

# EXTERNAL ACCREDITATION

## OVERVIEW

Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning policy requires institutions to maintain regional accreditation with the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and to actively seek and maintain accreditation for all programs for which professional accreditation is available.

## WEBSITE

<http://www.usm.edu/ie/accreditation.htm>

## CONTACT INFORMATION

### Office of the Provost

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### Office of Institutional Effectiveness

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### NCATE Office

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## **Top Ten Things You Should Know About External Accreditation**

### **One - Provost's Office**

External accreditation responsibilities are housed in the Office of the Provost. Associate Provost Bill Powell and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness are charged with external accreditation administrative duties. The NCATE Office oversees all NCATE activities.

### **Two - A copy of all correspondence (sent & received) must be maintained in IE Office**

In order to maintain a continuously-updated archive of University documentation pertaining to accreditation, copies of reports, responses, and key correspondence with accrediting agencies are to be forwarded to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. Send a copy of all pertinent correspondences to Box 5026 or hand-deliver to International Center Suite 517.

### **Three - All reports must be reviewed prior to submission**

**Drafts of reports must be submitted to IE at least seven working days prior to submission date.** It is very important that another set of eyes review the report to ensure accurate institutional representation. It is the department's responsibility to inform IE and the Associate Provost of the due date of the report and the date the draft will be submitted. Turn-around time will be as immediate as possible.

### **Four - Resources are available and should be utilized**

Institutional Research and Institutional Effectiveness can provide a wide range of support services.

### **Five - External accreditation requirements can mesh with university assessment processes**

Many programs need to document student learning outcome assessment activities for both the university and their external accrediting body. Both endeavors can, and should, draw on the same information gathering and analysis processes! IE works with these programs to develop assessment plans that meet both university and external accrediting body requirements.

### **Six - Site visits require coordination**

Advanced planning is necessary. Most external accrediting bodies request external reviewers meet with university administration. Make sure you start coordinating calendars as early as possible, especially those of the president and provost.

### **Seven - Master External Accreditation Calendar**

A Master External Accreditation Calendar Spreadsheet is under development. The spreadsheet contains the following headings: College, Department, Program, Emphasis, Accrediting Body, Most Recent Accreditation, Most Recent Accreditation Activity, Next Action, and Next Accreditation. Departments will be asked to review the spreadsheet for accuracy. Once accuracy is confirmed, maintenance of the spreadsheet will be provided through the receipt of all external accreditation correspondence.

### **Eight - If it's available – game plan needed**

IHL requires institutions to endeavor to acquire accreditation for all programs for which external accreditation is available. Accreditation of all eligible programs is also one of the university's strategic goals. If your program is eligible for accreditation, a timeline to accreditation is to be submitted.

### **Nine - Don't forget Emphasis Areas!**

Accreditation exists at the emphasis-level. Some programs have external accreditation for one emphasis area and not another. Others have separate accreditations for multiple emphasis areas. We have to make sure we account for all programs **and** emphasis areas!

### **Ten – Common external accreditation report elements**

Many reports require the same basic elements – University Mission, College Mission, University Organization Chart, SACS accreditation status, etc. We would like to provide a “one-stop shop” for all this information on the IE Web site. Please let us know what other elements would be helpful.

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## **EXTERNAL ACCREDITATION NOTES**