

NWCCU POLICIES | PUBLIC NOTIFICATION AND THIRD-PARTY COMMENTS REGARDING MISSION FULFILLMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY EVALUATIONS

It is the policy of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, in accordance with 34 CFR 602.23, to publish the year when candidate or member institutions are being considered for initial or continuing accreditation. The Commission also provides an opportunity for third-party comment, in writing, concerning the institution's qualifications for candidacy or accreditation.

Procedures

A. Procedure for Publication by Institutions

In accordance with Commission policy, an institution that is scheduled for a Year Seven/Comprehensive Report and visit advertises to its publics that a visit is scheduled and invites their comments. Comments will be accepted only when they are submitted in writing and signed.

1. Dissemination of notification. In most cases, a local newspaper will be the most appropriate vehicle for an announcement of a forthcoming visit. However, the Commission recognizes that an institution's opportunities and vehicles for reaching its publics vary from place to place. In some situations, submitting a press release to a newspaper may not ensure publication; it may be necessary for the institution to purchase space in an appropriate publication or find other means of publicizing the visit.

Alumni magazines and campus newsletters may also be useful ways to communicate to certain constituencies. An institution with operations off-campus, including those outside the United States, should find ways to provide appropriate notification to those affected by the institution's presence at those sites.

2. Content of notice. The Commission does not prescribe specific language for the public notification of the impending visit. However, the Commission recommends that the institution's announcement include the following information:
 - a. the purpose of the forthcoming visit;
 - b. the dates of the visit;
 - c. the institution's current accreditation status with the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities;
 - d. the year of the most recent Commission action relating to the institution; and
 - e. an invitation to send comments directly to the Commission that includes the Commission's address and the date by which comments must be received (no later than one month before the visit).
3. Timing of the notice. The notice should appear three to four months prior to the Year Seven Report and visit. The institution sends a photocopy of the printed notice to the Commission office.

B. Procedure for Publication by the Commission

In accordance with Commission policy, the Commission publishes the list of institutions scheduled for evaluation through appropriate Commission publications and invites comments from third parties. Comments will be accepted only when they are submitted in writing and signed.

1. Distribution of notification. The primary means of publicizing the list of institutions for evaluation are the website of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities and the minutes of the Commission's annual winter and summer meetings.
 2. Content of notice:
 - a. the names of institutions scheduled for initial candidacy, initial accreditation, or continued accreditation;
 - b. the scheduled dates of the evaluation; and
 - c. the address of the Commission's headquarters to which comments and information may be sent and the date by which comments must be received (no later than one month before the visit).
- C. Commission's Procedure for Handling Third-Party Comments
1. The office of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities will acknowledge, in writing, the receipt of all written third-party comments pertaining to an institution's qualification for candidacy or accreditation.
 2. Copies of third-party comments will be made available to members of the evaluation committee and to the institution being visited for candidacy or accreditation at least ten days prior to the scheduled evaluation.
 3. The institution being evaluated may respond, in writing, to the chair of the evaluation committee. Such response is to be provided no later than the beginning of the on-campus evaluation.
 4. The evaluation committee will consider third-party comments and the institution's written response along with all other information available during the evaluation process.
 5. The Commission will maintain a file of third-party comments for each institution, and a copy of the letter acknowledging the third-party comments. These records will be maintained for at least five years.

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