

**TRANSNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHRISTIAN
COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS
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GENERAL INFORMATION

PURPOSE

Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools (TRACS) is a voluntary, non-profit, self-governing organization of Christian postsecondary institutions. TRACS was established in 1979 to promote the welfare, interests, and development of postsecondary institutions through the accreditation process, whose mission is characterized by a distinctly Christian purpose as set forth in the Foundational Standards. While TRACS encourages each affiliated institution to develop its own distinctives, TRACS expects institutions to provide quality postsecondary education within the context of Christian values, with emphasis on high academic standards and spiritual development.

SCOPE

TRACS is recognized by the United States Department of Education (USDE) and the Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) as an institutional agency accrediting Christian postsecondary institutions (e.g. liberal arts colleges/universities, graduate schools/ seminaries, Bible colleges/institutes) offering either a certificate, diploma, or degree (Associate, Baccalaureate, or Graduate). TRACS works closely with state higher education agencies in the accrediting process. The geographic territory of TRACS currently consists of the United States and its territories.

ROLE AND VALUE OF ACCREDITATION

Accreditation is granted to higher educational institutions which are in compliance with the Standards and Evaluative Criteria within the Policies and Procedures established by the Accreditation Commission. In the United States, accreditation is voluntarily sought by institutions and is conferred by independent, autonomous bodies. Voluntary, non-governmental, institutional accreditation, as practiced by TRACS and other accrediting agencies recognized by the United States Department of Education (USDE), is uniquely characteristic of American education. For purposes of determining eligibility for federal government assistance under certain legislation, the USDE publishes a list of nationally recognized accrediting agencies.

The two fundamental purposes of the accreditation process are (1) to assure the quality and integrity of postsecondary institutions and (2) to assist the development and improvement of institutional higher learning.

The Accreditation process involves continuous institutional self-evaluation, periodic self-study, long and short range planning, and institutional research for the purpose of determining areas of strengths and weaknesses indicating effectiveness.

Periodic peer evaluation by qualified professionals from other institutions serving on visiting teams serve to confirm that the institution is achieving its mission through compliance with the established Standards.

ACCREDITATION COMMISSION

The Accreditation Commission is charged with the responsibility of enforcing all the accreditation policies of TRACS and the approving of all institutions for Accreditation or Candidacy. The decision of the Accreditation Commission is final. The Commission is made up of fifteen members, including three Public Commissioners.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR APPLICATION

Every institution must be legally constituted as a non-profit institution if so operated. It must meet the legal requirements established by the State to operate as an educational institution, to maintain its functions, and to conduct its programs. The educational institution should attain a satisfactory degree of stability before it applies. Pre-requisites are determined through the Institutional Eligibility Requirements (IERs).

ACCREDITATION STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

The *Accreditation Manual*, which contains the Standards and Criteria, guide the accreditation process through the benchmarks for those affiliate institutions and those seeking candidacy/accreditation. A copy of the *Accreditation Manual* may be obtained from the TRACS office.

ACCREDITATION CLASSIFICATION

Pre-accredited (or Candidate Status): Candidacy offers institutions the opportunity to establish an initial, formal, and publicly recognized relationship with TRACS. Candidate institutions must satisfy the IERs, be in basic compliance with the Standards and provide evidence of sound planning, adequate human, financial, and physical resources to implement plans, and appear to have the potential to attain its goals within a five-year period. Following a successful staff visit, institutional self-study, and an on-site peer evaluation team visit, an institution may be awarded candidacy for a maximum of five years by the Accreditation Commission.

Accredited Level Status: Following an institutional self-study and an on-site peer evaluation team visit, accredited status may be granted by the Accreditation Commission to institutions which are in substantial compliance with the Standards and Criteria for accreditation. Following the initial five years, the institution must undergo a periodic review. The maximum term is ten years upon approval of the Accreditation Commission.

THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS



- (1) The institution's President notifies the TRACS office that the Board has given approval to become an applicant and files the Institutional Profile (IP) and other required materials.
- (2) The Review Committee reviews the Application (Institutional Profile) and supporting materials. The Committee may ask for further materials or may ask for clarification of answers. The Executive Director responds in writing to the institution.
- (3) The Executive Director, upon a favorable review, schedules an initial staff visit in cooperation with the president. The Institutional Eligibility Requirements (IERs) serve as the basis for the staff visit report that is a prerequisite for the institutional self-study.
- (4) Upon a favorable staff visit report, the applicant institution, prior to starting the self-study, submits a Self-Study Proposal. Upon approval, an institutional self-study may then be conducted and prepared according to a prescribed format by institutions seeking Candidacy. The Self-Study Report must be submitted to the TRACS office six (6) months prior to the target meeting of the Accreditation Commission which meets semi-annually in spring and fall.
- (5) The institution and the TRACS office schedule an on-site evaluation team visit following the submission of an acceptable Self-Study Report. The evaluation team normally consists of five qualified professionals, including a TRACS staff representative. The visit is usually three to four days in length. Expenses of the visit are billed directly to the institution. (Refer to Fee Structure Chart.) The team visit must occur three months prior to the target Accreditation Commission meeting.
- (6) A draft copy of the Evaluation Team Report, based on institutional compliance with the Standards, including evaluation team recommendations, suggestions and commendations, is given to the chief executive of the institution after the exit interview has been concluded.
- (7) The college administration responds in writing to the official evaluation team report sent from the TRACS Office and must respond to the report and its recommendations prior to consideration by the Accreditation Commission at its next meeting.
- (8) The on-site evaluation team report and the institutional response are considered by the Accreditation Commission and action is taken at its next regular meeting. The college president (and others he/she may choose to accompany him/her) is invited to attend the meeting at which time action is to be taken.
- (9) The institution is notified in writing by the Executive Director of the decision following the Accreditation Commission meeting.

ACCREDITATION ACTION/DECISIONS - APPLICANT INSTITUTIONS

The Accreditation Commission after full deliberation and examination of all institutional and visiting team documentation, including self-study report, the visiting team report, and institutional response, may approve, defer, or deny an institution's application for candidate status.

PROCEDURES REQUIRED OF MEMBER INSTITUTIONS

Member institutions are required to submit Annual Reports and Financial Reports on standard forms provided by TRACS, along with a yearly opinioned audit. In addition, institutions are required to notify the Accreditation Commission of any significant changes in governance, facilities, faculty, financial stability, management, educational programs, new or additional geographic location, and any other material factors which affect the governance or operation of the institution. Self-evaluations and re-evaluations by evaluation team visits are requested by the Accreditation Commission. The Commission may also request special staff visits as called for.

DUES AND FEES

TRACS is funded primarily through annual fees from its institutions. Expenses related to staff visits and evaluation team visits are borne by the institutions. The annual fee is currently calculated according to the enclosed Fee Structure Chart



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