or for area of teaching) for all faculty, both full and part-time, and makes clear through its publications the status (e.g., full-time, part-time, adjunct), titles (e.g., professor, associate professor, assistant professor, adjunct professor, lecturer, tutor), and academic credentials of its faculty.
- 12.5 *Distance education* programs must have a regime is in place to ensure that faculty are both qualified and assessed for teaching effectiveness and that needed resources are afforded the students and faculty.

Teaching and Educational Resources: Standard Thirteen

Class size is appropriate to subject matter,
level of instruction, and need for class discussion.

Criteria for Education Standard Thirteen

- 13.1 The institution defines and enforces class size or course enrollment policies that are appropriate to its mission and to the educational objectives of its general education program as well as its majors.
- 13.2 The institution regularly reviews its class size and course enrollment policies as part of its ongoing efforts to assess and improve its performance.

Teaching and Educational Resources: Standard Fourteen

Regular faculty members, including senior ones, teach introductory general education courses, as well as introductory courses within majors, and are regularly engaged in academic counseling.

Criteria for Standard Fourteen

- 14.1 The institution regularly reviews and assesses its instructional policies to ensure that these are appropriate to its mission and to the educational objectives of its general education program, as well as its major programs.
- 14.2 The institution regularly reviews and assesses its academic counseling policies to ensure that these are appropriate to its mission and to the educational objectives of its academic programs.

Teaching and Educational Resources: Standard Fifteen

The library and other information resources are adequate to the demands of the institution's programs and students are encouraged or required to utilize its scholarly resources.

Criteria for Standard Fifteen

- 15.1 The institution owns or provides its students with access to library and other information resources adequate to the demands of its educational programs, including online or distance education programs.
- 15.2 The institution regularly assesses the adequacy of its library and other information resources as part of its ongoing efforts to assess and improve its performance and resources.
- 15.3 The institution possesses clear policies concerning ownership of material, faculty compensation, copyright issues, and the revenue derived from the creation and production of software, distance-courses, or other media products.
- 15.4 Review and approval processes ensure the appropriateness of any technology in general use, especially in distance education.

Part II. AALE Institution Standards

In addition to its primary purpose of gauging educational substance and quality, *accreditation also reflects an institution's ability to sustain its operations over time*. The determination of institutional *sustainability or viability* is based principally on consideration of an institution's record of stability or growth in enrollment and faculty/staff employment; on the adequacy and maintenance of its facilities and student services; on the reliability of its governance and administrative structures and practices, especially with regard to continuing financial support; and on a *review of its financial resources and outlook*.

A. Organization and Governance

- A.1 The institution has a governing board that is responsible for setting institutional policies.
- A.2 The institution clearly defines the duties and responsibilities of the governing board, specifies the number of board members, length of service, rotation and removal policies, organization and committee structures, and frequency of meetings.
- A.3 The institution's records and informational materials are truthful, accurate, and current with regard to the names and credentials of the members of its governing board.
- A.4 The board carries out its duties and responsibilities as a group. No member or committee acts in place of the board except by formal delegation of authority.
- A.5 The board approves long-range institutional plans and ensures that such plans are in conformity with the institution's mission, educational objectives, resources, and capabilities.
- A.6 The board approves both long-range financial plans and annual budgets and reviews the regular fiscal audits. The responsibilities of the board include securing financial resources to support adequately the institution's mission and educational objectives.
- A.7 The board approves an academic and administrative structure which serves the institution's mission and educational objectives. Implementation and administration of policies approved by the board are the responsibility of bodies within this structure, not of the board.
- A.8 The institution's administrative organization and staffing is appropriate to the institution's size and complexity and adequate to its needs.

- A.9 The institution clearly defines the duties of the chief executive officer and the administrative officials directly responsible to him or her. The chief executive officer's principal responsibility is to the institution.
- A.10 The institution ensures that administrative officers have credentials, experience, professional training, or demonstrated competence appropriate to their responsibilities and that it keeps adequate records in this regard.
- A.11 The institution has an appropriate written policy regarding conflicts of interest applicable to members of the governing board and administrative personnel.
- A.12 Where distance education courses or degrees are offered by a conventional, "bricks and mortar" institution, the responsibility for these programs is vested in the overall organization and governance of the institution, and consideration is given to the effect, if any, of such programs on its conventional offerings.

B. Financial Management

As noted, accreditation signifies to the public that an institution is financially stable enough to provide reasonable assurance that full-time students who enroll can expect to complete their degrees at the same institution. Domestic institutional accreditation also confers eligibility to participate in the Federal Student Loan Program. Because of these public aspects of accreditation, review of the finances of applicant colleges is an important part of the accreditation process.

- B.1 The institution ensures that it has sufficient financial resources to support all of its programs and activities. The institution's recent financial history and short-term projections (three to five years) indicates that it is financially stable and able to support all its functions in an ongoing manner consistent with the Academy's standards and with the institution's mission and educational objectives.
- B.2 The institution ensures that per-student funding of its liberal arts program(s) compares favorably with the per-student funding of its other academic programs.
- B.3 The institution prepares detailed annual budgets and utilizes a budget control process that ensures the budgetary plans of the governing board and the chief executive officer are implemented.
- B.4 The institution undergoes annual fiscal audits by independent certified public accountants or an appropriate governmental auditing agency. The institution submits or agrees to submit the results of such audits to the Academy and other agencies as required.

- B.5 The institution employs an accounting system that follows generally accepted principles of institutional accounting as these appear in the appropriate NACUBO or AICPA regulations.
- B.6 The institution clearly defines the responsibilities of the business office and has policies and procedures that allow for financial reports to be available to appropriate administrative personnel including the chief executive officer, as well as to the faculty.
- B.7 The institution maintains a strategic plan that takes into account potential growth in students and revenues and uses reasonable data to supports its conclusions.
- B.8 Long-range planning, budgeting, and projections apply to the facilities, staffing, equipment and other resources essential to the viability and effectiveness of all programs, including distance education.
- B.9 The institution ensures that its promotional and informational materials and activities for fundraising and development purposes are truthful, accurate, and current.

C. Student Support Services

General Services

- C.1 The institution ensures that its student services in the following areas are, where applicable, consistent with and adequate to the institution's mission and educational objectives:
 - a. Co-curricular activities;
 - b. Housing and food service, where these are provided;
 - c. Health services;
 - d. Campus safety and security; and
 - e. Career and post-graduate advising, information, and placement services;
 - f. Technology support for students engaged in online courses.
- C.2 The institution regularly reviews the adequacy of its student services in the areas specified above in relation to its mission and educational objectives, as part of its ongoing efforts to assess and improve its performance.

Student Records and Privacy

- C.3 The institution maintains appropriate academic records for students and secures these records adequately. The institution has well-defined and published policies

concerning the types of information to be included in students' permanent records and the security, release, retention, and disposal of such information.

- C.4 The institution has clear and published policies concerning the confidentiality of student academic records and students' right to privacy.

International Students

- C.5 Institutions enrolling international students ensure that such students are admitted and served responsibly. Admissions staff and representatives clearly and accurately convey information concerning admissions requirements and financial obligations to prospective international students. Academic policies, requirements, and expectations are the same for international students as for other students.
- C.6 Institutions enrolling international students ensure that all relevant federal government regulations for international students are observed and made known to students.
- C.7 Study abroad programs are integrated into the overall curriculum and sufficiently monitored and assessed.

Student Athletics

- C.8 The institution ensures that its intercollegiate athletics programs adhere to an officially approved written statement of policy consistent with the institution's mission and educational objectives. Academic policies, requirements, and expectations are the same for students involved in intercollegiate athletics as for other students.

Student Financial Policies

- C.9 The institution has equitable, clearly defined, and published policies regarding student tuition, fees, and other institutional charges, as well as regarding refund policies. This information is made readily available to prospective students as well as to students enrolled at the institution.
- C.10 The institution ensures that its financial aid program is equitably and efficiently administered.
- C.11 The institution has well-defined and published policies concerning the confidentiality of student financial records.
- C.12 The institution is regularly audited to assure its compliance with all relevant federal and state requirements for financial aid policies and practices.

- C.13 The institution maintains current cohort default rates under the Federal Stafford Loan or Federal Supplemental Loans for Students Program within the guidelines established by the United States Department of Education.

Student Complaints

- C.14 The institution permits the Academy to review student complaints on matters related to the Academy's measures of accreditation.
- C.15 The institution makes the Academy's mailing address, e-mail address, and telephone number available to students.
- C.16 The institution provides an adequate means for resolving student complaints.

D. Facilities

- D.1 The institution provides for its students and faculty a setting and atmosphere conducive to inquiry, discussion, learning, and contemplation.
- D.2 The institution's instructional, research, co-curricular, and support facilities are adequate to the needs of the institution in relation to its stated mission, educational objectives and programs, and other integral activities.
- D.3 The institution regularly reviews the adequacy of its instructional, research, co-curricular, and support facilities in relation to its stated mission, programs, and activities as part of its ongoing efforts to assess and improve its performance.
- D.4 The institution ensures access to laboratories, facilities, and equipment, as needed by either in situ or online students.

E. Branch Campuses, Off-Campus Teaching Sites, Distance Education Programs

- E.1 The institution ensures that the educational standards of degree-granting programs offered at branch campuses, off-campus teaching sites, or through distance learning media conform to those in force on the main campus.
- E.2 The institution provides students doing coursework at branch campuses, at off-campus teaching sites, and through distance learning media with adequate library and information access and support services.
- E.3 The institution regularly assesses the adequacy of its instructional, research, co-curricular, and support facilities at branch campuses and off-campus teaching sites in relation to its stated mission, programs, and activities as part of its ongoing efforts to assess and improve its performance.

- E.4 Students and prospective students at branch campuses or in distance education programs are provided with clear, complete and timely information on the curriculum, course and degree requirements, nature of faculty/student interaction, assumptions about technical competence and skills, equipment requirements, availability of academic support services and financial aid resources, and costs and payment policies.

Note: Branch campus and distance education programs that do not conform to the Academy's standards may not be advertised or represented as being covered by the Academy's accreditation. As of August 2007, the Academy's domestic purview, does not include distance education programs, for purposes of Title IV and are not considered as covered by the accreditation awarded by the Academy.

Preface to Appendices on AALE Student/Institutional Success Requirements

This preface is meant to augment the entirety of the Academy's documents that deal with assessing student learning, teaching effectiveness and institutional success, particularly the *Standards and Criteria*, the *Guide to the Self Study*, the *Annual Institutional Reporting Form* as well as the *Monitoring Supplement*.

Assessing institutional success is at the core of effective teaching and learning. It goes on in one form or another in every classroom every day and throughout every semester of the academic year. It should not be viewed merely as a compliance hurdle to be jumped over for the sake of accreditation.

Assessment addresses accountability and transparency issues and is one of many ways for the college to monitor its adherence to the mission of educating students. Quantitative assessment in particular – the subject of the first appendix - can provide clear and verifiable evidence to support claims of academic successes. Useful as they may be, however, quantitative measurements are not intended to supersede qualitative ones; both are useful in assessing liberal learning and related skills, and *both are required* by AALE. External outcomes measures are needed – thus the Academy requirement that a peer group of colleges be selected, and the results on chosen assessment tools compared to the results of the group as a whole.

As always, the Academy's Criteria should be viewed as a floor of compliance rather than as a ceiling to aspiration and accomplishment. Likewise, quantitative assessment protocols should be viewed as promoting a "value-added" approach rather than as an encouragement to testing or norming for their own sakes. Members are encouraged to go beyond the requirements of the Academy as they strive to meet the mission objectives.

The Academy's *Standards and Criteria* (S&C) continue to require members to think introspectively about assessing student learning and institutional success. Recently expressed public concerns about accountability, however, must be met by more formal and transparent methods capable of yielding measurable indices of success and progress. It is this quantitative aspect of assessment that this appendix is meant to address.

1. All Academy members must establish learning/achievement outcomes for students and mechanisms for determining if students are successful in attaining these outcomes. Both must be related to the institution or program's stated mission. Once established, the goals, outcomes, and measurement tools (both quantitative and qualitative), must be articulated in the self-study and annual reports submitted to the Academy and *must be made available to the public through the institution or programs' website and printed promotional materials*.
2. Each member institution or program must *select a group of peer institutions* by which to compare the measurement tools and data.
3. All members must have both qualitative and quantitative (see Appendices in S&C and *Guide to the Self-Study*) measurements.
4. The outcomes as well as the measurement tools are to be vetted through the Academy.
5. Each institution or program is, additionally, to address the entirety of *Appendix II*.

6. With regard to Appendix I, at least 3 tools, in addition to graduation rate, are to be selected and compared to the peer group. These must demonstrate that the institution or program is at or above the *mean within the peer group* for each tool. Members and applicants are strongly encouraged to implement an “after college” measure as well. Given the nature of a liberal education, it seems appropriate to glean as much as possible about the effects of the education over time, e.g., the effect of liberal learning and the “quality of life” of the liberally educated.
7. All outcomes are to be reported to the Academy each year through the Annual Institutional Reporting Form (AIRF) and appropriate accompanying narrative and other evidentiary materials.
8. The self-study and annual reporting should provide evidence, such as meeting minutes, etc., that quantitative and qualitative goals are being monitored and looped back to the faculty in efforts to address student learning weaknesses.
9. Should the college or program fall below the mean in a measurement or fail to reach a stated goal in the hoped for amount of time, a narrative addressing the shortfall as well as a plan and timeline for recovery must be forwarded to the Academy within 30 days of the AIRF reporting deadline. (One example: the entering SAT/ACT scores are in the 80th percentile, thus one would expect that any “outcome” testing would be similar)
10. Upon satisfactory staff, Council of Scholars or Board of Trustee review, a one to three year window will be established for meeting or exceeding the mean. If a satisfactory review is not reached, the school may be put on probation or have its membership revoked by the Academy’s Board of trustees.
11. All changes to stated outcomes must be reported to the Academy each year, with a narrative indicating why the change has been made, any changes in curriculum that will result and the timeline for implementation.

The Academy’s Vice-President or Director for Higher Education will be the primary contact and will initiate all reviews of member materials.

The Academy may request additional information as it deems necessary to making any accreditation decisions. Membership is contingent upon meeting the Academy’s Standards and Criteria as well its own stated mission objectives.

The Academy may require additional reports and staff or peer review visits at anytime during the membership term.

Appendix I

Quantitative Learning Assessment Requirements for Liberal Arts Institutions

AALE expects members to develop and implement assessment plans for determining success in meeting their liberal arts mission and educational aims. AALE does not prescribe specific methods or instruments of assessment; rather, institutions are urged to develop assessment plans appropriate to their mission and to the character and context of their educational program. AALE does expect that assessment will be both regular and comprehensive, and that members will use the results to improve teaching and learning. Faculty should have a central role in developing this process and evaluating results.

To make well-rounded judgments concerning the effectiveness of educational programs, it is important to have access to a wide range of information. For this reason, assessment plans should make use of multiple approaches and kinds of information; thus, both qualitative and quantitative evaluations of student achievement should be employed, as appropriate. The following list of approaches and data is intended to be illustrative and exemplary and *not prescriptive or exhaustive*:

- Results of surveys addressing the undergraduate learning environment, e.g. the National Survey of Student Engagement;
- Results of standardized examinations for graduate or professional school admissions;
- Retention and degree-completion rates;
- Rates of employment and/or other relevant occupational data;
- Matriculation rates for graduate or professional study;
- Results of applicable licensing examinations;
- Studies of alumni achievement and satisfaction;
- Trends in data reported through AALE's Graduate Achievement Data Form;
- Third-party standardized test results, e.g., the CLA, ISI, MAPP exams, etc.,

Note: for schools or programs that utilize a portfolio or an oral or written examination or theses system, including an Oxford style Don Rags, the school must append to its self-study, Annual or Mid-Term report, a matrix or guide as to what is looked for and accepted as passing, e.g., so many examples, counter examples, the ability to articulate an argument in opposition to a point, etc.

Note: Much of this data is to be compiled and reported to the Academy each year through the submission of the *Annual Institutional Reporting Form* (AIRF).

Appendix II

Qualitative Learning Assessment Standards

Areas for Inquiry and Investigation – See also the *Guide to the Self-Study*

1. Effective Reasoning

Areas for inquiry and investigation

- **Curriculum:** Is the curriculum designed to encourage and foster effective reasoning across the areas of fundamental skills and knowledge (e.g., fluency in reading, writing, and oral communication and mastery of the basic principles of logical, mathematical, and scientific reasoning)? Do program and course descriptions, syllabi, and study guides consistently frame development of students' reasoning abilities as principal objectives? Are course readings and requirements, especially in those courses that form part of an institution's core or general education, systematically designed to foster development of these abilities? Is the curriculum designed to ensure that students attain and demonstrate the necessary foundational abilities in effective reasoning - fluency in reading, writing, and oral communication - during their first year of coursework? How are programs and courses monitored and evaluated for their success in developing students' ability to reason effectively?
- **Teaching:** What pedagogical methods and practices do faculty regularly employ to encourage and enable their students to develop the ability to reason effectively? What institutional or collegial procedures are in place to monitor, evaluate, and improve the effectiveness of teaching in developing students' ability to reason effectively?
- **Learning:** What curricular policies and procedures are in place for monitoring and documenting student progress in the various elements of effective reasoning? How are standards formulated for gauging student achievement in effective reasoning? How are students apprized of these standards, of their progress in meeting them, and of the steps they might take to enhance their progress or redress deficiencies? How is evidence of student achievement archived and made available to outside evaluators, potential employers, or graduate admissions offices?
- **Student Life:** What resources or policies are in place for encouraging and assisting activities beyond the classroom (student-led publications, conferences, performances, special interest organizations, etc.) that are likely or expressly designed to help students develop and demonstrate their ability to reason effectively?

2. Broad and Deep Learning

Areas for inquiry and investigation

- **Curriculum:** Is the curriculum designed to encourage and foster the ability to relate and integrate the knowledge and methods of study and analysis gained in its different parts? Are courses and programs designed to facilitate comparative or cooperative projects between different areas of learning, e.g., between the sciences and humanities? Does the curriculum feature interdisciplinary or cross disciplinary courses, programs, or requirements (e.g. capstone courses, independent study) which encourage students to explore the ways that materials and methods from various disciplines can be related, compared, or integrated with one another? How are programs and courses monitored and evaluated for their success in developing students' breadth and depth of learning?
- **Teaching:** Do faculty from different disciplines, or with different areas of knowledge cooperate in ways that exemplify fruitful relations that are possible between specialists in disparate fields of learning? Does the faculty effectively encourage and enable students to relate, compare, and integrate knowledge across different disciplines or areas of study, or between general education and major field courses and programs?
- **Learning:** What curricular policies and procedures are in place for developing, monitoring, and documenting the depth and breadth of student learning? What are the standards for gauging student achievement in relating, comparing, and integrating knowledge across different areas and fields of study? How are students apprized of these standards, their progress in meeting them, and the steps they can take to enhance their progress or redress deficiencies? How is evidence of student achievement made available to outside evaluators, potential employers, or graduate admissions offices?
- **Student Life:** What resources or policies are in place for encouraging and assisting activities beyond the classroom (student-led publications, conferences, performances, special interest organizations, etc.) that are likely or expressly designed to develop students' ability to relate, compare, and integrate in meaningful ways the knowledge gained through their coursework or by other means (service learning programs, study abroad, internships, etc.)?

3. The Inclination to Inquire

Areas for inquiry and investigation

- **Curriculum:** Is the curriculum designed to encourage and foster individual and cooperative inquiry? Are courses and programs designed to help students learn to become active inquirers and participants in the search for knowledge, rather than passive consumers of information? Are institutional resources and curricular offerings (both in general education and major programs) sufficient to allow students to pursue their intellectual inquiries in intellectually cogent and significant ways (e.g., through independent study or research projects)? How are programs and courses monitored and evaluated for their success in developing students' inclination to inquire?
 - **Teaching:** Does the faculty regularly use teaching methods and styles designed or likely to encourage students' intellectual inquisitiveness and independence? What institutional or collegial procedures are in place to monitor, evaluate, and improve the effectiveness of teaching in developing an inclination to inquire in students? Do teachers exemplify for their students the challenges and rewards of a life motivated by the love of inquiry for its own sake and for the good it contributes to self and society?
 - **Learning:** What curricular policies and procedures are in place for monitoring and documenting students' intellectual enterprise? How are standards formulated for gauging student achievement in this area? How are students apprized of these standards, their progress in meeting them, and the steps they might take to enhance their progress or redress deficiencies? How are students encouraged or enabled to engage in frank intellectual self-assessment? How are the results of these self-assessments used to frame new intellectual pursuits and challenges for students? How is evidence of student achievement archived and made available to outside evaluators, potential employers, or graduate admissions offices?
- Student Life:** What resources or policies are in place for encouraging and assisting activities beyond the classroom (student-led publications, conferences, performances, special interest organizations, etc.) that are likely or expressly designed to develop thoughtful and inquisitive dispositions? Do student and alumni surveys indicate that their educational experience has enabled or encouraged them to extend their pursuits of meaningful knowledge and skills beyond the classroom or the academy?