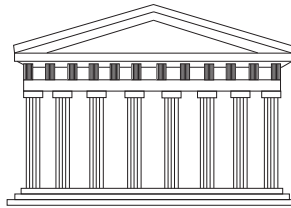


# **ACCREDITATION PROCEDURES**

**Schools of Public Health**

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**Public Health Programs  
Outside Schools of Public Health**



**CEPH**  
COUNCIL *on* EDUCATION  
*for* PUBLIC HEALTH

**Council on Education for Public Health  
Amended February 2008**

# ACCREDITATION PROCEDURES

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## Introduction

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The Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) is an independent agency, recognized by the US Department of Education (USDE) to accredit schools of public health and programs in public health, which are located in administrative settings other than schools of public health. These two categories of educational programs constitute CEPH's scope of recognition. In keeping with good accreditation practices, CEPH is responsible for notifying the US Secretary of Education of any change that would alter its scope of recognition or compliance with any of the criteria against which it is periodically reviewed for recognition.

The goal of the Council, a mission held in common with the schools and programs it accredits, is "to enhance health in human populations, through organized community effort." Its organizational focus is the improvement of health through the assurance of educational programs that prepare professional personnel to identify, prevent and solve community health problems. The Council seeks to:

1. promote quality in education for public health through a continuing process of self-evaluation by the schools and programs that seek accreditation;
2. assure the public that institutions offering accredited graduate instruction in public health have been evaluated and judged to meet standards essential to conduct such educational programs; and
3. encourage through periodic review, consultation, research, publication and other means improvements in the quality of education for public health.

CEPH is an autonomous organization that establishes its own accreditation policies. These are incorporated in two types of publications: the procedures manual, which establishes a fair and equitable process for accreditation review, and the criteria documents, which identify the standards by which schools and programs are evaluated. The procedures and criteria used by CEPH are adopted by its governing body, the CEPH Board of Councilors, after full review, discussion and comment by public health practitioners and educators.

The procedures are implemented by councilors, staff, and site visit teams after full explanation to individuals involved in the accreditation review activities. Procedural guidance is provided to school and program representatives through consultation with CEPH staff, to team chairpersons during orientation sessions, and to site visitors in training programs and executive sessions at the beginning of each site visit.

Evaluation of the CEPH accreditation review process is explained in the last section of this manual. Revisions in the procedures and criteria may be made on the basis of comments from school or program representatives and site team members, and upon the recommendations of recognition agencies in the accrediting community. Changing situations in education, in legislation and in the practice of public health may also necessitate revision. The procedures and criteria used by CEPH are evaluated periodically and may be modified after affected parties have been given an opportunity to review and comment upon any proposed change of a substantive nature. A major review and revision is scheduled approximately every five years or more frequently as needed.

## **CEPH Board of Councilors**

The Board of Councilors is the 10-member decision-making body of the CEPH. As an independent body, the board is solely responsible for adopting criteria by which schools and programs are evaluated, for establishing policies and procedures, for making accreditation decisions, and for managing the business of the corporation. Board members are appointed by the agency's two corporate sponsors, the American Public Health Association (APHA), a professional membership organization, and the Association of Schools of Public Health (ASPH), an association of schools. The agency maintains and makes publicly available a list of current board members including their names, academic degrees, employer and organizational affiliations. Curriculum vitae for councilors and principal staff are available on request. For further information on the Board of Councilors or the history of CEPH visit [www.ceph.org](http://www.ceph.org).

## Uses of this Manual

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This publication describes the procedures used by the Council in the accreditation of schools and programs offering education in public health. It is intended for a variety of audiences:

- representatives of schools and programs that participate in the accreditation process or that may seek accreditation in the future and thus desire guidance about the review process and CEPH's expectations.
- members of site visit teams and Council consultants who have responsibilities for implementing the process.
- interested organizations, agencies and individuals who desire information about the accreditation practices of the Council.
- members of the general public who desire information about accreditation in public health and what a school or program must do to achieve that designation.

This manual should be used in conjunction with other documents that set forth CEPH's criteria for accreditation: *Criteria for Accreditation of Schools of Public Health, June 2005* and *Criteria for Accreditation of Public Health Programs, June 2005*. These documents identify the specific evaluation criteria. They address essential characteristics of a school or program and establish standards related to mission and goals, setting and organization, governance, resources, instructional programs, research activities, service activities, faculty, students, evaluation and self-study.

The procedures described in this manual are applicable for both school and program reviews and for all levels of accreditation decisions. The manual is designed to be equally useful to applicants seeking initial accreditation and to already-accredited schools and programs undergoing periodic reevaluation. For a brief overview of the entire accreditation process, see the "Checklist of Activities in an Accreditation Review" on pages 35 and 36.

## Initiating the Review Process

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### New Applicants

A school or program that is not accredited by CEPH begins the accreditation review process by submitting an application. The application process must also be completed by a school or program seeking a change in category. A school or program must submit a written application, addressed to the CEPH president, which summarizes the ability of the school or program to meet the accreditation criteria. The school or program should be able to present its qualifications in 15 pages or less. The written application must include:

1. a request to CEPH for future consultation regarding the review.
2. payment of the applicant fee as indicated in CEPH's schedule for accreditation support.
3. a request signed by the chief executive officer of the institution in which the school or program is located, inviting CEPH to initiate the accreditation process. The request should be cosigned by the chief administrative officer of the university unit in which the school or program is located and by the school dean or program director. In the case of a school or program that is sponsored by more than one institution, signatures must be obtained from the leadership at each institution.
4. documentation that the school or program has met the following eligibility requirements:
  - a. location in an institution that is regionally accredited (an applicant institution located outside the United States that is not eligible for regional accreditation must demonstrate a comparable external evaluation process);
  - b. an organizational structure with assigned primary responsibility for curriculum development, admission standards, faculty selection and retention, and fiscal planning;
  - c. a stated mission with supporting goals and measurable objectives;
  - d. a curriculum plan, consonant with CEPH criteria, with a timetable for implementation;
  - e. institutional commitment to the development of the school or program, including evidence of fiscal support;
  - f. policies and plans for recruitment and selection of faculty and students; and
  - g. evidence that the school or program has or will have graduated at least one class by the time of the site visit or within two years of the application, whichever comes first.

If the application is for a school of public health, then the applicant must meet the following additional eligibility requirements:

- h. have an independent structure and reporting mechanism that is equivalent to other professional schools or colleges within the university, as defined by Criterion 1.3;
- i. offer the MPH or equivalent professional degree programs in at least the five basic areas of public health knowledge, as outlined in Criterion 2.1, or provide specific plans and timeline



demonstrating that they will be in place with graduates in each program area at the time of the site visit or within two years of the application date, whichever comes first;

- j. have at least five full-time faculty who are trained and experienced in the discipline for each core concentration area offering a doctoral degree and at least three full-time faculty plus two full-time-equivalent faculty in core concentration areas offering only the MPH or equivalent professional degree by the time of the site visit or within two years of the application date, whichever comes first; and
- k. offer three doctoral degrees in public health disciplines, with students enrolled in all three and a graduate from at least one by the time of the site visit or within two years of the application date, whichever comes first.

An application may be submitted at any time. However, the CEPH Board of Councilors, which makes the determination, meets in the spring and fall. To expedite approval, applications should be submitted at least six weeks prior to the Council meeting. Meeting dates may be obtained from CEPH staff.

Once accepted as an applicant, a school or program must proceed toward accreditation. An applicant must schedule a CEPH consultation visit, attend an accreditation orientation workshop, and submit an acceptable self-study document to CEPH offices within two years of the date when accepted as an applicant; failure to do so will result in termination of applicant status. At any time during applicant status, a school or program may withdraw its application, on written notice to CEPH, and no further review activities will be conducted.

CEPH will consider applicant institutions located outside the United States; however, due to the variable nature and scope of international accreditation activities, such activity will be undertaken on a case-by-case basis. Prior to providing evidence of meeting the previously outlined eligibility requirements, international applicants must submit a written request for consideration. If accepted, the Council will require a staff member and/or Council member to conduct a consultation visit before inviting a full application.

## **Accredited Schools and Programs**

When accreditation is conferred, the Council designates a specific date through which that status is valid. Approximately two years before the end of the accreditation period, CEPH staff notifies the dean or director of the upcoming review and advises that the school or program should begin its self-study process. In the event a school or program does not wish to maintain its accreditation status, it should advise CEPH in writing, and no further review procedures will be scheduled.

All accredited schools and programs are expected to undergo periodic full evaluations, as described in subsequent sections of this manual.

## **Schools or Programs Seeking Change in Category**

The Board of Councilors will accommodate schools and programs seeking a different category of accreditation. The two categories of CEPH accreditation are a) schools of public health and b) programs in public health. A school or program in transition from one category to another, for whatever reason, must submit to the Council written notice of its intentions, including a description of the nature of the change, a timeline for implementation and any action taken or expected to be taken by the institution's administration or governing body. Accredited schools and programs seeking a change in category must also submit an application as outlined on page 4. Schools and programs making such a transition must undergo a full accreditation review using the appropriate criteria within two years of notifying the Council or by the expiration of the current accreditation term, whichever occurs first. If the school or program fails to give notice or is unable to do so, the procedures related to changes that occur after award of accreditation described on page 23 will prevail.

## **Timetable for Review**

A suggested timetable for review is shown on page 34. The time necessary to pursue initial accreditation is approximately the same as for periodic reevaluation. Because advance notice is not made by CEPH for an initial review, the minimum time may be less than that shown in the timetable.

Review dates are determined in consultation with CEPH staff as soon as possible after a mutual decision to proceed with the review. Dates will be established for consultation, submission of the preliminary self-study document, submission of the final self-study document, and for the site visit. Major steps in the review process are presented on pages 35 and 36 in checklist form.

## **Cost of Accreditation Review**

The Council has established fees for consultation, the accreditation review, and continuing support; the support schedule is published separately and is available upon request. Fees differ for schools, programs, and collaborative organizational models and by duration of the visit. Schools and programs are expected to reimburse CEPH for travel and expenses for site visit teams, site visit coordinators and consultants.

## **Consultation to Schools and Programs**

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CEPH staff is available to provide procedural consultation to any school or program seeking accreditation. While much guidance about CEPH policies, procedures and criteria can be obtained via telephone discussions and written communications, on-campus visits by CEPH staff also can be very helpful in understanding the review process and interpreting the criteria used for evaluation. Schools and programs seeking first-time accreditation by CEPH, accredited programs or schools in transition to another accreditation category, and international applicants are required to seek on-site consultation from CEPH. Consultation also is available to already accredited schools and programs and especially those that are undergoing substantive transition in terms of organization, accreditation category or curriculum.

CEPH publications, including brochures and manuals describing CEPH procedures and criteria, are available on request or may be accessed through CEPH's website: [www.ceph.org](http://www.ceph.org). Staff is pleased to distribute single copies of these documents. CEPH does not charge for its publications and cannot respond to requests for multiple copies. However, the documents are not copyrighted, and constituents may make multiple photocopies as needed.

### **Schools and Programs Under Review**

Upon request, a CEPH staff member may visit a school or program early in the review process to discuss CEPH policies, procedures and criteria and to answer questions of administrators, faculty, students and others who will be involved in the self-study process. An offer of consultation is made in the letter of notification preceding the review. Throughout the review process, CEPH staff are available for telephone, written or personal consultation concerning the procedures and criteria.

### **Developing Schools and Programs**

An on-site consultation visit by a CEPH staff member is required of all new applicants, although a school or program in any stage of development may request consultation as well. The visit focuses on CEPH accreditation criteria and procedures. Prearranged visits to CEPH offices are encouraged, or arrangements can be made for staff to visit academic units. Other recently established schools and programs may be especially helpful to new schools and programs in the planning and early implementation stages of development. Self-study documents submitted to CEPH offices by each school and program are available for public review.

### **Collaborative Schools and Programs**

Schools and programs that are sponsored by more than one institution of higher education but operated as a single organizational unit are eligible to seek accreditation as a single school or program. Collaboration, cooperation and formal affiliation among educational institutions may occur among schools and programs that are not operated as a single organizational unit, and these schools and programs are expected to pursue independent review and separate accreditation. Those that are operated as a single organizational unit are eligible to seek accreditation under CEPH's provisions for collaborative organizational models. Collaborative organizational models are evaluated against the same set of criteria as schools and programs sponsored by a single institution and are subject to the same policies and procedures with the following exceptions:

- Depending on the nature of the collaboration and the geographic proximity of the participating institutions, the Council may require, or the school or program may request special accommodations in the structure of the site visit, including visiting multiple sites or extending the duration of the visit.
- Collaborative schools and programs must provide evidence during the review process of written agreements among the participating institutions.
- Collaborative schools and programs are shown in CEPH's published list of accredited schools and programs as a single listing, with each sponsoring institution identified.

## **Self-Study Process and Documentation**

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The self-evaluation process is the core of accreditation. CEPH criteria for a school or program call for an "explicit process for evaluating and monitoring its overall efforts against its mission, goals and objectives; for assessing the school's effectiveness in serving its various constituencies; and for planning to achieve its mission in the future." The criteria further require that the school or program "undertake systematic, broad-based and integrated evaluation of its activities."

### **Orientation Program**

CEPH conducts an annual accreditation orientation workshop that is required of all applicants and is recommended to representatives of institutions exploring accreditation or undergoing the reaccreditation process. The purpose of the workshop is to explain CEPH accreditation policies, procedures and criteria; to discuss the self-study process and expectations for the resulting document; and to elucidate guidelines for hosting a site visit. There is a fee for the daylong workshop to cover expenses, and institutions are responsible for covering the cost of their own travel and accommodations.

### **Process**

The self-study process may differ somewhat depending on whether the school or program is an applicant seeking initial accreditation, an already accredited unit undergoing a full review or an already accredited unit undergoing an abbreviated review. While there will be common aspects in terms of procedures, the focus of each may be different. For example:

1. A new applicant is expected to address all of the criteria for accreditation but the process of analysis and the resulting self-study document may be more oriented to baseline data for measurement of outcomes. Particularly if the school or program is new, there may be relatively little historical data on which to base assessments. The soundness of plans and the level of institutional commitment to implementation of those plans will take on greater significance in the self-study and evaluation by CEPH.
2. An already accredited school or program undergoing a full review is expected to address all of the accreditation criteria and provide thorough quantitative and qualitative documentation of compliance with the criteria. The focus of a full review must be the entire unit that is being reviewed, including all of its degree programs, and the manner in which it currently fulfills the expectations for accreditation.
3. An already accredited school or program may undergo an abbreviated review that focuses on a narrowly defined set of issues identified by CEPH. This might occur, at the discretion of the CEPH Board of Councilors, when a school or program is placed on probation or has serious deficiencies that require on-site follow up. While the school or program must meet all of the accreditation criteria, the self-study process may be directed at those issues identified as particularly problematic. When the CEPH governing body authorizes an abbreviated review, it will specify the scope of the review and may specify the composition of the site visit team, the duration of the visit or other modifications.

To be of most value to the school or program, the self-study should involve institutional officers, administrative staff, teaching faculty, students, alumni, community advisors and other stakeholders. A school or program has considerable latitude in conducting its self-study. Depending on existing administrative and committee structures, new groups and procedures may or may not need to be established. However, involvement of all constituent groups is essential. In the case of collaborative schools or programs sponsored by more than one educational institution, constituents from each institution must be involved in the process. Applicants in the past have used steering committees, task forces, departmental study committees, and other self-study models. Whatever the model, it is important to assign responsibility for coordination. That role may be assumed by the dean or director or assigned to another individual or a small group.

Models used by other schools or programs are described in their individual self-study documents, which are available directly from them or available for review at CEPH offices. Consultation regarding the self-study process is also available from CEPH staff. Whatever self-study methods are devised and implemented, these should result in an organized report of quantitative and qualitative information that describes and clearly analyzes the existing strengths and weaknesses and that presents specific plans for enhancing the strengths and correcting any deficiencies.

## **Product**

The process of self-analysis should result in the preparation of a self-study document that addresses all criteria for accreditation. The criteria document defines the documentation necessary to demonstrate compliance with each criterion. In the case of an abbreviated review, the document should include documentation for all criteria representing those issues and concerns which CEPH and the school or program has established as the basis for the review.

As general guidance, the self-study document should be organized to facilitate an assessment by the reviewers about each criterion. It is helpful to reviewers if pages in the document are numbered sequentially and if sections are separated by tab dividers. Each criterion should be addressed in terms of the policy of the school or program regarding that particular standard, evidence that describes its performance and an assessment that supports a conclusion about how the school or program meets the particular standard. The assessment should be an analytical discussion that provides an insightful analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the school or program. Data templates are provided on the CEPH website to facilitate a logical presentation of required data. Though the templates may need to be modified slightly to fit the unique situations of each school and program, CEPH requests that institutions use them.

CEPH expects a succinct yet thorough self-study document which, except in rare circumstances, should be limited to 150 pages plus well selected exhibits in a volume of appendices. Supplementary documents such as faculty curricula vitae, university reports, committee minutes, copies of student papers and theses, policy manuals, syllabi and copies of student and alumni survey instruments should be referenced in the document and made available in a resource file for on-site inspection.

## Procedures

A preliminary version of the self-study document must be submitted to CEPH five months prior to the scheduled site visit. One copy should be sent to CEPH offices and one copy to each of two councilors designated as preliminary reviewers. One of these individuals usually will be the site visit chairperson; if the site visit chairperson is not a CEPH councilor, that individual will also serve as a preliminary reviewer in addition to the two councilors.

The purposes of this review are to determine whether the document is sufficiently descriptive and analytical to proceed with final scheduling of the site visit and to offer constructive comments about how the documentation should be improved prior to final submission to the site visit team. Within eight weeks, CEPH staff will relay the comments of the reviewers, including questions, suggestions for revisions in the documentation and requests for further or different information. The reviewers may find the preliminary document unacceptable, for example, if it is not analytical or if it is incomplete. Reviewers may also suggest that an applicant is not yet at a developmental stage in which a site visit would be successful, particularly in cases where a school or program outlined plans to meet the eligibility requirements within the specified timeframe and they were not met. In this case, the Council may, in addition to providing specific feedback to the applicant, direct staff to work with the school or program to reschedule the visit.

If the review is to proceed, copies of the final revised document should be distributed by the school or program one month prior to the site visit. CEPH staff is authorized to cancel a visit if the document is not received one month before the visit. The self-study document and appendices should be provided both in paper copy and on compact disc or other electronic format. The body of the self-study document should be in Microsoft Word format. The distribution includes:

1. one copy (paper and electronic) to each member of the site visit team, including the site visit coordinator, and
2. one copy (paper and electronic) to CEPH offices for its archives and for public review.

Additional copies should be prepared for internal use or university purposes and for distribution on request.

If the review is not to proceed because the reviewers deemed the preliminary documentation unsatisfactory, CEPH will notify the school or program of the unacceptable features of the document and of any other reasons necessitating the postponement. If this occurs, the school or program is at risk of having its accreditation status lapse before a visit can be rescheduled. The Board of Councilors will consider all available information at its next scheduled meeting and will determine what action should be taken. Consultation from CEPH staff will be available during the interval between the postponement and the CEPH meeting.

Approximately three months before the scheduled site visit, the school or program should notify its major constituents that an accreditation review is scheduled and should indicate to them that written third-party comments will be received by CEPH until 30 days before the scheduled site visit. The form of such notice is at the discretion of the school or program but it should be described in the self-study document and verifiable by an on-site evaluation team. Such notice should include the name and mailing address of CEPH.

## Site Visits

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An on-site visit by a team of peer reviewers is an important component of the accreditation process. The team's assessment of the validity of the self-study document provides the primary basis for CEPH's decision concerning accreditation.

### Roster of Visitors

CEPH maintains a roster of potential site visit team members with appropriate subdivisions for academician and practitioner members. The list is developed through a nominating process by peers and is designed to seek competent and knowledgeable individuals who are qualified by experience and training to serve on site visit teams. Nominators, as a minimum, include CEPH's corporate members, organizations representing professional disciplines within public health, selected associations and agencies representing the practice of public health, deans of schools of public health, directors of public health programs, former CEPH councilors and former site visitors.

The Council seeks nominations of potential site visitors who meet the following criteria:

- senior academicians who are known and recognized by their peers and whose judgment is respected within their disciplines
- responsible and experienced executives who have demonstrated professional competence in public health and who are able to assess the relevance of educational efforts to the world of practice
- individuals, either academicians or practitioners, who have a broad perspective of public health and who are able to knowledgeably address multiple aspects of the field
- individuals who demonstrate mature judgment, fairness and effective communication skills

The site visit roster is reviewed and periodically updated by the Board of Councilors. It and the list of nominating organizations are available for review upon request.

### Training Programs

CEPH periodically conducts programs to train its site team members. The primary objectives of these training sessions, typically held in conjunction with annual meetings of the American Public Health Association, are to ensure that site visitors are fully knowledgeable about CEPH accreditation policies, procedures and criteria, and are clear about their roles as agency representatives. Experienced site visitors, councilors and staff collaborate to conduct the training sessions. Materials are developed for orientation and training purposes as needed. Individual guidance also is provided in various CEPH documents which are distributed to each team member prior to each site visit. These include a brochure offering guidance to site team members and a code of good practice for accrediting agencies adopted by the CEPH board. Finally, guidance is provided during an executive session of the team the evening before the site visit, at which time procedures and processes are discussed and roles and assignments clarified.

CEPH staff orients new Council members upon their appointment to the board. Each new councilor is provided with CEPH documents and publications describing the agency's history, procedures, guidelines, policies, criteria and recent activities. In addition, CEPH distributes a conflict of interest monograph and recent annual reports. Each year, CEPH schedules a formal training session for



councilors who have yet to serve as a chair of a site visit team. These sessions occur in conjunction with regular board meetings.

### **Selection of Site Visit Teams**

CEPH site visit teams for schools of public health typically include five members:

- a. A chair, who has significant experience conducting CEPH site visits. This member may be a public health academic or practitioner member.
- b. A site visit coordinator, who serves as the team secretary, drawn either from the full-time staff of CEPH, specially trained consultants with significant experience in accreditation or from a cadre of experienced CEPH site visitors specially trained to assume the role.
- c. Three additional members, one of whom must be a public health practitioner and one of whom must be a public health academic, unless either the chair or secretary meets those designations.

Site visit teams for programs outside schools of public health include three members:

- a. A chair, who has significant experience conducting CEPH site visits. This member may be a public health academic or practitioner member.
- b. A site visit coordinator, who serves as the team secretary, drawn either from the full-time staff of CEPH, specially trained consultants with significant experience in accreditation or from a cadre of experienced CEPH site visitors specially trained to assume the role.
- c. One additional member, who may be a public health academic or practitioner.

All site visit teams include at least one academic member and one practitioner member. A larger or smaller team may be requested of CEPH or CEPH may require it, depending upon the need to properly evaluate the school or program. Any deviation from the standard site visit team size must be negotiated with CEPH staff.

Team chairpersons are designated by the CEPH president and may be CEPH councilors, previous councilors or other individuals with extensive experience on CEPH site visit teams. The team composition is determined in consultation between staff and the CEPH president, who appoints team members. Schools and programs may not select the individuals who will visit their campuses but may identify areas of expertise they would like to have represented on the team and areas which may warrant special attention by the team. Special requests should be in writing to CEPH no later than one year before the site visit.

CEPH staff is responsible for inviting and confirming the team members' participation and informing them about the dates of the visit, the length of time for which their participation will be required, their responsibilities during and after the visit, reimbursement of expenses and CEPH's policy regarding conflicts of interest.

Schools and programs are advised of the proposed team composition and provided an opportunity to identify any conflicts of interest. If a conflict of interest exists, CEPH will seek a replacement for that team member. A list of the final team with each visitor's name, address and professional affiliation is sent to the school or program at the earliest possible date, but typically about three months before the site visit.

## **Site Visit Scheduling**

Visits to schools of public health require three full days, plus the evening preceding the arrival of the team on campus. Visits to programs outside schools of public health require two full days, plus the evening preceding the visit. The duration of the visit may be shorter or longer if special circumstances dictate the need for less or more time to accomplish the work of the site visit team. Unusual circumstances might include, for example, a visit focused on a narrow set of issues, a visit to a particularly complex or collaborative school or program or a visit to a school or program where the team needs to observe more than one geographic site. The school or program may request a shortened or extended visit or, in some circumstances, CEPH may require a longer site visit or an increase in the number of site visitors to ensure a thorough review. Any deviation from the standard must be negotiated with CEPH staff and is reflected in the fees charged.

The school or program is asked to prepare a schedule for the visit consistent with the suggested schedules on pages 37 and 40. Site visit teams find it helpful when the agenda is structured around the criteria, thus helping to focus the interviews. Every agenda will be slightly different, depending on the nature of the school or program and the nature of the problems identified in the self-study. The time allocated to various meetings will be determined by the specific needs of the particular school or program. The schedule should be prepared as soon as CEPH staff advises that the review is to proceed, following the review of preliminary documentation. It is advisable to consult by phone with CEPH staff regarding the proposed agenda. The schedule should be sufficiently flexible to allow the site visit team to request adjustments. Changes may be needed to accommodate particular concerns of team members or their perceptions about the most expeditious and effective ways to pursue their tasks. Ample time must be scheduled for executive sessions. The scheduling of working luncheons with groups or for executive sessions is appropriate.

Depending upon the structure of the school or program and the specific issues to be addressed, the team will need to meet with a broad representation of school or program constituents. These normally include university officials, school or program administrators, faculty, students, alumni and community representatives such as field placement preceptors. Typically, the team should meet with these constituent groups, particularly university officials, without the presence of the school dean or program director.

The school or program should reserve a convenient meeting room for use by the site visitors during their time on campus. The room should provide easy access to the on-site resource file as well as a computer with high-speed internet access and a printer. The visitors may, in addition, want to inspect campus facilities such as the library, laboratories and computer centers.

The final session on the schedule should be an exit interview during which the team chair will present a brief summary of the team's findings. It is the prerogative of the dean or director to determine who should attend the exit interview, but CEPH considers it appropriate to invite other representatives of the school or program as well.

## **Joint Visits with Other Accrediting Agencies**

To facilitate coordination of accrediting efforts, CEPH will schedule concurrent or joint visits with other accrediting agencies, at the request of the school or program. If a joint visit is to be conducted, the schedule must be arranged to facilitate the combined effort. Guidance about planning and scheduling a joint visit is available on request.

## **Other Preparation for the Site Visit**

CEPH sends written notice to the chief executive officer of the university and the chief administrative officer of the appropriate university component about the scheduled site visit. The school or program should supply the names of these individuals to CEPH.

School or program personnel should make hotel reservations for all site visit team members and request that the hotel send confirmations to the individuals. One month before the visit, the school or program should send to each team member a copy of the final self-study document, a copy of the current bulletin or catalog, a site visit agenda and a list of materials that will be available in the on-site resource file. CEPH provides each team member with a list of the team members, the procedures manual, the applicable criteria document, a brochure describing CEPH, a brochure providing guidance to site team members, the list of the schools and programs CEPH accredits, a copy of the last accreditation report (if any), the last interim report (if any) of the school or program, the code of good practice for accrediting bodies, travel guidelines and an expense reimbursement form and any other pertinent information.

## **On-Site Resource File**

Before the team arrives on site, the school or program must compile information in a resource file for on-site inspection by the team. Documentation describing the methods of advertising used by the school or program must be provided to the site team. Advertising, promotional materials or recruitment literature used by the school or program to describe its educational offerings (including catalogs, bulletins, publications or combination of publications) must accurately describe its academic calendar, admission policies, grading policies, degree completion requirements, tuition and fees. The school or program also will need to provide evidence in its resource file that it tracks degree completion rates of its students and rates of job placement or other measures of success of its recent graduates.

In general, the resource file should include any materials referenced in the self-study document that were not included in the appendixes and any other information that provides evidence of compliance with the accreditation criteria. If not included in the attachments to the self-study document, schools and programs can expect site visit teams to ask for the following on site: a) examples of student work (theses, graduate research projects and field placement reports); b) schedule of courses offered (with instructor identified) over the last three years; c) minutes of all committee meetings except for minutes of meetings or portions of meetings that deal with individual personnel actions; d) faculty curriculum vitae; e) course syllabi; f) personnel manuals; g) survey and course evaluation responses and data summaries; and h) a record of written student complaints and grievances, if any, for the past three years. Unless CEPH specifically asks during a review of a preliminary document that certain materials be included as part of an appendix, the school or program may conclude that it is appropriate and acceptable to include these materials as part of the on-site resource file.

## **Conduct of the Visit**

At the initial executive session of the team, the chairperson will propose a plan of action for the site visit. He or she will assign responsibilities for pursuing particular lines of inquiry, for validating certain sections of the self-study and for preparing specific portions of the site team report. During executive sessions throughout the visit, the chairperson will evaluate progress of the team and may make additional or revised assignments. The chairperson may also consult with the dean or director to assess the progress of the visit or to arrange changes in the agenda if necessary.

Throughout the site visit, the team members will seek information to validate the self-study document. In meetings with administrators, faculty, students and other groups, the visitors will explore issues identified by the team during the executive sessions. They will seek open and frank discussions that clarify and expand upon information in the self-study. They will review materials in the resource files and other materials requested on site to verify information in the self-study document and to assess the manner in which the school or program interacts with and represents itself to its various constituents. They will seek to identify strengths and weaknesses of the school or program, based upon their findings and observations.

In executive sessions, the team will discuss their findings and observations and organize and prepare their comments for succinct presentation in a final session with school or program administrators.

### **Reimbursement for Site Visitors' Expenses**

The Council does not pay honoraria for the services of the team members but does reimburse expenses. Each site visitor should submit a voucher, with original receipts, to CEPH for travel and expenses incurred in connection with the visit. CEPH will reimburse each visitor and will invoice the school or program for the total costs.

## Reports and Decisions

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### Site Visit Team Report

Site visit teams are expected to make a written determination about whether a school or program complies with each of the established accreditation criteria. The Council uses the following standard terminology to describe compliance in the site team reports:

- **This criterion is met.**

The school or program fully complies with or exceeds the expectations embodied in the criterion.

- **This criterion is met with commentary.**

The school or program evidences the minimum characteristics expected by the criterion, but some aspects of performance could be strengthened.

- **This criterion is partially met.**

The school or program fails to meet one or more parts of the multiple-part criterion or one or more components of the school or program fails to meet the standard.

- **This criterion is not met.**

The school or program fails to meet the criterion in its entirety or performs so poorly in regard to the criterion that the efforts of the school or program are found to be unacceptable.

The written report, which represents an independent analysis by the site visit team, should present strengths and weaknesses of the school or program, including the identification of areas needing improvement. In all cases, the report should address the school's or program's performance with respect to student achievement. If the school or program offers degree programs in off-campus locations or in distance or executive formats, the written report should address these specifically.

Before completing the site visit, members of the team will provide the chairperson with any written material they have been requested to prepare. This may include assessments of particular aspects of the school or program being reviewed, comments on the extent to which the school or program is in compliance with CEPH standards or formulations of recommendations. Using this and other material, such as notes made during the visit, the self-study and supplemental materials distributed at the visit, the chairperson will prepare an outline of the verbal presentation to be made to school or program officials at the end of the visit.

This outline will serve as the basis for the first draft of the team's report that will be prepared by the site visit coordinator following the visit. The draft will be distributed for review and comment to all members of the site visit team, who will be asked to respond by a specified date. The team's revisions will be incorporated in a second draft, which will be sent to the school dean or program director with a request that he or she supply corrections of factual errors or misinterpretations. The school or program administrator may involve as few or as many of the faculty and students in reviewing this draft as he or she wishes. In addition to suggesting factual corrections, a school or program may prepare a written response to the team's findings. In this response, it is appropriate to note any disagreements with the findings and opinions of the team or to provide supplemental information that may be helpful to the Council's deliberations.

The final site visit report will be prepared by the visit coordinator and will include the school or program corrections and any further team revisions. It will be sent, along with the written response of the school or program, to each CEPH councilor 30 days prior to the meeting at which the decision is to be made. At the time the final site team report is distributed to the Board of Councilors, a copy of the report will be sent to the chief executive officer of the educational institution. The chief executive officer will be provided an opportunity to review the report and comment upon it prior to the meeting at which the accreditation decision is to be made.

## **CEPH Decisions**

At the next regularly scheduled meeting following completion of the site visit report, the CEPH Board of Councilors will review the report. A copy of the self-study and supplementary materials will be available at the meeting for review.

Each report under consideration by CEPH at a regular meeting is presented by two councilors who have not participated in the site visit to the school or program. The site visit chair will be available via telephone conference for clarification only. In special circumstances, the Council may request to meet with a representative of the school or program, either by phone or in-person, during this meeting. In arriving at a decision, the board will consider the team's written findings, the school or program's written response and other written material that is available. However, the Council will not consider new information in making its final accreditation decision. Following the presentation and subsequent discussion, a Council member will present motions for two separate actions by the councilors: one is the adoption of the team's report, with or without amendment, as the Council's official report to the university, and the other is a decision about accreditation, including status, term and interim reporting requirements, as appropriate.

Councilors who have a conflict of interest in relation to the school or program under review must declare such and abstain from participating in related discussion and decision-making. A separate policy statement on conflicts of interest adopted by CEPH guides decisions pertaining to conflicts. A conflict of interest occurs because of an individual's potential ability, or perception of an ability, to influence a decision, not in his or her knowledge about the decision. All parties, including those who may have had a conflict of interest, are bound by confidentiality restrictions imposed by CEPH procedures.

Possible accreditation decisions by the Council include the following:

1. **Accreditation** – A school or program demonstrates minimum compliance with all applicable CEPH criteria. Accreditation may be conferred with requirements for interim reports or other types of follow up.
2. **Extension of Term** – A school or program seeking to make a transition from one accreditation category to another fails to meet the requirements for accreditation under the new category but may be awarded one additional year on its existing term under the original accreditation category. An extension of term may also be used when the Council agrees to postpone a regularly scheduled visit for extraordinary reasons or when it determines, on the basis of an interim report, that a school or program has demonstrated that it meets all accreditation criteria.
3. **Denial of Accreditation** – A school or program in applicant status does not meet the criteria for accreditation.
4. **Probationary Accreditation** – An already accredited school or program is judged deficient in resources and procedures to continue to accomplish its stated mission and objectives, or fails to meet the requirements for its reaccreditation review or interim report requirements. This status is conferred for a specific length of time but may not exceed three years in total, including up to two years in which the school or program must come into compliance with the accreditation criteria and, failing to do so, the additional time accorded to the applicant to remedy the deficiencies if the school or program shows good cause.
5. **Revocation of Accreditation** – A school or program does not meet the criteria for continued accreditation, or does not permit a reevaluation after proper notice by CEPH. Revocation also applies when an institution disestablishes or closes a school or program.

Denial of accreditation and revocation of accreditation are adverse actions. Adverse actions and probation are appealable actions. CEPH notifies the dean or director and the chief executive officer of an institution, stating specific reasons for the adverse action or probation. Appealable actions are not made public for 30 days following notification, during which time a school or program may appeal the decision. Appeals procedures are described on page 26 and reporting of such actions are described on page 23.

## **Limitations on Actions**

The Council will not act to continue accreditation if the institution in which the school or program is located is subject to an action or notified of a threatened action by a recognized institutional accrediting body that might lead to the suspension, revocation or termination of accreditation. Similarly, the Council will not act to continue accreditation if the institution is subject to an action or notified of a threatened action by a state agency that might lead to the loss of the institution's legal authority to provide postsecondary education.

In granting accreditation to a school or program, the Council will take into consideration actions by a regional institutional accrediting body to deny accreditation, revoke accreditation or place an institution on probation. Similarly, it will take into consideration the action of a state agency to suspend, revoke or terminate the institution's legal authority to provide postsecondary education. If the Council grants initial accreditation to a school or program notwithstanding the adverse actions of the institutional accreditation body or the state agency, the Council must submit a thorough explanation to the US Secretary of Education.

## **Accreditation Terms**

An accreditation term is the period during which the accreditation status remains valid. Schools and programs typically are subject to review on a seven-year cycle, except that schools and programs seeking initial accreditation are eligible for a maximum term of five years. Schools and programs that seek accreditation under a different category are considered to be seeking initial accreditation under that category. The Council may vote to schedule the date of a site visit for a school or program before the end of an accreditation term if it is deemed necessary based upon findings of the accreditation review or based on information reported in an annual report, interim report or substantive change notification. Other types of follow-up may also be required including, but not limited to, interim reports, an abbreviated accreditation review or a visit by CEPH staff and/or Councilor.

Accreditation status – including accreditation and probationary accreditation – is stated as valid through a specific date. Accreditation will automatically lapse at the conclusion of the term unless certain conditions have been met. In the case of a reaccreditation review, an on-site visit must have been conducted prior to the termination date; in the case of probationary accreditation, the school or program must have submitted an acceptable self-study document prior to the termination date and scheduled its site visit. If these conditions have been met, the accreditation status will continue until the first meeting of the Board of Councilors at which the reaccreditation decision can be made. If a school or program fails to permit reevaluation after proper notice, the accreditation status is subject to revocation at the time the term lapses.

A school or program may request a postponement of its regularly scheduled review but only for extraordinary reasons. A request for postponement must be made in writing at least 12 months prior to the expiration of the term. Any exceptions to this must be approved by the Board of Councilors. A decision to postpone a regularly scheduled review requires action by the board to extend the current accreditation term by a specific period of time.

The effective date and termination date of an accreditation term are important because accreditation status sometimes establishes eligibility of a school or program for participation in certain federal programs and/or establishes the qualifications of graduates to pursue certain career opportunities. The Council's procedures are structured, to the extent possible, to protect the interests of students who enter an accredited school or program with the expectation that they will graduate from such.



An accredited school or program must be aware of decisions that may put students at risk and must represent those possibilities accurately. For clarification:

1. Initial accreditation is effective on the date of the decision by the CEPH board; it is not retroactive.
2. Accreditation or probationary accreditation continues in effect until the first CEPH meeting at which a decision can be made, providing the conditions noted above have been met.
3. Probationary accreditation may not extend beyond three years (including two years to come into compliance and the additional time accorded to an applicant to come into compliance if the school or program can show good cause); the Council must deny or revoke accreditation unless the school or program, based on a full or abbreviated review, returns to accredited status.
4. Extension of term caused by the failure of a school or program to meet the requirements for accreditation under a different category of accreditation may not extend beyond one year; the Council must deny or revoke accreditation at the conclusion of the term unless the school or program, based on a full or abbreviated review, qualifies for accreditation under the new category.
5. Accreditation lapses on the date specified if the school or program fails to schedule a timely reevaluation after proper notice.
6. Accreditation or probationary accreditation lapses on the date of dissolution or disestablishment of a school or program by its parent institution.

### **Interim Reports**

In situations where a deficiency exists at the time the accreditation decision is made but when reasonable remedial actions could bring the school or program into compliance with the criteria, CEPH will require an interim report. The request for an interim report will specify the areas of deficiency and the date of expected submission. In situations where a school or program is not in compliance with an accreditation standard, the Council must require the school or program to come into compliance within two years, a period that may be extended only for good cause. In determining whether good cause exists for an extension, CEPH may consider a number of factors, including but not limited to progress toward achieving full compliance, the complexity of the changes that must be made, financial considerations, logistical considerations, and other circumstances internal and external to the school or program that might affect the time needed to come into full compliance. If a school or program fails to bring itself into compliance within the specified period the Council must revoke the accreditation of the school or program.

It is the responsibility of the school or program to submit one copy of the interim report to CEPH offices on a timely basis. The report will be copied, distributed to and reviewed by the Board of Councilors, which will report its findings in writing to the school or program. The Council will act either to accept the interim report or not to accept the interim report. Interim reports are accepted if the Council concludes, based on evidence provided in the interim report, that the school or program has demonstrated full compliance with the criteria. If the school or program has not fully resolved the cited deficiencies, the Council must act not to accept the interim report and must a) revoke the accreditation of the school or program; or b) extend the time period by which the school or program must come into compliance. In order for the Council to grant an extension of the time period for achieving compliance, the school or program, as part of its interim report, must show cause for not fully resolving the previously stipulated deficiencies. The Council will award an extension of the time period for achieving compliance only if the school or program has made substantial progress toward compliance and the quality of the program is not in jeopardy. The Council determines the

appropriateness of an extension of time for achieving compliance on a case by case basis. If a school or program does not submit a requested interim report, the Council will revoke the accreditation of that school or program.

When an accreditation term is awarded for a period less than the maximum possible, the Council may at its discretion require an interim report and specify that an extension of the term is possible, pending a future determination by the Council that one or more cited deficiencies have been resolved satisfactorily. If the Council, at the time of the original accreditation decision, offered to extend the accreditation term based on demonstration that the school or program has fully resolved the cited deficiencies, a separate decision must be made regarding the extension of the accreditation term. If the Council, at the time of the original decision, did not offer to extend the accreditation term, the CEPH governing body may do so at its sole discretion if it concludes that all deficiencies have been fully resolved.

### **CEPH Reports and Notification**

As part of its decision, the Council will formally adopt the site visit team's report with any revisions it deems appropriate and necessary on the basis of the evidence used in arriving at its decision. This report becomes the Council's official report. A copy of CEPH's official report will be sent with a cover letter from the CEPH president to the chief executive officer as notification of CEPH's decision within 30 days of the decision. The Council's report is sent with a letter from the CEPH president to the school dean or program director.

Within 30 days after a final accreditation decision, the Council formally notifies agencies about the action. These include, at a minimum, the US Department of Education and appropriate state agencies. Decisions to be reported to these bodies include a decision to award accreditation; a decision to deny or revoke accreditation; a decision to place an institution on probation; a decision of an accredited institution to voluntarily withdraw from accreditation; or a decision by an accredited institution to allow its accreditation status to lapse. In addition, CEPH distributes annually to appropriate recognized accrediting agencies and to selected state agencies information about the accreditation status of schools and programs, including adverse actions.

If a final decision is to deny or revoke accreditation status or to place a school or program on probation, the notice to the Secretary of Education will occur at the same time that CEPH notifies the school or program. As noted elsewhere in these procedures, adverse actions become final 30 days after the school or program has been notified of its opportunity to appeal the decision or at the conclusion of the appeal, whichever occurs first.

If the final decision is to deny, withdraw, suspend or terminate the accreditation status of a school or program, the Council will prepare a brief statement summarizing the reasons for the agency's action and will submit such within 60 days of the final decision to the Secretary of Education and the appropriate state agency. This statement will also be made available to the public on request. The Council will append the written comments of the affected school or program if the school or program elects to submit such a statement within 50 days of the final decision.

As a recognized agency, the Council is also required to report to the USDE the name of any institution or program the Council has reason to believe is failing in its responsibilities under Title IV of the Higher Education Amendments or is engaged in fraud or abuse and to report the reasons for the agency's concerns.

## **Release of Reports and Information About Actions**

The official accreditation report must be made available to the public for reasonable reproduction costs on request to either the school or program or to CEPH 60 days following the date of the final accreditation decision. The school or program may append a written response to the accreditation report whenever it releases the full report. If the school or program provides a copy of its written response to CEPH within 50 days following the final accreditation decision, CEPH will append the response whenever it distributes a copy of the full report.

## **Reports to CEPH**

All accredited schools and programs of public health are required to submit an annual report to CEPH, using a prescribed format. The purpose of the annual report is to allow the accrediting body to monitor significant changes in the school or program between the on-site visits.

## **Changes that Occur After Award of Accreditation**

It is the responsibility of the school or program to promptly notify CEPH if significant changes occur in its environment which might necessitate a review by CEPH. These include, but are not limited to, loss of legal authority to operate and adverse actions by other recognized accrediting bodies, including public probation and revocation of accreditation. This would include accreditation actions related to university or larger administrative unit in which the school or program is located and to principal programs offered by the school or program.

When CEPH awards accreditation, it does so based on the expectation that the school or program will continue to comply with the accreditation criteria over the term of accreditation. If changes occur that might have a negative impact on the school's or program's ability to continue to meet the accreditation criteria, it is the responsibility of the school or program to notify CEPH in writing of such conditions. The Council will review this written notice at its next regular meeting. While this generally will be for information purposes, the Council may, at its discretion, request additional reporting, initiate a special inquiry or require a full or abbreviated review.

If at any time in the interval between scheduled reviews an accredited school or program undergoes major organizational changes that may affect its administration, scope or quality, the school or program may request a reevaluation by CEPH, or the Council may require a review before the date stipulated. Information that may prompt a special inquiry or an early review may come from several sources, including interim reports to CEPH, annual reports to CEPH, required notifications from the school or program regarding changes that occur after the award of accreditation, notice of substantive change, notice of actions by the USDE or the appropriate state agency, notice of adverse actions by relevant accrediting bodies, a record of excessive complaints lodged with CEPH about a school or program, and other sources. Failure of a school or program to submit required reports and notices to CEPH on a timely basis may also prompt a special inquiry or early review.

Before the Council requires an early full review, it may exhaust other avenues for determining the continued compliance with the accreditation criteria. It may, for example, a) ask for written clarification from the school or program, b) require on-site consultation by a CEPH councilor and/or staff member, or c) require an abbreviated review that focuses on a limited set of issues relating to the specific conditions that prompted the request for a reevaluation.

The decisions available to the Council following an abbreviated review shall include continuation of the current term, extension of the current term for up to two additional years, probation and revocation of accreditation. If an early full review is necessary, CEPH will notify the school or program in writing and will establish a timetable for the submission of the self-study document and on-site visit. The date of the on-site visit shall be no more than 18 months from the date of notification.

The Council will promptly review the accreditation status of any school or program in an institution whose recognized institutional accrediting agency takes adverse action against the institution in order to determine whether the Council should take adverse action against the accredited school or program. Similarly, if a program in a CEPH-accredited school of public health loses its accreditation or is placed on probation by another recognized specialized accrediting body or if a school in which a CEPH-accredited program is located loses its accreditation or is placed on probation by another recognized specialized accrediting body, CEPH will promptly review the accreditation status of that school or program to determine if the Council should take adverse action against it. The determination will be made at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board of Councilors and may result in no action, in the initiation of adverse action against the school or program or in the request for additional information to allow CEPH to better assess the reasons for the adverse action by the other accrediting body and the implications for the CEPH-accredited school or program.

### **Prior Notification of Substantive Change**

If a school or program undertakes a substantive change that affects its mission or degree offerings after accreditation has been awarded, the school or program must notify CEPH before the change is made. It is the responsibility of the school or program to promptly notify CEPH of its intent to implement a change, describing the change fully in writing.

A substantive change includes but is not limited to the following changes: a major change in the established mission or objectives of the school or program; offering of a new degree; the addition or discontinuance of an area of specialization; the offering of a degree program that differs substantially in method of delivery from those previously reviewed; the offering of a degree program at a site distant from the school or program; a substantial increase or decrease in the length of a degree program; and the revision of basic requirements specified in the accreditation criteria for professional degrees.

### **Publication of Accredited Status**

A list of accredited schools and programs is updated biannually or more frequently as needed. The list is available at the CEPH website, [www.ceph.org](http://www.ceph.org). This list identifies the date of initial accreditation and the date by which the next review must take place for each accredited school or program. All final decisions are recorded in the annual reports of CEPH, including decisions to grant or withdraw accreditation status, decisions to confer probationary accreditation status and decisions of schools or programs to voluntarily withdraw from the review process. CEPH annually submits to the Secretary of Education a copy of its list of accredited schools and programs and its annual report.

Schools and programs are advised that they must disclose their CEPH accreditation status accurately, including the academic units or instructional programs covered by that status and category of accreditation. CEPH policies provide that in the event a school or program misrepresents or distorts the findings of the accrediting body, CEPH will take corrective action, including release of a public statement and release of part or all of the official accreditation report.

It is incumbent upon an accredited school or program to be forthright regarding its accreditation status and conditions that might impinge upon its ability to continue to meet accreditation standards. Each school and program must:

1. present itself and its degree programs fully and accurately in publications and materials provided to students and prospective students, including but not limited to catalogs, recruitment brochures, student handbooks or manuals and the website,
2. represent its category of accreditation accurately to the public; specifically, accredited public health programs may not refer to themselves as schools or colleges of public health until an application for accreditation as a school of public health has been submitted to and approved by CEPH, and
3. disclose its accreditation status and make available the name, address and telephone number of CEPH.

Because accreditation terminology may be confusing to the general public and because schools and programs may withdraw their application at any time without penalty, applicant schools and programs may not advertise “approval” or “applicant status” to the public. Applicant schools and programs may describe their progress toward accreditation using the language, “seeking accreditation from the Council on Education for Public Health.” Applicant schools and programs are encouraged to disclose as much information as possible to the public regarding their progress toward accreditation, including their site visit dates, anticipated accreditation decision date and the name and contact information for CEPH.

### **Maintenance of Records**

CEPH maintains complete and accurate records of the two most recent accreditation reviews of each school and program. These records include official accreditation reports, institutional responses to reports, interim reports, official correspondence between CEPH and the institution and self-study documents with attachments. Except for self-study documents and attachments and the official accreditation report, official records are confidential and not distributed publicly by CEPH. CEPH also maintains complete and accurate records of all accreditation decisions, including adverse actions, in formally adopted minutes and in annual reports.

## **Appeal and Complaint Procedures**

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### **Appeals**

If the decision of the Council is to place a school or program on probation or to deny or revoke accreditation, CEPH notifies the school dean or program director and the chief executive officer of the university. In the notice, a specific statement of reasons for the action is given, as well as information about the right to appeal.

The action will not be made public for 30 days. During that time period, which begins on the date the school or program receives CEPH's decision letter, the school or program may file a notice of appeal in writing and request an appeal hearing. If the school or program initiates the appeal within the prescribed 30 days, there is no change in accreditation status pending disposition of the appeal and the action is not made public. If the school or program does not file a written notice of appeal within 30 days, the Council's action becomes final and public. The appeal fee shall be due at the time the school or program files its notice of appeal.

The school or program bears the burden of proof on appeal. The grounds for appeal are (a) that the Council's decision was arbitrary, capricious, or not supported by substantial evidence in the record on which the Council took action; or (b) that the procedures used by the Council to reach its decision were contrary to the Council's By-Laws, Accreditation Procedures, or other established policies and practices, and that procedural error prejudiced the Council's consideration. The appeal will be limited to only such evidence as was before the Council at the time it made its decision.

The Appeals Panel will consist of three members, none of whom served on the site visit team or are current CEPH councilors. The Appeals Panel will include one public health practitioner, appointed by the American Public Health Association; one member of the faculty or administration of an accredited school of public health; and one generalist educator, appointed by the appropriate regional accrediting commission. The Appeals Panel will select one of its members as Chair.

The appellant school or program shall be notified of the composition of the Appeals Panel as soon as it is constituted and shall be afforded the opportunity to present objections to the selection of any member of the Panel based on conflicts of interest. The school or program has the right to be represented by counsel during the appeal process.

The hearing shall occur no later than 90 days from the panel's designation. Notification of the hearing will be made to all parties concerned. A school or program shall be required to submit a detailed written statement setting forth its position on appeal. This statement must be provided to the Appeals Panel at least 15 business days prior to the appeal hearing. In addition, the school or program may, in its notice of appeal, request that the record considered by the Council in reaching its decision be made available to it. The record shall include, but is not necessarily limited to:

- a. CEPH Procedures Manual, applicable at the time of the review;
- b. CEPH Criteria for Accreditation, applicable at the time of the review;
- c. Relevant self-study document of the school or program;

- d. Relevant accreditation reports and responses to those reports by the school or program; and
- e. Relevant written communications to and from the school or program regarding the review, including any prior decision letters.

Opportunity to appear before the Appeals Panel will be extended to representatives of the school or program and its counsel. The school or program will have 60 minutes to orally present its position. Thereafter, the Appeals Panel will direct questions to and hear responses of the school or program. The school or program will also be permitted to make a closing statement. A written transcript will be made of the hearing. All sessions in which the Appeals Panel meets to organize its work, as well as all deliberations of the Appeals Panel, will be conducted in executive session.

In reaching its decision, the Appeals Panel will consider the record before the Council at the time it made its decision, the school's or program's written appeal statement, any presentation made by the school or program at the hearing as well as the school's or program's responses to questions from the panel members. The Appeals Panel will base its decision on conditions as they existed at the time of the Council's decision and will not consider new evidence not before the Council at the time of its decision. Consistent with the standard for review on appeal, the Appeals Panel considers whether the decision was arbitrary and capricious or not supported by substantial evidence that existed in the record at the time of the Council's decision, and whether the action of the Council was in accordance with its established procedures. The Appeals Panel does not conduct a de novo review of the underlying decision.

The Appeals Panel, on a majority vote, either affirms the decision being appealed or directs the Council to reconsider its original decision in view of the findings of the Panel. The Appeals Panel may not grant accreditation or change the Council's original accreditation decision. It may only affirm that decision or remand it to the Council for reconsideration. If the Appeals Panel affirms the decision, the decision becomes final at that time. If the Appeals Panel refers the matter back to the Council for reconsideration, the decision of the Council on reconsideration is final and not subject to further appeal unless the Council's decision on reconsideration contains grounds that were not included in the original Council decision previously reviewed by the Appeals Panel. In that event, a school or program may take an appeal of the Council's action on reconsideration, but must limit its appeal to any new grounds introduced by the Council on reconsideration that the Appeals Panel did not previously review. The Council's decision on reconsideration of the accreditation status of the appellant school or program is final.

The Chair of the Appeals Panel will send simultaneous notification, including specific findings, of the Panel's decision to the school dean or program director and the chief executive officer of the university as well as to the President of the Council. The decision will be issued within 21 business days of the hearing.

If the Appeals Panel upholds denial or revocation of accreditation, the name of the school or program will be removed from the list of accredited schools and programs and notification of the removal will appear on CEPH's website. The USDE, appropriate state agencies, and appropriate accrediting agencies will be notified immediately. If the panel upholds probationary accreditation, the school or program will remain on the accredited list, but notification of the probationary status will appear on

CEPH's website and the school or program must proceed with its accreditation review at the time originally stipulated by CEPH. Failure to do so will result in revocation of accreditation.

The school or program shall be responsible for the cost of the appeal as set forth in CEPH's fee schedule. The appeal fee shall be due at the time the school or program files its notice of appeal.

The school or program may terminate the appeal in writing at any time up until the time the decision of the Appeals Panel is rendered. In so doing the school or program foregoes any right to reassert the appeal at a later date. If the school or program terminates the appeal, the school or program will remain responsible for any costs of the appeal incurred up to that point. Any remaining portion of the appeal fee shall then be refunded to the school or program. The action of the Council becomes final upon receipt of a written request to withdraw the appeal.

In addition to the foregoing appeal procedures, the CEPH staff shall assume certain responsibilities related to the appeal hearing. Those responsibilities are set forth in a separate document, "Council on Education for Public Health – Staff Responsibilities During Appeals Proceedings." This document shall be posted on the Council's website and provided to any school or program that initiates an appeal.

## **Complaints**

The Council is concerned about sustained quality of the schools and programs it accredits. CEPH requires that schools and programs maintain a record of written student complaints and make that information available to CEPH on request. Although CEPH is not a mediator of disputes within an institution, it will receive written and signed complaints against a school or program that relate to CEPH accreditation standards and which might affect the accreditation status of a school or program. A complainant must have exhausted all administrative processes within an institution before filing a complaint with the Council.

When a complaint is filed with CEPH, the following procedures will apply. A complaint against an accredited school or program must be in writing, must be specific as to the accreditation standard that is being violated, must identify the outcome sought, must include documentation that appropriate administrative processes have been exhausted and must be signed. Complaints against accredited schools or programs may be submitted to CEPH offices at any time and are maintained on file.

In the absence of documentation that administrative processes have been exhausted or in the event the complainant has failed to be specific, the following will occur:

1. CEPH staff will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 15 days and advise that no subsequent actions are planned.
2. Copies of all materials received will be sent within 30 days of receipt of the complaint to the school or program against which the complaint has been made.
3. No further action will be taken.

Even though a complaint may not lead to formal action, the Council will maintain a record of written and signed complaints for three years. All complaints on file will be summarized and the summary provided to the site visit team at the time of the next accreditation review.



If the complaint is specific and includes documentation that administrative processes have been fully pursued, the following steps will be taken by CEPH:

1. CEPH staff will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 15 days and provide information about subsequent actions to be taken.
2. Copies of all materials received will be sent to the school or program within 30 days of receipt of the complaint, along with a request for verification that administrative remedies have been exhausted.
3. If the school or program acknowledges that the complainant has exhausted the administrative remedies at the institution, CEPH staff, at the time it forwards the complaint to the school or program, will request that a summary of actions leading to the original complaint be submitted by the dean or program director within 30 days of receiving copies of the complaint materials.
4. CEPH's administrative committee, which meets at least once per year but which will meet by telephone conference call within 15 days of receiving the response of the school or program for purposes of reviewing a complaint, will review the materials submitted by the complainant and the responses submitted by the school or program and will determine whether there is sufficient evidence to believe the school or program is in violation of CEPH's accreditation criteria. In order to assure timely consideration of complaints, this review may be accomplished by telephone conference call between meetings of the administrative committee.
5. If the administrative committee determines that the complaint lacks sufficient evidence to proceed with an investigation, the complainant and the school or program will be so notified in writing within 15 days of the administrative committee decision.
6. If the complaint appears valid, the administrative committee will appoint a three-member investigative panel. The investigation shall begin within 30 days of the establishment of the panel. The panel's investigation of the complaint may include a visit to the school or program, but in any event, both the complainant and the school or program representative will be offered an opportunity to appear before the panel. It is expected that the panel shall have access to any and all information which is pertinent to the investigation.
7. The investigative panel will report its findings, along with its recommendation, to the CEPH Board of Councilors at its next regularly scheduled meeting. The board shall be the final decision-making body. Based upon these deliberations, or in the event a school or program fails to permit an investigation on a timely basis, CEPH's decisions may include any of the following:
  - a. continue the accreditation status of the school or program without change,
  - b. continue the accreditation status of the school or program, but initiate an earlier review of the school or program,
  - c. place an accredited school or program on probation, or
  - d. revoke the school's or program's accreditation.
8. The school or program and the complainant will be advised of the Council's decision and the reasons for the decision within 30 days.

The school or program may appeal a board decision. The appeals procedures described elsewhere in this document shall apply, except that if accreditation is revoked and no appeal is made, a new request for review for accreditation will not be entertained until one year from the date of revocation.

Complaints about CEPH's performance related to its own procedures, policies or criteria or about agency conduct inconsistent with good accreditation practices, as defined in its adopted code of good practice, may be forwarded to CEPH's offices. Complaints must be in writing, must be specific, and must be signed by the complainant. CEPH staff will seek to achieve an equitable, fair and timely resolution of the matter. If staff negotiations are unsuccessful, the complaint will be referred to the CEPH administrative committee at its next regular meeting. The decision of the administrative committee will be communicated to the complainant in writing within 30 days of the meeting of the administrative committee.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the resolution determined by the administrative committee, CEPH will provide the complainant with the name and address of the appropriate office within the US Department of Education and of any other recognition bodies to which the Council may subscribe. As a matter of policy, CEPH maintains complete and accurate records of complaints, if any, against itself and makes those available for inspection on request at CEPH offices.

Costs for complaint investigations shall be shared as follows: all costs of the complainant to participate in the process shall be borne by the complainant; all costs for the school or program representatives to participate in the complaint deliberations shall be borne by the school or program; and all costs for the three-member investigative panel shall be borne by CEPH. If an earlier full review is scheduled as a result of a complaint investigation, costs to the school or program shall include all expenses normally associated with an accreditation review.

## **Evaluation of Review Process**

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### **Site Team Member Assessment**

After completion of a site visit, each member of the site visit team is sent a questionnaire for evaluating CEPH's review process. The team members are asked to complete the form and return their responses to CEPH offices. Site team members, excluding the chair, additionally are asked to evaluate the effectiveness of the chair. Results of these assessments are summarized regularly and are used in revision of CEPH accreditation procedures and criteria, in preparation of the site visitor and site visit chair training programs and in the appointment of site visit teams. Data summaries of the evaluations of site team chairs are provided only to that chair on request.

### **School or Program Assessment**

When a review is complete and notification of the decision transmitted, a copy of CEPH's evaluation questionnaire is mailed to the school dean or program director. Comments and recommendations from the school or program evaluations are used in periodic revisions of CEPH manuals of criteria and procedures.

## **Review and Revision of Criteria or Procedures**

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The Council periodically reviews and revises the criteria by which it evaluates schools and programs for accreditation and the procedures by which it carries out this responsibility. Whenever substantive changes are considered, these are agreed to in principle by the CEPH governing body and made available for review and comment by potentially affected parties for a period of at least 60 days before final adoption. Unless a specific implementation date is specified at the time of adoption by the CEPH Board of Councilors, the revisions become effective in the fall of the following academic year.

## **APPENDICES**

## Scheduling of Major Activities in an Accreditation Review

Application is submitted to CEPH	Applicant plans self-study process	Applicant conducts self-study process	Applicant submits preliminary document to CEPH reviewers		Applicant revises and distributes final document			Applicant responds to site visit team report	
CEPH establishes review schedule for next academic year	CEPH provides consultation to school or program			CEPH reviews preliminary documents, returns comments		CEPH conducts on-site visit	CEPH prepares and circulates draft reports		CEPH makes accreditation decision
<—2-4 months—>	<—6-12 months—>			<—2 months—>	<—2 months—>	<—3 months—>			<—6 months—>

## **Checklist of Activities in an Accreditation Review**

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- \_\_\_ 1. Approximately two years before an accreditation term concludes, CEPH notifies the school or program that it will be reviewed during the upcoming review cycle. If a new school or program or a school or program making a transition to a new category of accreditation, an application is submitted.
- \_\_\_ 2. The program or school arranges for CEPH consultation, as appropriate or required, and conducts an analytical self-study.
- \_\_\_ 3. The school or program selects tentative site visit dates and advises CEPH of special expertise desired on the site visit team.
- \_\_\_ 4. CEPH establishes deadlines for submission of the preliminary and final self-study documents and other events leading up to the on-site visit.
- \_\_\_ 5. CEPH provides names and addresses of the councilor(s) and the site visit chairperson who will read the preliminary self-study document.
- \_\_\_ 6. CEPH bills school or program for the review fee.
- \_\_\_ 7. The school or program submits preliminary self-study document with attachments to CEPH offices, designated councilor(s) and the site visit chair approximately five months before site visit.
- \_\_\_ 8. CEPH notifies school or program that it must make its constituents aware of the opportunity to provide written third-party comments to CEPH offices.
- \_\_\_ 9. CEPH reviews preliminary document to determine whether review should proceed and offers suggestions and comments about improving the documentation.
- \_\_\_ 10. CEPH appoints site visit team, notifies school or program about team composition, inquires about conflicts of interest and provides mailing addresses to school or program.
- \_\_\_ 11. CEPH sends each team member background materials and other information needed in preparation of the site visit. If appropriate, CEPH also provides a summary of any complaints and a copy of any third-party comments.
- \_\_\_ 12. The school or program makes hotel reservations and ensures that individual confirmations are sent to team members.
- \_\_\_ 13. The school or program develops a tentative site visit agenda and consults with CEPH staff about its acceptability six to eight weeks prior to site visit.

- \_\_\_ 14. The school or program sends the final self-study document, current catalog or bulletin, site visit agenda and list of materials available in the on-site resource file to each team member, including the visit coordinator, one month prior to the visit. A set in addition to that sent to the visit coordinator, is forwarded to CEPH offices.
- \_\_\_ 15. CEPH advises university officials about upcoming campus visit.
- \_\_\_ 16. CEPH team conducts visit and determines the validity of the self-study document. Site visit chair reports major findings to school or program officials during exit interview.
- \_\_\_ 17. CEPH sends follow-up letters to team and university officials. Team members receive evaluation questionnaire.
- \_\_\_ 18. CEPH reimburses team members for travel and living expenses and submits invoice for all travel to school or program.
- \_\_\_ 19. The school or program submits payment for accreditation fee and reimbursement of expenses.
- \_\_\_ 20. CEPH staff prepares first draft of site team report and distributes to team members only for revisions and corrections.
- \_\_\_ 21. CEPH submits second draft to school or program for correction of factual errors or misinterpretations; dean or director invited to prepare written response.
- \_\_\_ 22. CEPH incorporates corrections in final draft and forwards, with written response, to each councilor. The report is sent to chief executive officer for comment.
- \_\_\_ 23. CEPH considers team report at its spring or fall board meeting. Councilors adopt team's report, as is or as amended, and make a decision about accreditation.
- \_\_\_ 24. CEPH notifies university official and dean or director of decision, transmitting final reports within 30 days of decision.
- \_\_\_ 25. CEPH notifies US Department of Education of final action within 30 days of decision or immediately in the case of an adverse action.
- \_\_\_ 26. CEPH sends other relevant notifications to the appropriate state agencies and recognized accrediting bodies.
- \_\_\_ 27. CEPH invites dean or director to evaluate the CEPH processes.
- \_\_\_ 28. CEPH makes accreditation report available to the public within 60 days of communicating final action to school or program. Written response by the school or program will be attached, if provided within 50 days.



## **Basic Site Visit Schedule for Schools of Public Health**

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This is a suggested agenda only. It identifies the types of individuals and groups the team should meet with and suggests a focus for the discussion around the accreditation criteria. Local circumstances may make it appropriate to deviate from this general framework. For example, schools may propose sessions whereby the site visit team would meet with each department individually or with two or more departments collectively in order for the team to focus its attention on specific academic units and their activities. The agenda should be developed in consultation with CEPH staff approximately six weeks before the site visit.

### **DAY 1**

(Minutes)

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| 15 min.     | Meeting with <b>self-study coordinator</b> to ask for agenda revisions or provide list of documents to be assembled   |
| 30 min.     | Team review of <b>resource file</b> and other documentation provided  |
| 60-120 min. | Meet with <b>school administration</b><br>Discuss: mission and goals<br>organization and setting<br>governance<br>resources   |
| 15 min.     | Break   |
| 30-60 min.  | Meet with <b>self-study or other committee</b><br>Discuss: mission and goals<br>evaluation<br>self-study  |
| 90 min.     | Lunch with <b>students</b><br>Discuss: instructional programs<br>student advising and other services<br>governance  |
| 90-120 min. | Meet with <b>teaching faculty</b> (in groups to be defined)<br>Discuss: instructional programs<br>core requirements<br>research<br>service<br>faculty<br>governance |
| 60 min.     | Team review of <b>resource file</b> and other documentation provided<br><br>Adjourn to dinner and executive session of team   |

**DAY 2**

- 120-180 min. Meet with **teaching faculty** (in groups to be defined)  
Discuss: instructional programs  
core requirements  
research  
service  
faculty  
governance
- 60 min. Lunch in executive session  
Review **resource file** and other documentation provided
- 30-45 min. Meet with **appropriate university officials**  
Discuss: setting and organization  
governance  
resources  
evaluation
- 45-90 min. Meet with **committees or selected faculty**  
Discuss: organization and setting  
faculty  
governance  
evaluation
- 15 min. Break
- 60 min. Meet with **alumni**  
Discuss: organization and setting  
instructional programs  
service  
faculty  
student services
- 60 min. Meet with **community representatives, employers of graduates, preceptors**  
Discuss: mission and goals  
instructional programs  
research  
service  
evaluation
- 30 min. Review of **resource file** and other documentation provided  
  
Adjourn to dinner and executive session

**DAY 3**

- |         |   |
|---------|---|
| (Open)  | Special meetings as requested by team<br>Tour of selected facilities (only at the request of the site visit team) |
| (Open)  | Working lunch in executive session<br>Review of resource file and other documents provided<br>Report preparation  |
| 45 min. | Exit interview (who attends is at the discretion of school administration)  |

## **Basic Site Visit Schedule for Public Health Programs**

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This is a suggested agenda only. It identifies the types of individuals and groups the team should interview and suggests a focus for the discussion around the accreditation criteria. Local circumstances may make it appropriate to deviate from this general framework. The agenda should be developed in consultation with CEPH staff approximately six weeks before the visit.

### **DAY 1**

(Minutes)

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| 30 min.     | Meeting with <b>self-study coordinator and/or program director</b> to ask for agenda revisions or provide list of documents to be assembled and review of resource file and other documentation provided |
| 60-120 min. | Meet with <b>program/department administration</b><br>Discuss: mission and goals<br>organization and setting<br>governance<br>resources<br>evaluation  |
| 15 min.     | Break  |
| 60-90 min.  | Meet with <b>public health core teaching faculty</b><br>Discuss: public health core<br>instructional programs  |
| 90 min.     | Lunch with <b>students</b><br>Discuss: instructional programs<br>student advising and other services<br>governance   |
| 90-120 min. | Meet with <b>teaching faculty</b> (in specialty or tracks)<br>Discuss: instructional programs<br>research<br>service<br>faculty<br>governance  |
| 15 min.     | Break  |
| 60 min.     | Meet with <b>alumni</b><br>Discuss: instructional programs<br>research<br>governance<br>evaluation   |

**DAY 1 (continued)**

(Minutes)

60-90 min. Meet with **community representatives, employers of graduates, and preceptors**  
Discuss: instructional programs  
research  
governance  
evaluation

Adjourn to dinner and executive session of team

**DAY 2**

30-45 min. Meet with **university/school officials** (ie, dean and provost and/or president/chancellor)  
Discuss: mission and goals  
organization and setting  
governance  
resources  
evaluation

(Open) Special meetings as requested by team  
Tour of selected facilities (only at the request of the site visit team)

(Open) Working lunch in executive session  
Review of resource file and other documents provided  
Report preparation

60 min. Exit interview (who attends is at the discretion of program administration)

## **Evaluation of CEPH Accreditation Review Process**

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### **Evaluation by Site Team Members**

#### **1. Procedural Arrangements**

- a. Were the arrangements for your participation handled adequately by CEPH staff?
- b. Were communications before the visit handled by CEPH staff on a timely basis?
- c. Were the materials provided to you by CEPH before the visit adequate to prepare you for your responsibilities on site?
- d. Were the arrangements made by the school or program adequate?
- e. Do you suggest any procedural changes?

#### **2. Self-Study Document**

- a. Did the self-study document adequately respond to all CEPH criteria?
- b. Were the issues and problems identified in the self-study consistent with those evident during the on-site visit?
- c. Do CEPH criteria provide a sufficiently explicit basis on which to make a reasonable judgment about compliance by the school or program?
- d. Are the criteria valid indicators for judging quality of a school or program?
- e. Do you suggest any changes in the accreditation criteria?
- f. Do you suggest any changes in the format or content of the self-study document?

#### **3. On-Site Visit**

- a. Did the organization of the agenda and time allotted to each session facilitate necessary information-gathering?
- b. Did interviews focus on the school's or program's major strengths, weaknesses and issues?
- c. Based on the exit interview, should the school or program have realistic expectations about what the written report will include?
- d. Did the team have adequate time to discuss and analyze the information gathered during the visit?
- e. Do you suggest any changes in the structure or conduct of the visit?

#### **4. Overall Evaluation**

- a. Was participation in this site visit worthwhile in light of the time and effort required?
- b. If applicable, how does the CEPH process compare with other accreditation agencies with which you are familiar?
- c. Please provide any additional comments you wish to make about the accreditation process.

#### **Evaluation of Site Team Chair**

1. Was the site visit chair effective in conducting the executive sessions of the site visit team?
2. Did the site visit chair provide sufficient guidance to the site visitors throughout the review process?
3. Did the site visit chair manage the agenda well in the time allotted?
4. Did the chair facilitate participation by team members and school or program constituents during the on-site visit?
5. Did the chair manage the on-site process so that school or program constituents were clear about the purpose of the visit and were aware of the needs and expectations of the team?
6. To your knowledge, did the chair accurately reflect CEPH policy, current practices and procedures?
7. During the exit interview, did the site visit chair present the findings and accurately represent the conclusions of the site visit team?

## **Evaluation by School and Program Officials**

### **1. Procedural Arrangements**

- a. Did CEPH staff manage the procedural aspects of the accreditation process – from initial notification to final transmittal of the decision – expeditiously?
- b. Was the process consistent with information provided in the procedures manual?
- c. Did CEPH provide you with sufficient consultation throughout the process?
- d. Do you suggest any procedural changes?

### **2. Self-Study Process**

- a. Was the self-study process beneficial to your school's or program's constituents (students, faculty, administration, community representatives and alumni)?
- b. Given its benefits, did the self-study process require a reasonable expenditure of resources?
- c. Did the criteria provide a useful base for organizing your self-study?
- d. Are the criteria by which the school or program is evaluated appropriate, clear and fair?
- e. Are the criteria to be valid indicators for judging quality of a school or program?
- f. Do you suggest any changes in the accreditation criteria?

### **3. On-Site Visit**

- a. Was the composition of the team appropriate for your school or program?
- b. Was the team sufficiently prepared to conduct the on-site evaluation at your school or program?
- c. Did the site visitors address the major issues and problems identified in your self-study during the on-site interviews?
- d. Were the findings from the exit interview consistent with the findings subsequently communicated in the team's written report?
- e. Do you suggest any changes in the structure or conduct of the on-site visit?



#### **4. Overall Evaluation**

- a. Was the final accreditation report an accurate and fair representation of your school or program?
- b. In what specific ways were the self-study process and on-site visit of benefit to your school or program? In what ways were they not beneficial?
- c. If applicable, in what ways, if any, was this accreditation review more or less satisfactory than the last?
- d. Do you wish to make any additional comments about the accreditation process?