

New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc.
Commission on Independent Schools — <http://cis.neasc.org>

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Founded in 1885

Policy and Procedure for a Substantive Change Report*

*A school will submit a Substantive Change Report when one or more grades, an Early Childhood, Residential, or Post-Graduate Program are added or for a change in ownership or other significant change.

Amending Accreditation Based on A Substantive Change

Introduction

A school already accredited by NEASC may find itself substantially changed from the time of their most recent accreditation review. For example, it may add grades or a residential program to its existing structure or have a change in ownership.

The following protocol must be followed when a member school applies for a revision in its accreditation status to cover a wide range of changes without necessarily going through a comprehensive self-study and full visiting committee process.

Principles and Policies

1. NEASC recognizes the dynamic nature of its member schools and the fact that school communities go through major, sometimes rapid, changes.
2. NEASC will preserve the flexible, supportive nature of its accreditation process so as to ensure that schools have the opportunity to obtain accredited status for the substantive change without unnecessary work or expense.
3. NEASC will also preserve the integrity and status of its accreditation process. The substantive change will therefore require reporting and evaluation using the two sets of “benchmarks” which apply to all NEASC accreditation processes, namely:
 - The school’s own mission
 - The NEASC Standards for Accreditation
4. Upon notification from a school of a substantive change, the school’s accreditation will automatically be extended to include the new program(s).
5. NEASC requires the school to file a Substantive Change Report by the requested deadline, typically at the completion of one full year of the new program(s). This report may be followed by a Focused Visit from the Commission.
6. Subsequent procedures will be established by the Commission upon review of the Substantive Change Report and any related Focused Visit Report.

7. If the effect of the substantive change is such that the general nature of the entire school is likely to be radically changed, NEASC reserves the right to require the whole school to submit itself to a complete evaluation. This would only be required in very special cases and after in-depth discussions between the school and NEASC.

NOTE: The Commission may at its discretion expedite the schedule described above and may take steps at any time to assure a school's compliance with the Standards.

Practical Steps

The practical steps involved in extending accreditation to include a substantive change are as follows:

1. A school will notify the NEASC office of the change.
2. NEASC will supply the school with a Substantive Change Report form as applicable. The report must be submitted by the requested deadline, typically at the completion of one full year of the new program(s).
3. Following receipt of the report, a one-day Focused Visit from the Commission may be scheduled. The visitor or visitors will submit a brief report to the Commission which will determine if the initial extension of the school's accreditation is to be confirmed or revised.
4. The Commission will consider the Substantive Change Report submitted by the school and the report of any related Focused Visit. There are two possible outcomes which are:
 - a. Accreditation is confirmed to include the substantive change
 - b. Accreditation is confirmed with a Special Progress Report due to address specific issues.
5. Once final approval is made by the Commission, the substantive change will be incorporated into any further accreditation or Interim Evaluation Reports required.

Preparing the Substantive Change Report

The Head of School is responsible for submitting the completed Substantive Change Report to the Commission. The work involved in completing the report form and submitting the additional documents required will in some ways be a “mini Self-Study” based on the NEASC Standards for Accreditation, which is a valuable exercise in itself. However, it is anticipated that the process will not be too time-consuming, especially as the majority of the required documents will be copies of items already in use within the school.

While the Head of School has the overall responsibility for the submission of the report, it is envisioned that other appropriate members of the school community will actively collaborate in the process. The members of the school’s administration and faculty most directly involved in supervising the proposed substantive change will certainly be expected to take part in the completion of the report.

The report will consist of the following:

1. Completing the Substantive Change Report as applicable and providing the requested documents or supporting materials.
2. Completing a rating of each of the Standards using the Compliance with the Standards for Accreditation Related to a Substantive Change form. Suggested indicators do not need to be utilized as in an initial or decennial accreditation process, unless a school finds this process useful.