

**ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR COMMUNITY AND  
PRECOLLEGIATE ARTS SCHOOLS**

**Procedures for Accreditation**

**PART I**

**The ACCPAS  
Accreditation Process:  
An Overview for Institutions**

**May 2007 Edition**

**Correlated to the ACCPAS *Handbook 2007* and Beyond**

**Users of this document must have a current edition  
of the ACCPAS *Handbook* and any supplements or appendices.**

# NOTICES

1. This is **Part I** of the ACCPAS *Procedures for Accreditation*.

**Part I** provides an overview of the accreditation process.

**Part II** describes procedures and content areas for the institution's Self-Study.

**Part III** provides an overview of the visit, the Visitors' Report, and the Visitors' Report format. This section is primarily for the visitor(s), although the school should understand this aspect of the accreditation process as well.

The three documents give a complete picture of the approach to accreditation used by ACCPAS, and should be used in collaboration with the ACCPAS Standards, contained in the Handbook.

The policies and procedures outlined herein are intended to facilitate consistent review among all institutions and, at the same time, to provide maximum flexibility for tailoring the accreditation process to the needs of specific institutions.

2. These documents are available on the ACCPAS website ([www.accpas.arts-accredit.org](http://www.accpas.arts-accredit.org)).
3. Information contained herein concerning programs, procedures, requirements, standards, and fees is subject to change without notice by the Council of Arts Accrediting Association.
4. Permission is hereby granted to copy this document for use in the accreditation process.

---

## National Office:

### ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR COMMUNITY AND PRECOLLEGIATE ARTS SCHOOLS

11250 Roger Bacon Drive, Suite 21

Reston, Virginia 20190

Telephone: 703-437-0700 ∪ Facsimile: 703-437-6312

E-mail: [info@arts-accredit.org](mailto:info@arts-accredit.org)

Web Site: <http://www.accpas.arts-accredit.org/>

# **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

## **Part I: The ACCPAS Accreditation Process**

Procedures: Application for Accreditation or Renewal of Accreditation .....	I-1
Introduction .....	I-1
Preparations for Application .....	I-2
• ACCPAS Documents .....	I-2
• Definition of Accreditation and Accreditation Categories .....	I-2
• Consultative Visits .....	I-2
• Web Site .....	I-2
• Staff Consultation .....	I-3
• Facsimile and E-Mail .....	I-3
• Joint or Concurrent Accreditation Visit .....	I-3
• Consolidation and Coordination with Other Reviews .....	I-3
• Evaluation Calendar and Sample Schedule .....	I-3
• Program Requirements .....	I-4
• Terminology .....	I-4
Fundamental Policies .....	I-4
• ACCPAS <i>Handbook</i> .....	I-4
• Confidentiality .....	I-4
• The Accreditation Role of the ACCPAS Staff .....	I-5
• Focus .....	I-5
• Accreditation and Institutional Autonomy .....	I-5
• Observers with Visiting Teams .....	I-6
• Questions, Anxieties, Malfunctions .....	I-6
The Notice of Intention to Apply .....	I-6
Self-Study .....	I-6
• The Self-Study Process .....	I-6
• Developing the Self-Study .....	I-7
• Organizing the Self-Study .....	I-7
• Custom Self-Studies .....	I-8
• Electronic Storage and Future Revisions .....	I-8

**Table of Contents (continued)**

Filing Application Materials ..... I-9

Selection of the Visiting Evaluators..... I-10

- ACCPAS Nomination and Institutional Preference ..... I-10
- Nomination and Invitation Policies ..... I-10
- Conflict-of-Interest Policies..... I-11
- Invitation of Visiting Evaluators ..... I-11

Selection of the Visit Date ..... I-12

Preparations for the Visit ..... I-12

The Visit..... I-14

Procedures Prior to Commission Action..... I-15

- ACCPAS Visitors’ Report..... I-15
- Optional Response to the Visitors’ Report..... I-15
- Withdrawal of the Application for Accreditation..... I-15

Review of the Application by ACCPAS ..... I-15

- Possible Commission Actions on First-Time Applications for Accreditation ..... I-16
- Possible Commission Actions on Applications for Renewal of Accreditation ..... I-16
- Approval ..... I-17
- Deferral, Administrative Warning ..... I-17
- Probation, Denial ..... I-17
- Personal Appearances ..... I-17

Further Explanation of Deferral ..... I-18

Procedures Regarding Review of Accreditation Decisions ..... I-18

The Reaccreditation Cycle ..... I-18

Maintaining Accredited Status ..... I-19

Evaluation Calendar For Community and Precollegiate Schools

- Applying for Accreditation or Renewal of Accreditation..... I-20

Sample Institutional Schedule and Checklist: Preparation for on-Site Visit ..... I-21

# Procedures: Application for Accreditation or Renewal of Accreditation

## INTRODUCTION

The first purpose of the accreditation process is to provide a mechanism that assists institutions, schools and programs to analyze their operations, work, and aspirations. These analyses encourage development of means to improve artistic and educational results. ACCPAS facilitates this process by placing the review in the context of nationally developed standards and consistent procedures that ensure fairness and objectivity. ACCPAS is concerned with service rather than control.

Since each applicant institution is unique, the accreditation process must balance two concerns: (1) compliance with threshold standards and (2) evaluation based on the mission, goals, and objectives of specific institutions. This balance is achieved by focusing on functions rather than methods—*what* and *why* rather than *how*.

The Self-Study is the core of the accreditation process. Users should devote considerable thought to specific purposes for their Self-Study process in addition to preparing a document for ACCPAS. Whatever the purposes, the focus should be on self-evaluation rather than reporting. The Self-Study process and the written document can have a profound impact on cohesion of purpose, common understanding of challenges and opportunities, strategic thinking, and operational planning. The specific emphases, however, are developed by each institution.

Users of Parts I and II of the *Procedures for Accreditation* are encouraged to take full advantage of the flexibilities of the ACCPAS process to design an accreditation review that meets their specific needs. ACCPAS works to bring high levels of intellectual energy and artistic purpose to accreditation. ACCPAS's focus is on education and training in the arts disciplines at all levels consistent with the mission articulated by the institution. The accreditation process should not be considered an end in itself.

As faculty and administrators develop their accreditation agenda and schedule, questions may arise. If answers do not seem evident in the text, please contact the ACCPAS National Office at 703-437-0700. The staff looks forward to working with you.

# PREPARATIONS FOR APPLICATION

## ACCPAS Documents

**A packet containing all forms and materials should be obtained from the ACCPAS Web site.**

The ACCPAS *Handbook* and all current addenda, the ACCPAS accreditation packet, and other materials provided by ACCPAS contain complete information about ACCPAS and should be studied carefully before application is made and then regularly during the application process. The standards for accreditation through ACCPAS are found in the *Handbook*.

## Definition of Accreditation and Accreditation Categories

Accreditation is granted to community and precollegiate arts institutions, schools and programs meeting all standards of ACCPAS. Institutions approved for the first time are granted five-year periods of accreditation. At the end of five years, the institution is expected to apply for renewal of accreditation.

Renewal of accreditation is normally granted for ten-year periods.

The standards for accreditation are published in the ACCPAS *Handbook*.

## Consultative Visits

**During preparation of applications, institutions may wish to have a consultative visit by an ACCPAS-trained consultant who is not a member of the ACCPAS staff.**

The consultative visit is neither a prerequisite for ACCPAS accreditation, nor for renewal of accreditation. An institution may apply for accreditation and have as its first visit an official ACCPAS evaluation. Hosting a consultant does not guarantee accreditation.

With regard to the application process, the two purposes of a consultative visit are (a) to provide an objective analysis of an institution's program and (b) to make recommendations reflecting comparison with ACCPAS standards.

When acting as a consultant, the individual may not act as an evaluator. The recommendations of consultants are, therefore, purely advisory in nature. Official action concerning accreditation is taken only after ACCPAS receives and acts upon a complete, documented application, including the report of official ACCPAS evaluators. It is ACCPAS policy that an individual who serves as consultant to an institution will not later be assigned as an official evaluator in connection with a subsequent application for accreditation or renewal of accreditation.

Consultants are hired by and work for institutions. ACCPAS merely assists institutions to secure consultative advice.

For further information regarding consultative visits, please consult the Web site or contact the ACCPAS National Office staff.

## Web Site

ACCPAS maintains a comprehensive Web site at <http://www.accpas.arts-accredit.org/>.

## **Staff Consultation**

The ACCPAS National Office staff is available by phone at (703) 437-0700 on weekdays from 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. Eastern time. The staff consults regularly at the request of institutions and programs engaged in the accreditation process.

There is no charge for staff consultation. However, travel-related expenses of staff associated with development and operation of joint visits, concurrent visits, custom Self-Studies, or similar services must be reimbursed by the institution.

## **Facsimile and E-Mail**

The ACCPAS facsimile number, (703) 437-6312 and general e-mail address (info@arts-accredit.org), are provided to facilitate communication about the accreditation process. E-mail addresses for staff members may be found at the Web site. However, official accreditation correspondence such as reports of Commission action are not transmitted through e-mail or by facsimile. Please do not transmit by e-mail or facsimile completed submissions to the Commission. Multiple copies of materials, prepared as stipulated in Part II of these *Procedures*, must be forwarded to ACCPAS by mail or courier service.

## **Joint or Concurrent Accreditation Visit**

If the institution wishes the ACCPAS visit to be joint with NASAD or NAST, or concurrent with that of another accrediting agency, or if the institution wishes to schedule a joint visit with NASM or NASD for review of its community education division and its degree-granting program, the ACCPAS National Office should be so informed on the *Notice of Intention to Apply* form. Preferably, this notice is preceded by a telephone call to the National Office. If the institution wishes the ACCPAS evaluators to visit jointly for ACCPAS and non-arts accrediting agencies, the ACCPAS National Office should be advised at the same time as the national office of the other accrediting body, and at least 24 months before the scheduled visit. Normally, at least one on-site ACCPAS staff consultation and ACCPAS staff presence during the visit are required for joint visits.

## **Consolidation and Coordination with Other Reviews**

ACCPAS encourages institutions to consolidate, coordinate, or correlate accreditation reviews with other internal or external reviews of schools. ACCPAS will do everything possible to help institutions and programs maintain a reasonable evaluation load and avoid duplication of effort.

The National Office staff will facilitate consolidation or coordination consistent with ACCPAS procedures. Requests in this regard should be made as early as possible in the application process. Specific protocols for each such consolidation or coordination must be approved in advance of the visit by the ACCPAS Executive Director.

## **Evaluation Calendar and Sample Schedule**

Special attention is drawn to the **Evaluation Calendar** (*see page I-20*) and to the **Sample Institutional Schedule and Checklist: Preparation for On-Site Visit** (*see page I-21*).

## **Program Requirements**

ACCPAS will grant accreditation or renewal of accreditation only when every community or precollegiate education program in the arts offered by an applicant institution or an administrative unit thereof meets the standards and guidelines of ACCPAS. This provision applies to all programs of an institution demonstrating objectives consistent with the ACCPAS standards. The particular administrative structure used to manage curricula in multipurpose institutions has no effect on the applicability of this rule. In other words, an applicant school must include all music, dance, theatre, visual arts (fine arts, design, media, film/video, etc.), and creative writing programs in its application. ACCPAS accreditation includes a review of all arts programs offered, not individual arts programs of the institution.

## **Terminology**

The term *school* is used to designate the entire community or precollegiate program being reviewed for accreditation. Thus, *school* may refer to free-standing institutions or to departments or schools that are part of larger institutions, or to programs administered by two or more administrative units. Please focus on the structure of the applicant school, not the general terminology used in the accreditation process.

*Community* arts schools offer programs of arts study for children, youth, and adults, in the institution's local community. These range from early childhood programs to private instruction to large institutionalized programs with specialized professional faculty and administration. Normally, these schools do not offer elementary, middle, or high school studies that include general education.

*Precollegiate* arts schools may offer elementary, middle school, or secondary education; the high school diploma; or the arts component of a program that meets elementary/secondary education or high school diploma requirements of the states or other governing entities.

## **FUNDAMENTAL POLICIES**

### **ACCPAS Handbook**

The ACCPAS *Handbook* contains all Standards and Guidelines used in the accreditation process. It is the only statement of operational and program requirements for accreditation. ACCPAS Standards and Guidelines are established by the Council of Arts Accrediting Associations (CAAA) in consultation with the field of community arts schools and precollege arts programs, including the National Guild of Community Schools of the Arts and the International Network of Schools for the Advancement of Arts Education. The *Handbook* is published every two years; addenda reflecting accreditation action may be published in alternate years. Commission decisions are made using the *Handbook* and any addenda current at each ACCPAS Commission meeting with due consideration to avoid *ex post facto* actions. The Self-Study, the Visitors' Report, and other accreditation documents are best prepared with constant reference to the *Handbook* and any current addenda.

### **Confidentiality**

Commission members of ACCPAS, visitors, and staff treat as confidential all information about institutions and programs reviewed and all discussions and decisions made in connection with the review. ACCPAS considers all material generated for the accreditation review by the program and by

ACCPAS as confidential. However, ACCPAS encourages appropriate dissemination within the institution. The Self-Study document is considered to be the property of the institution. For further information, see ACCPAS *Handbook*, “Rules of Practice and Procedure.”

### **The Accreditation Role of the ACCPAS Staff**

The ACCPAS staff manages the accreditation process, and ensures that all procedures, policies, and operations established by CAAA and ACCPAS are carried out fairly and in accordance with ACCPAS practice. The staff does not engage in accreditation evaluations of institutions or programs, nor does the staff take overt responsibility for operating the accreditation process at specific institutions. However, the staff is responsible for providing consultative services when requested to do so by institutions and programs. The staff is also involved extensively in the development of literature, workshops, and other services to assist institutions in structuring their own uses of requisite accreditation standards and procedures.

Each member of the ACCPAS staff avoids conflicts of interest in the accreditation process by declining to (a) act inconsistently among accredited and applicant institutions; (b) make unilateral accreditation personnel decisions affecting any institution where the staff member was a student or employee; (c) direct institutions and programs concerning internal policy decisions; (d) make definitive judgments or promises concerning acceptability of the content of documents submitted for Commission review; (e) accept positions on boards, councils, or development groups associated with specific institutions of higher education; (f) accept personal remuneration, gratuities, or favors of any kind for services associated with the accreditation process.

### **Focus**

While accreditation is a process with numerous procedural elements, the focus should be on the content and substance of the arts disciplines as addressed by each school’s specific set of missions, goals, and objectives for teaching, learning, creative work, and performance.

### **Accreditation and Institutional Autonomy**

CAAA has established standards for ACCPAS accreditation that are applied only at the invitation of institutions. The standards provide benchmarks for reviewing the extent to which operational, curricular, and evaluative functions associated with particular programs and areas of study are being fulfilled.

As they evolve, standards for accreditation used by ACCPAS are designed to allow considerable variation within broad principles applicable to community and precollege arts schools. Failure to meet the exact provisions of a specific standard will not preclude accreditation if it can be shown that artistic, intellectual, educational, and developmental functions indicated by the standard are and can continue to be fulfilled by appropriate means.

Standards used by ACCPAS are applied with profound respect for the rights and responsibilities of schools to identify, designate, and control (a) their missions, goals, and objectives; (b) artistic, educational, and philosophical principles and methodologies used to pursue functions implicit in their various missions, goals, and objectives; (c) specific repertoires, texts, and other teaching materials used for study and presentation; (d) specific personnel choices, staffing configurations, and other operational decisions; and (e) content and methodologies of tests, evaluations, and assessments.

## **Observers with Visiting Teams**

On rare occasions, observers will be permitted to accompany ACCPAS visiting teams only if (a) a required governmental or educational function is being served by the observer(s), (b) the presence of the observer(s) has been agreed upon by the institution and the ACCPAS Executive Director, and (c) there is a written protocol establishing purposes and conditions for the presence of the observer(s). All observers must agree in writing to protect the confidentiality required in ACCPAS policies and procedures and to observe ACCPAS policies regarding conflict of interest. Observers are not official members of an ACCPAS visiting team and therefore have no role in the preparation of any part of the ACCPAS Visitors' Report.

## **Questions, Anxieties, Malfunctions**

The ACCPAS National Office staff should be contacted without delay whenever information is needed or if a concern exists about any aspect of the accreditation effort. With teamwork, the vast majority of problems can be resolved quickly and simply. The ACCPAS National Office telephone number is (703) 437-0700; the facsimile number is (703) 437-6312; e-mail is info@arts-accredit.org.

## **THE NOTICE OF INTENTION TO APPLY FORM**

**One copy of this form should be submitted one to two years before the on-site visit; however, the *Notice of Intention to Apply* must be received in the ACCPAS National Office no later than:**

**June 1**  
**for Commission action in January**  
**of the second calendar year after submission**

## **SELF-STUDY**

### **The Self-Study Process**

Self-Study should be a continuing process. Whether the Self-Study is used solely for accreditation or for other purposes, individuals involved with the school analyze resources and effectiveness in fulfilling stated mission, goals, and objectives.

**In a Self-Study, the faculty, administration, and governing bodies declare what they want the school to be and make their own appraisal of its present condition and future potential. The goal of the process should be to understand, evaluate, and improve, not merely to defend what already exists.**

The fact that it precedes an evaluation visit gives added impetus to the Self-Study, and the views of the visiting evaluators should sharpen its impact.

The Self-Study is the part of the ACCPAS evaluation that should have primary importance for the institution. Its benefits are proportional to the incisiveness of the inquiry and to the attitude with which it is approached. A well-conducted Self-Study should result in a renewed common effort to develop and improve the school as a whole.

## **Developing the Self-Study**

Because schools are quite different from one another, situations change over time, and external influences and internal conditions vary, many approaches to Self-Study are possible for institutions within the framework provided by ACCPAS. In making decisions regarding the most appropriate approaches to be used, a school should consider the following:

1. The Self-Study process chosen should involve as many individuals as possible who are engaged in the work of the school. It is essential that the faculty be involved in the process of Self-Study in a manner and on a schedule consistent with the organizational structure of the school.
2. The approach selected should be attuned to the current order of institutional priorities. To the extent possible, important internal priorities and problems should not be set aside while the accreditation review is underway.
3. The approach selected should use recent or current institutional research or self-evaluation.
4. The approach selected must be sufficiently general and carried out with appropriate depth and access to basic information so that ACCPAS can fulfill its basic function of accountability. This provides a means through which the school's programs can be justified according to its stated mission, goals, and objectives. To the fullest extent possible, the process should focus on artistic and educational results, and the implications of these results for the future of the school's programs, procedures, and processes concerned. In this way, the evidence of institutional effectiveness is used to improve the programs and processes on a continuing basis.
5. The approach used should yield a readable, concise, but substantive Self-Study document that can be used as a basis for (a) internal planning by faculty members, administrators, trustees, and others and (b) the use of ACCPAS visiting evaluators and Commissioners. The Self-Study document should go beyond mere description and dwell primarily on analysis, interpretation, and projection.
6. One of the goals of the Self-Study process should be to foster continuous analysis and planning at the institution. What happens in the long term after ACCPAS has completed its immediate work is as important as the accountability and short-range improvement aspects of the process.

## **Organizing the Self-Study**

Only general principles for conducting the Self-Study can be given, since the detailed organization and application must fit the circumstances and personnel of the school. In developing the project, the writers should keep these points in mind:

1. The authority and office of the chief school executive are essential to the success of the whole project. The executive's role is to keep maximum emphasis on the project, to stimulate the project without dominating it, and to see that the results are translated into immediate action and/or long-range plans. In most cases, the chief school executive will serve as the principal coordinator of the project with responsibilities for planning the work, holding it in balance, suggesting new approaches, and editing the final report.

Many institutions will find it useful to develop a steering committee with the school executive or a designee serving as the chair. In any case, the principal coordinator is the key person in the enterprise. In larger institutions, the task of the coordinator—with its demands on time, energy, intelligence, and tact—is a major assignment, possibly calling for special recognition and/or reduction of other job responsibilities.

2. Because a Self-Study is an analytical project that addresses the responsibilities of faculty, administration, students, parents, the governing board, and so forth, each constituency should be involved as appropriate to the goals for Self-Study and the process chosen.
3. The Self-Study should be organized so that the work represents the entire school. It is important that the Self-Study bring the school into focus, emphasize relationships among as well as results within various sub-units, and instigate healthy cross-fertilization of ideas. The standards of ACCPAS should serve as references and departure points for this process.
4. A definite timetable should be adopted. This timetable should be realistic, and the coordinator of the Self-Study should insist on maintaining it.

For example, after considering the ACCPAS evaluation calendar, set a publication date for the Self-Study of at least five weeks before the evaluation team is due to arrive so that the text can be in the hands of the visiting evaluators four weeks before the visit. Having determined the finish date, allow two weeks preceding that for final editing and duplicating. Then work back toward the beginning, allowing the necessary intervals for each stage.

In estimating time allowances, remember that the Self-Study process is a major undertaking. The Self-Study process is and how many people will be involved. The Self-Study must deal with the separate aspects of the school's life, but it must go beyond them in its concern with their relationships. It must deal with overall educational impact as well as with the efficiency of each of the component parts. If this procedure is to be carried out effectively, an appropriate amount of time must be budgeted.

5. The Self-Study should provide the basis for future action. New thinking, new patterns, new proposals, and, probably, new unity will emerge during the process. The institution should see that each proposal is channeled in the proper direction and consistently acted upon.

### **Custom Self-Studies**

The standard ACCPAS Self-Study format is provided in Part II of these *Procedures*. However, schools may wish to develop Self-Study procedures and documents based on specific needs and agendas. The ACCPAS Executive Director or a staff designee will work with the school to develop a Self-Study that meets its needs and satisfies the needs of the ACCPAS.

**The final plan and outline for a custom Self-Study must be approved by the Executive Director of ACCPAS.**

Planning for custom Self-Studies should begin at least two years before the site visit date. Normally, one or more on-site staff consultations will be required.

### **Electronic Storage and Future Revisions**

The ACCPAS Self-Study format is designed to facilitate electronic storage and updating. Institutions are encouraged to keep these possibilities in mind as the specific text is created. Use of excerpts for other purposes and keeping an updated version can save time and energy in both ACCPAS and other contexts.

## FILING APPLICATION MATERIALS

### The following materials are sent to ACCPAS:

- **The Application Form** — four copies, plus one additional copy for each discipline being offered at the school, should be submitted with the copies of the Self-Study.
- **The Application Fee** — according to the ACCPAS Fee Schedule current at the time of evaluation (see <https://accpas.arts-accredit.org/accreditation/general-information/dues-fees/> for current fee schedule).

All accredited institutions will be invoiced for the application fee during the month of August of the academic year in which they are to be reviewed. All potential accredited institutions should forward the application fee with the copies of the Self-Study and Application Form.

Institutions seeking simultaneous accreditation of degree-granting programs and non-degree-granting community education programs should be aware of special fee requirements.

- **The Current Institutional Catalogue(s) and Supportive Material** — four copies, plus one additional copy for each discipline being offered at the school, of each catalogue and supportive material should be submitted. *[Note: Please do not submit video tapes with your Self-Study. The Commission is not able to view video tapes during its deliberations.]*
- **The Self-Study Document** — four complete copies, plus one additional copy for each discipline being offered at the school, should be submitted. Pre-punched photocopies of the catalogue pages containing significant information relating to the school and its programs (e.g., dance, music, theatre, visual arts, or creative writing course listings; curricular patterns; tuition fees; graduation requirements, if applicable) may be included in the Self-Study behind the school's analysis of a specific area. Such information may serve to clarify and/or expand the school's analysis.

### Please Note:

**All materials submitted to ACCPAS in support of the application should be prepared as follows:**

Use only standard 8½ x 11-inch paper, punched to fit in a standard three-ring notebook (i.e., center of the holes should measure 1¼, 5½, and 9¾ inches from the bottom of the page). Supporting documents (e.g., handbooks, promotional materials), exclusive of bound institutional catalogues, should be either punched or enclosed in labeled, unsealed, manila envelopes (pre-punched to fit into a three-ring binder).

Please **do not** use envelopes for Appendices I, II, or III. These should be hole-punched and appended to the Self-Study document.

**For complete information regarding the preparation of materials, see *Procedures for Accreditation – Part II: The ACCPAS Self-Study Document*, “Preparation Guidelines,” page II-3.**

**Copies of the Application Form, Self-Study document, Catalogue(s), and Supportive Materials are due in the ACCPAS National Office at least four weeks before the visit. ACCPAS will notify the institution in writing regarding receipt of materials and, if applicable, additional materials due.**

The following materials are sent by the institution to each visiting evaluator as early as possible. These must arrive at least four weeks before the visit so that the Visitors have ample time for study and reflection before arrival.

- **The Self-Study Document** — one copy (see *Procedures for Accreditation – Part II: The ACCPAS Self-Study Document*, “ACCPAS Visitors’ Copies,” page II-4)
- **The Institutional Catalogue(s) and Supportive Material** — one copy

**Please Note:**

Visits may be postponed or canceled at the prerogative of the Executive Director of ACCPAS after consultation with the visiting team if satisfactory materials are not available to the visiting team at least four weeks before the visit.

## **SELECTION OF THE VISITING EVALUATORS**

### **ACCPAS Nomination and Institutional Preference**

Upon receipt of the *Notice of Intention to Apply* form, the Executive Director of ACCPAS nominates a proposed slate of visiting evaluators who have completed intensive orientation and training.

Nominations are based on the backgrounds and experience of the evaluators in relation to the stated purposes and characteristics of the institution. The slate normally includes nominees affiliated with institutions of various types and sizes. This practice is based on the interrelationship that exists among all schools and programs. It reflects ACCPAS policies requiring that all evaluators base their judgments on ACCPAS standards as related to the visited school’s mission, not on a comparison of the visited school with the evaluators’ institutions or against any other criteria. The Executive Director will consider institutional requests of a general nature such as areas of specialization but will not consider requests for specific individuals to comprise the evaluation team. The suggestion of a specific individual by institutional representatives will cause that individual to be disqualified.

The slate shall include separate nominations for team chair and member(s) of the visitation team.

Following receipt of this slate, the institution indicates an order of preference and whether any suggested evaluators are unacceptable, taking special note of ACCPAS policies concerning conflict of interest.

### **Nomination and Invitation Policies**

Within ACCPAS guidelines, the institution may determine the size of the visiting team and the length of the site visit. Institutions wishing to expand the number of visitors or the number of days beyond ACCPAS minimum requirements should contact the ACCPAS Executive Director.

At least two evaluators, with at least one for each arts discipline offered (dance, music, theatre, visual arts, creative writing), are required for two full days of program review for all institutions. However, in community schools, if the size of a disciplinary program is small and the purposes are at elementary or introductory level, the institution may seek a reduction in team size as long as at least one member

of the team has experience in administering programs in that discipline. Normally, a three- or four-day visit is scheduled in order to accommodate orientation activities, two days of school and program review, and concluding and report drafting activities. Exceptions to the number of visitors may be made for schools with small programs in a specific art form.

Applicant degree-granting institutions seeking a separate accreditation listing of programs offered by affiliated community or precollegiate schools will be evaluated by a team comprising one or more persons in addition to the team assigned to the degree-granting component.

The number of visitors and the number of visitation days may be increased as requested by the institution or required for community or precollegiate schools with large programs or with multi-campus programs or for large/complex programs. In these cases, the number of visiting evaluators or the number of days for the visitation shall be determined in consultation with the Executive Director of ACCPAS.

### **Conflict-of-Interest Policies**

Institutional representatives and ACCPAS visiting evaluators are expected to avoid any conflict of interest. Conflicts that arise may be based on personal association, past or projected affiliations, past or current financial relationships, geographic proximity, or have other causes. Questions concerning conflicts of interest should be referred to the ACCPAS Executive Director. As an example of ACCPAS's conflict-of-interest approach, the Executive Director will not knowingly nominate or assign as a visiting evaluator a person:

- who is from the same state or the immediate region of the institution to be visited;
- who has expressed public opinions about the accreditability of the school, or ideological views about the institutional type;
- who was or is a potential employee of the institution;
- who was or is a student at the institution;
- who has a family member with a student, faculty, administrative, trustee, or similar relationship with the institution; or
- who has served or will serve as an independent consultant to the institution during the last two or next two calendar years.

Visitors and institutional representatives are formally required to avoid conflict of interest in the formation of ACCPAS visiting teams.

### **Invitation of Visiting Evaluators**

After receiving the institution's order of preference, the Executive Director of ACCPAS will invite specific visiting evaluators and inform the institution of the visitors invited. The process of invitation and response is continued until the team is completed.

At least one member of each assigned visiting team shall not be a member of the ACCPAS Commission that will review the application.

## SELECTION OF THE VISIT DATE

After the team is confirmed, the dates of the visit are arranged by the visiting evaluators and the executive of the applicant school. The minimum visit period is two full working days. Evaluators are requested to arrive the evening before the first day of the visit and to leave no sooner than the evening following the second day of the visit. Time may be extended due to the size and scope of the institution's program. Whatever schedule is determined, all team members are to be present the entire time. Further details are provided in the following section ("Preparations for the Visit").

Visitations may be scheduled concurrently with those of other accrediting agencies if applicable and if requested. Visits shall not be scheduled during examination periods.

**The following visitation periods are recommended:**

**September 15 – May 1**  
**for Commission action in January**

**Institutions wishing to use other schedules should contact the ACCPAS National Office staff.**

When specific dates for the visit have been fixed, the institution shall notify the ACCPAS National Office of the visit dates.

## PREPARATIONS FOR THE VISIT

Working together, the visiting team and representatives of the school develop the overall visit schedule, including lists of interviews, evaluations, auditions, rehearsals, and appointments. Normally, primary contact is between the team chair and the chief school executive. Social engagements for team members or the team as a whole are to be avoided. A typical visit agenda is provided below as a basis for developing specific schedules tailored to the needs of each institution.

### **Travel and Preparation Day**

- ρ Team arrival
- ρ Initial team meeting
- ρ Orientation meeting with chief school executive, and/or institutional representatives
- ρ Detailed planning session — logistics and content

### **First Day**

- ρ Review of facilities and equipment
- ρ Interviews, classes, auditions, rehearsals, exhibitions, and appointments
- ρ Team meeting (review, discuss, plan)

### **Second Day**

- ρ Interviews, classes, auditions, rehearsals, exhibitions, and appointments
- ρ Team meeting (review findings, reach consensus, prepare for exit interviews)

### **Late Afternoon of the Second Day or Morning of the Third Day**

- ρ Outline contents of Visitors' Report
- ρ Agree on arrangements and schedules to complete the Visitors' Report
- ρ Exit interviews with executive and other appropriate administrators and representatives
- ρ Leave the institution

Designated representatives of the institution schedule all aspects of the visit with institutional personnel and make appropriate logistics arrangements such as hotel accommodations and on-site travel arrangements. They advise the team of these arrangements in advance of arrival. Team members must have (a) single rooms, all at one location, and (b) secure, on-campus facilities for meeting in conference.

The chief school executive orients all involved regarding the purpose, scope, and character of the ACCPAS visit and distributes to faculty and appropriate administrators copies of the documents titled (a) ACCPAS *Information*, and (b) ACCPAS *Accreditation Information for Faculty*. These documents are available on the ACCPAS Web site. The chief school executive is responsible for keeping appropriate administrators, faculty, students, and staff informed of the accreditation process and its progress.

#### **Please Note:**

ACCPAS will forward one set of accreditation action materials (Visitors' Report and Commission action letter) to the school executive(s) and one set to the Chief Executive Officer/President/Board Chairman of the applicant institution. If the school is part of a larger institution or system, it is the responsibility of the school executive(s) to consult with appropriate academic and executive officers at the institution and thus establish a local distribution list and system for these and any subsequent materials.

All members of the team are responsible for (a) making their own transportation arrangements to and from the institution and (b) advising the team chair and institutional representatives of their schedule. Team members travel as inexpensively as possible and, when feasible, schedule travel on days that allow the greatest savings. Saturday night stay-overs should be discussed in advance with the chief executive.

All team members gain comprehensive understanding of the school through in-depth analysis of the Self-Study and supportive materials. Team members also must refamiliarize themselves with the ACCPAS *Handbook* and Parts I, II, and III of the *Procedures for Accreditation*. The team informs the National Office if the Self-Study and other materials are not received at least four weeks before the visit, or if at any time it appears that the institution is not or will not be prepared for the visit.

The team chair makes specific observation, interview, and writing assignments in consultation with other team members.

Immediately prior to the visit, the chief school executive ensures that arrangements have been made to provide efficient access to student records and guidelines; program descriptions; and compilations of performance and exhibition programs. For pre-collegiate schools, access is provided to transcripts, lists of graduates, projects, and course syllabi. Further, the school executive ensures that there is an opportunity for the visiting team to sample the work of student artists in each arts discipline offered. Work by students at various levels should be presented.

Section 438(b)(1)(G) of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 stipulates that institutions may release, without threat of loss of federal funding, student records to “accrediting organizations in order to carry out their accrediting functions.”

## THE VISIT

The primary purpose of the visit is to develop an external perspective on the work of the school. This perspective is considered by ACCPAS along with (a) materials submitted by the institution and (b) Standards as published in the *Handbook*. The visiting evaluators shall be afforded an opportunity to visit and consider all arts programs offered by the institution irrespective of where they are administered.

During the course of the visit, as appropriate to the goals of the school, the evaluators do the following:

- Observe classes, studios, rehearsals, and lessons particularly in the arts disciplines offered (*faculty should be advised that visitors may not stay for the entire session*)
- Interview faculty, arts and general administrators, students/parents, and board members
- Hear/see students perform alone and in groups, and review student work in the arts disciplines at various levels offered
- Inspect facilities and equipment
- Examine libraries and information resources (books, periodicals, scores, slides, recordings, information technologies, music, etc.)
- Examine items such as performance tapes and original works or copies thereof, submitted in fulfillment of requirements
- View Web sites applicable to the school
- Examine student records
- For pre-collegiate schools, examine transcripts or records of achievement, and inspect records of students’ arts examinations and repertory
- Consider the budget applicable to the school and its arts programs

These activities provide information that enables the visitors to complete a report that:

- Compares visitors’ impressions of conditions, evaluations, and projections with those described in the Self-Study
- Identifies the extent to which there appears to be compliance with standards for ACCPAS accreditation
- Recommends specific improvements
- Makes suggestions concerning opportunities or problems not yet apparent

All involved in the visit are expected to (a) maintain a professional, collegial, peer-review approach; (b) keep the process focused on the school, its programs, and its effectiveness; (c) contribute to the factual accuracy of the Visitors’ Report; and (d) cause as little disruption as possible to the artistic and educational routine of the school.

Additional perspectives on the visit, the work of visiting evaluators, and the Visitors’ Report format are found in ***Procedures for Accreditation – Part III: Instructions for Visiting Evaluators***.

## PROCEDURES PRIOR TO COMMISSION ACTION

### ACCPAS Visitors' Report

Immediately following the visit, the visiting evaluators prepare a report in two parts according to ACCPAS guidelines. Part I is prepared for the institution and ACCPAS. Part II is prepared for the ACCPAS only.

**The Visitors' Report must be received in the National Office of ACCPAS:**

**No later than six weeks after the visit.**

The Visitors' Report may be submitted electronically.

The National Office sends to the applicant a copy of Part I of the Visitors' Report marked: "ACCPAS Visitors' Report — For Internal Distribution at the Discretion of the Chief School Executive — Any Optional Response Due *(date)*." The school executive distributes the report according to the plan developed by the institution.

### Optional Response to the Visitors' Report

The institution has the **option** of responding to the Visitors' Report with respect to (a) errors of fact, (b) conclusions based upon such errors, and (c) documented changes made in the program since the visit.

**Any Optional Response should be submitted to the National Office of ACCPAS according to the following schedule:**

**No later than four weeks after receipt of the Visitors' Report**  
**for Commission action in January**

Procedures for filing the **Optional Response** will be provided with the copy of the Visitor's Report sent to the institution.

### Withdrawal of the Application for Accreditation

An application for accreditation may be withdrawn at any time prior to the decision of ACCPAS, without refund of fee or release of responsibility to reimburse CAAA for applicable expenses, including those of the visiting evaluators.

## REVIEW OF THE APPLICATION BY ACCPAS

ACCPAS meets annually in January by teleconference to review application materials, all supporting documentation, Visitors' Reports, and Optional Responses

Following the meetings, a written communication describing ACCPAS action based on the application materials—(a) the institution's Self-Study, (b) the Visitors' Report and, if applicable, (c) the institution's Optional Response—is transmitted to the school executive(s) and if applicable to

the chief executive officer of the applicant institution or the chair of the school's board. The letter of transmittal will contain a clear statement of the official accreditation action and may contain recommendations. However, the text of the letter distinguishes between accreditation actions and other matters.

**Possible Commission Actions on First-time Applications for Accreditation:**

- o The institution is approved for accreditation for a period of five years.
- o The institution is approved for accreditation for a period of five years with a request for one or more progress reports indicating the correction of minor deficiencies as outlined by the Commission.
- o Action on the application of the institution is deferred pending one or more of the following:
  - ◆ Receipt of additional information necessary to determine whether the institution meets ACCPAS Standards
  - ◆ Response to the stated concerns of the Commission about failure to meet ACCPAS Standards
  - ◆ Response indicating the correction of deficiencies as outlined by the Commission

*(See next section entitled "Further Explanation of Deferral.")*

**Responses may be requested in the form of written submissions.**

- o The application for accreditation is denied with notice of rights to request reconsideration or to appeal.

**Possible Commission Actions on Applications for Renewal of Accreditation:**

- o The institution with accreditation is continued in good standing for a period of ten years.
- o The institution with accreditation is continued in good standing for a period of ten years with a request for one or more progress reports indicating the correction of minor deficiencies as outlined by ACCPAS.
- o Accreditation of the institution is continued, but action on the application of the institution for accreditation or renewal of accreditation is deferred pending one or more of the following:
  - ◆ Receipt of additional information necessary to determine whether the institution meets ACCPAS Standards
  - ◆ Response to stated concerns of ACCPAS about failure to meet ACCPAS Standards
  - ◆ Response indicating the correction of deficiencies as outlined by ACCPAS

*(See next section entitled "Further Explanation of Deferral.")*

**Responses may be requested in the form of written submissions.**

- o The institution is issued a show-cause statement with regard to administrative warning.

- o The institution is given an administrative warning.
- o The institution is placed on probation with notice of right to request reconsideration.
- o The application for renewal of accreditation is denied with notice of rights to request reconsideration or to appeal.

**The following policies and procedures apply as appropriate to Commission motions regarding accreditation and renewal of accreditation:**

### **Approval**

- Notice of accreditation or renewal of accreditation is accompanied by a brief questionnaire that provides the institution with an opportunity to evaluate the entire accreditation process. Filing instructions are provided with the questionnaire.
- Institutions receiving accreditation or renewal of accreditation should review sections of ACCPAS “Rules of Practice and Procedure” that pertain to publication of accreditation actions, printed recognition of accreditation, and disclosure and confidentiality (see ACCPAS *Handbook*).
- Progress reports may be requested at any time or periodically throughout the term of accreditation.

### **Deferral, Administrative Warning**

*(See next section entitled “Further Explanation of Deferral” and ACCPAS Handbook, Rules, Article III, “Administrative Warning Status.”)*

- Deferral actions and reports and administrative warning actions and reports each are structured within specific time periods. The first deferral period is normally one year. Administrative warning periods extend from one to twelve months.
- If the application is deferred, the institution responds in writing to ACCPAS as directed, and the application is reconsidered by ACCPAS at the specified regular meeting following the response. The same process applies to administrative warning.

### **Probation, Denial**

- In cases of probation or several consecutive deferrals of action on the application, a new Self-Study and/or visit may be required.
- If accreditation or renewal of accreditation is denied, a new Self-Study and visit will be required upon reapplication.

### **Personal Appearances**

- When circumstances arise that cannot be clarified through written communications, the chief executive of an applicant institution may request of the Executive Director of ACCPAS an appointment with ACCPAS to discuss pending ACCPAS action.
- ACCPAS may request an appearance by a school executive to clarify points relevant to an application.

## **FURTHER EXPLANATION OF DEFERRAL**

In the accreditation process, an accrediting Commission often finds a situation in which an institution cannot be granted initial accreditation or renewal of accreditation on the basis of evidence presented. This may be because the institution clearly does not meet the standards as outlined in the ACCPAS *Handbook*, or because sufficient information has not been provided.

Rather than deny accreditation or place the institution on probation, the Commission defers any action until certain conditions are met that clarify the situation and/or bring the institution into compliance. Deferral is not a negative action, but rather a mechanism for dialogue between the Commission and an institution. The deferral concept is intended to prevent short review cycles and to obviate the need for other review procedures that would be expensive to the institution.

Accredited institutions whose applications are deferred continue their current accreditation status and maintain all rights and responsibilities of accreditation. Deferral does not mean that an institution has lost its accreditation or its listing in the CAAA/ACCPAS *Directory*. Deferral simply indicates that the institution has one or more issues that need to be addressed, reviewed, or explained in more detail before the institution's application can be approved.

There is no public notice of deferral. Letters reporting accreditation actions are sent only to the school executive(s) and to the chief executive officer of the institution. The ACCPAS National Office staff does not discuss an institution's status or application with anyone other than the school executive or other designated administrative officials of the institution.

## **PROCEDURES REGARDING REVIEW OF ACCREDITATION DECISIONS**

When an action of the Commission causes a serious disagreement that cannot be resolved through normal ACCPAS procedures, the institution and the individuals therein follow, as appropriate, one of the following sections of the ACCPAS "Rules of Practice and Procedure" (see ACCPAS *Handbook*): "Requests for Reconsideration of ACCPAS Accreditation Actions" or "Appeals of Adverse Decisions Concerning Accreditation."

## **THE REACCREDITATION CYCLE**

After accreditation is granted for the first time, reevaluation is scheduled in five years.

For continuing accreditation, reevaluation normally occurs on a ten-year cycle.

Neither the five-year nor the ten-year review period is extended because of deferred actions or requests for progress reports.

For cause, the Commission has the right to require a review and/or visit at any time.

Postponement may be granted for cause. If postponement seems advisable, contact the ACCPAS National Office.

## MAINTAINING ACCREDITED STATUS

Each accredited institution submits an annual report and pays an annual fee.

Accredited schools agree to maintain their programs in compliance with ACCPAS standards as they are developed and to participate in the continuing development of standards and guidelines.

If an institution wishes to add a new discipline or a new program on the same scale as those already listed by ACCPAS or to amend a previously approved and listed program substantially, a request for Plan Approval must be filed and approved before students are admitted into the new program. Procedures for Plan Approval may be obtained from the ACCPAS National Office. (*See ACCPAS Handbook, Rules of Practice and Procedure, "New Curricula: Plan Approval and Final Approval for Listing."*)

Institutions are required to gain prior approval of substantive changes occurring between regular accreditation visits (*for examples, see ACCPAS Handbook, Rules of Practice and Procedure, "Substantive Change"*).

Substantive changes to mission, goals, and objectives, as well as changes mentioned in the following paragraph, **must** be reviewed by the Commission before they are implemented.

If an accredited school proposes (a) to become affiliated with or become an integral part of another educational institution; (b) to implement substantial changes in the school's organization and administrative structure; (c) to make a change in ownership or a fundamental, comprehensive change of control; (d) to establish a branch campus offering programs eligible for accreditation by ACCPAS; or (e) to make arrangements for affiliative use of the institution's or school's name, the school must inform the Executive Director of ACCPAS and, prior to implementation, demonstrate to the Commission that changes will not affect compliance with accreditation standards.

# EVALUATION CALENDAR

## FOR COMMUNITY AND PRECOLLEGIATE SCHOOLS APPLYING FOR ACCREDITATION OR RENEWAL OF ACCREDITATION

ACTION	For Consideration at the Commission Meetings in January
<b>Notice of Intention to Apply* to the National Office</b> <i>(Please see note below)</i>	Two years before the visit [September 15 – May 1] and not later than June 1 for Commission review in January of the second calendar year after submission
<b>Self-Study Document, Institutional Catalogues, and Supportive Material to the Visiting Evaluators</b>	At least four weeks before the visit
<b>Application, Self-Study Document, Institutional Catalogues, and Supportive Material to the National Office</b>	At least four weeks before the visit
<b>Application Fee to the National Office</b>	<i>Accredited schools:</i> upon receipt of invoice <i>New applicants:</i> with Self-Study
<b>Visitation Period</b>	September 15 – May 1 (or as arranged)
<b>Visitors’ Report to the National Office</b>	Within six weeks of the visit
<b>Institution’s Optional “Correction of Factual Errors” in the Visitors’ Report to the National Office</b>	As early as possible and not later than four weeks after the Visitors’ Report is received
<b>Commission Meets</b>	Annually in January by teleconference
<b>Institution Notified of Commission Action</b>	Within four weeks after Commission action

**\*Please Note:**

For ACCPAS to provide the best and most efficient accreditation service, institutions should submit the NOTICE OF INTENTION TO APPLY form as early as possible within the time stipulated in the Evaluation Calendar. Early submission of this form allows the visiting team to be formalized without creating pressure on the evaluators’ schedules. Notices of Intention to Apply received after the deadline may be processed in the next evaluation cycle.

# SAMPLE INSTITUTIONAL SCHEDULE AND CHECKLIST: PREPARATION FOR ON-SITE VISIT

*Please feel free to use this sample schedule as a basis for developing the specific steps and schedule appropriate for your school.*

## PART I: INITIATION OF THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS

In order to be assured of an evaluation during the preferred time period, the institution should submit the *Notice of Intention to Apply* form two years prior to the projected date of the on-site visit; however, this form **must be received** in the ACCPAS National Office no later than June 1st for Commission action in January of the second calendar year after submission. First steps to initiate the accreditation process, establish a visiting team, and finalize the dates for the visit are:

- Submit “*Notice of Intention to Apply*” Form
- Receive Slate of Nominations for Evaluators
- Return Evaluator Preference
- Finalize Evaluation Team
- Finalize Visit Dates with the Evaluators
- Notify the ACCPAS National Office Staff of the Final Visit Dates

## PART II: THE SELF-STUDY AND PREPARATIONS FOR THE VISIT

**The following are guidelines only. An institution may wish to complete any of the following steps earlier than the timelines suggested.**

- MONTH 1:**
  - Formalize Basic Self-Study Purposes, Approach, Design, and Outline  
*(Seek approval from ACCPAS in special circumstances described herein)*
  - Assign a Self-Study Coordinator or Steering Committee
  - Make Data Collection, Analysis, and Writing Assignments
- MONTH 2:**
  - Begin Compiling and Writing the Self-Study
- MONTHS 3 – 5:**
  - Continue Self-Study, Continue Compilation
- MONTH 6:**
  - Continue Self-Study, Continue Compilation
  - Make Hotel Reservations for Evaluators
- MONTH 7:**
  - Continue Self-Study, Continue Compilation
- MONTH 8:**
  - Continue Self-Study, Continue Compilation
  - Make Arrangements to Present Student Work *(recitals, tapes, written work, etc.)*
- MONTH 9:**
  - Produce Preliminary Draft of Complete Self-Study and Seek Community Review of the Draft
- MONTH 10:**
  - Finalize and Polish Self-Study
  - Establish Basic Schedule with Chair of the Visiting Team
- MONTH 11:**
  - Forward Self-Study and Supportive Materials to Evaluators
  - Forward Self-Study, Supportive Materials, Application Form, and Application Fee *(if applicable)* to ACCPAS National Office
  - Confirm All Logistics of Visit with Evaluators
- MONTH 12:**
  - Complete All Schedules of Appointments and All Arrangements for Access to Transcripts, Student Work, etc.
  - Host On-Site Visit

