

# *Standards and Criteria*



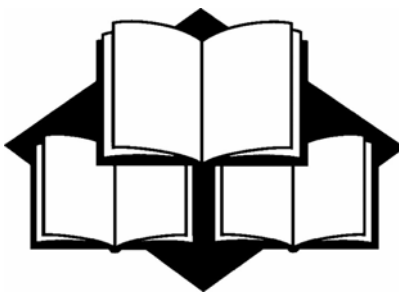
## **Program Accreditation**

**The American Academy for Liberal  
Education**

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# STANDARDS AND CRITERIA

## PROGRAM ACCREDITATION



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## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Readers of this handbook will note that the American Academy for Liberal Education differs from other accrediting agencies in significant ways. First, its scope is national, not regional. Second, the Academy's membership includes both institutions - universities and colleges - and programs within institutions of higher education. *Most importantly, the Academy's focuses on a specific kind of education: liberal arts education.*

Liberal learning - broad learning about the universe and nature, and about humanity and human achievements - is needed now more than ever. While it is undoubtedly true that specialized knowledge and training will increase in importance as we move into the twenty-first century, highly specialized knowledge or technical expertise alone cannot provide an understanding of human powers, abilities, or aims, nor can it provide us with sound advice about the uses to which such specialized knowledge and technical expertise should be put. This is why reflective education about what is permanent and common to all, combined with rigorous preparation in the habits of learning, in the deepening of understanding, and in the skills of articulate expression, remains the central purpose of undergraduate education.

Accreditation by the American Academy for Liberal Education signifies program integrity and a strong commitment to undergraduate education. Membership attests to the fact that the program meets or exceeds the Academy's independently established *Education Standards*. These standards require students to complete demanding studies in the arts and sciences taught by senior as well as junior faculty. Consequently, they provide interested parties - including parents and prospective students - a means of distinguishing between colleges and programs with focused, well-articulated goals for liberal learning in areas such as history, mathematics, science, literature, languages and philosophy, and those with lower expectations that fail to reflect a coherent approach to liberal education.

The American Academy welcomes inquiries from degree programs, within institutions accredited by a US Department of Education approved accreditor, that share the Academy's dedication to the highest standards of undergraduate teaching and learning. Both traditional campus based programs and distance oriented programs may apply.

Jeffrey D. Wallin  
President

## MISSION STATEMENT

The American Academy for Liberal Education is a national association for the accreditation of institutions and programs offering quality general education in the liberal arts that meet the **Academy's administrative, fiscal, and education criteria**. The Academy employs its specially designed *Education Standards* to evaluate an institution's academic requirements, practices and performance in the pursuit of excellence in liberal education. Universities, colleges, or baccalaureate degree programs within such institutions may apply for accreditation.

A distinguishing feature of the Academy's accreditation process is its two-tier system for reviewing applicants' academic quality. The Academy's *Council of Scholars* is comprised of distinguished teachers and scholars committed to the purposes of liberal arts education. The Council independently reviews the academic requirements and practices of each applicant institution or program, and reports its findings to the Academy's *Board of Trustees*, which is comprised of prominent educators and other public figures. The Board, which is charged with responsibility for all accreditation actions, then conducts its comprehensive review of applicants' educational, administrative, and fiscal performance. This system of dual review ensures that the educational performance of applicant institutions and programs receives the highest level of professional and independent appraisal.

The American Academy for Liberal Education is located in the nation's Capital and is non-profit, non-partisan, and non-sectarian. *The Academy is listed by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education as a recognized national accrediting agency for the accreditation and preaccreditation of institutions of higher education and programs within institutions of higher education that offer liberal arts degrees up to the baccalaureate level.*

**Note on the use of these standards:** While the Academy's natural focus is on the quality of the instruction, one should not discount the sections dealing with resources, institution standards, finances or student support services. All of these have a significant bearing on the quality of the education and should be reflective of the college's mission regarding the liberal arts.

Readers of these *Standards* should note that all of the Academy's education standards reflect the requirement that colleges take their missions seriously and that educational assessment is part of the lifeblood of the college and not seen as merely a necessary hoop to be jumped through. Assessment should be viewed as a way for the college to inform itself and interested outsiders whether it is fulfilling its' mission. Colleges preparing to write their self-study should also consult the Academy's *Self Study* and *Guided Self-Study* manuals for guidance on how to sufficiently address the Academy's *Standards*.

## Part I. Education Standards and Criteria

Forming liberally educated men and women has always been the leading aim of undergraduate programs in the liberal arts. For this reason the American Academy for Liberal Education believes that a program's demonstrated ability to instill and develop in its students the characteristics of liberally educate persons is the soundest basis for liberal arts accreditation. The Academy's *Education Standards* implement this principle in two distinct and complementary ways.

At the fore is the Academy's unique **Liberal Learning Assessment** standard and criteria. The Academy asks programs to reflect upon and to describe and document their success in instilling and developing in their students the characteristics of liberally educated persons. These characteristics include an ability to reason clearly and effectively about important questions and issues, the acquisition of a rich fund of meaningful knowledge, and an inclination for seeking out and acquiring knowledge and skills. The Academy's Liberal Learning Assessment criteria are intended to open or extend a program-wide dialogue on aims for student learning as well as on means for determining whether those aims are being met. These criteria are carefully designed to be appropriate to the nature, goals, and means of liberal education and can accommodate the widest variety of curricular models and approaches.

The *Education Standards* are also crafted to ensure that the cornerstones of a liberal arts program focus clearly and coherently on providing students with a comprehensive liberal education. *Education Standards* ask programs to describe their mission and educational aims, their conception and implementation of programs of study designed to fulfill those aims, their formation of a faculty well-qualified to carry out those programs of study, and their development of appropriate learning resources for those programs. These elements of an educational enterprise are the foundation and framework for student achievement in liberal learning.

The Academy's *Standards and Criteria for Program Accreditation* are designed for use by programs offering liberal arts education at the baccalaureate level. Programs preparing self-studies for accreditation should respond to each standard as well as to its associated criteria, always reflecting on the ways their mission, curriculum, teaching, learning resources, and learning assessment practices help to support and achieve the aim of forming liberally educated men and women.

## Standard One: Liberal Learning Assessment

The formation of liberally educated men and women has always been the guiding purpose of undergraduate liberal arts institutions. For this reason the American Academy for Liberal Education views demonstrable success in forming liberally educated men and women as the true sign of excellence in undergraduate liberal arts education.

AALE expects members to develop and implement assessment plans for determining success in meeting their liberal arts mission and educational aims. *The Academy does not prescribe specific methods or instruments of assessment; rather, institutions are urged to develop and implement assessment plans appropriate to their mission and to the character and context of their educational program.* AALE does expect that assessment will be both regular and comprehensive, and that members will use the results to improve teaching and learning. Faculty should have a central role in developing this process and evaluating results. Please refer to the Academy's *Liberal Learning Assessment Standards* in **Appendices I** and the *Policy on Learning Assessment for Liberal Arts Institutions* found in **Appendices II** of this publication, as well as the manuals for writing the self-study.

The Academy's unique *Liberal Learning Assessment Standards* first invite programs to reflect and report on the ways their educational programs actually foster the growth and flourishing of key characteristics, such as the ability to reason and communicate effectively, possession of a certain breadth and depth of knowledge, and a well-founded love of learning. *These characteristics should be recognizable across a broad spectrum of approaches to liberal education.*

The Academy's *Liberal Learning Assessment Standards* then require programs to report on their regular practices and processes for assessing the effectiveness of their liberal arts programs. To make well-rounded judgments concerning effectiveness, it is important to have access to a wide range of information. For this reason, liberal learning assessment programs should make use of multiple approaches and kinds of information; **both qualitative and quantitative evaluations of student achievement should be considered, as appropriate. At root the Academy asks its members to reflect on their missions and whether they are achieving that mission.**

### *Liberal Learning Assessment Criterion One - Effective Reasoning*

An education in the liberal arts always seeks to develop students' abilities to recognize and to think clearly about important issues and questions. The ability to reason effectively includes certain foundational skills or abilities (e.g., fluency in reading, writing, and oral communication, mastery of the basic principles of logical, mathematical, and scientific reasoning), as well as higher-order capacities for formulating, analyzing, integrating, and applying arguments and information.

Aspects of effective reasoning that programs should seek to assess through appropriate means may include:

- Demonstrated attainment of the necessary foundational abilities of effective reasoning - e.g., fluency in reading, writing, and oral communication, and mastery of the basic principles of logical, mathematical, and scientific reasoning - during the first year of coursework or at the conclusion of the general education program.
- The ability to frame reasonable arguments, support them with relevant evidence, and anticipate likely counter-arguments, along with the complementary ability to analyze arguments rationally, evaluate the evidence supporting them, and frame reasonable and persuasive counter-arguments.
- The ability to recognize and evaluate new information, integrate that information into existing frameworks of knowledge, and adapt those frameworks as necessary or appropriate.
- The ability to identify and apply standards of intellectual rigor or precision appropriate to different kinds of subject matter.
- The ability to engage in reasoned and sustained discussions of important issues or questions. The ability to elucidate orally and in writing different or opposing perspectives evenhandedly and dispassionately.

#### *Liberal Learning Assessment Criterion Two - Broad and Deep Learning*

A liberally educated person should possess a rich fund of meaningful knowledge, as well as the ability to compare and integrate new and diverse areas of knowledge in fruitful ways. *A program's general education curriculum should impart a broad foundational knowledge of the various liberal arts and sciences. In most cases, students will also experience the depth of learning that comes from a sustained, progressive exploration of the distinct modes of inquiry belonging to one or more of the major disciplines.* Through such studies or their equivalents, students acquire the ability to relate disparate areas of the arts and sciences to one another, as well as to integrate knowledge gained across different fields of study.

Aspects of breadth and depth in student learning that programs should seek to assess through appropriate means may include:

- A familiarity with the essential knowledge, principles, and methods proper to the various subject areas or disciplines represented in the general education requirements.
- The ability to relate the different subject areas or disciplines represented in the general education curriculum to one another in cogent and significant ways.
- A thorough grasp of the basic knowledge, principles, or methods proper to one or more of the major disciplines or their equivalent.

- The ability to relate and integrate the knowledge, principles, and methods of study and analysis acquired in the student's major field with the knowledge gained in the general education curriculum.
- A broad understanding of the political and historical foundations of American government and society, together with a habit of bringing relevant knowledge of past thought and events to bear on contemporary questions.
- A thoughtful grasp of the principles and history of liberal and democratic institutions and government generally, as well as of their practical workings, along with a proven ability to take up the responsibilities and privileges of liberal and democratic citizenship on campus, in one's immediate community, or in larger circles of human society.
- An understanding of and an ability to discuss the political and cultural history of Western civilization, together with a habit of bringing relevant knowledge of past thought and events to bear on contemporary questions. The ability to communicate effectively in an appropriate foreign or non-native language is a natural gateway to such studies.
- An understanding of and an ability to discuss the political and cultural history of a non-Western civilization (or in the case of students of non-Western origin, at least one non-native civilization), along with the ability to relate that history to the student's native culture in intellectually cogent and significant ways. The ability to communicate effectively in an appropriate foreign or non-native language is an ideal complement to such cross-cultural or comparative learning.
- A substantial acquaintance with the various areas and salient issues of scientific and technological knowledge and research, along with a basic understanding of the ethical, philosophical, and cultural implications of scientific and technological research and development. This study should include a substantial experience with laboratory principles and methods.

*Liberal Learning Assessment Criterion Three - The Inclination to Inquire*

An education in the liberal arts and sciences is more than the mere accumulation of knowledge and skills. It fosters and encourages the student's desire for seeking out and acquiring important knowledge and skills, *both for their own sake and for the good they contribute to our common and individual lives*. For this reason, a disposition for asking incisive and insightful questions and for pursuing enriching and useful skills is perhaps the surest sign of a liberally educated mind.

Aspects of students' inclination to inquire that programs should seek to assess through appropriate means may include:

- The development of a reflective and inquisitive turn of mind, one that actively weighs the judgments and information put to it by authorities, by peer groups, by conventional wisdom, or by the habit of its own convictions.

- The ability to question and assess one's own knowledge, abilities, and performance accurately and without self-deception, along with the willingness and initiative to seek out and acquire relevant knowledge and training in areas of weakness.
- The ability to bring to bear the knowledge and skills acquired in academic pursuits to important issues, questions, and endeavors outside the academy and the disposition to seek out new knowledge and skills in and beyond the classroom.
- The development of a personally significant and continually examined perspective on historically and philosophically important answers to the question, "What is the good life?"
- The development of a personally significant and continually examined perspective on historically and philosophically important answers to the questions, "What is the common good?" and "What is the best social order?"

Institutions should consult the Academy's *Liberal Learning Assessment Standards: Suggested Areas for Inquiry and Investigation* in Appendices I of this document for more on how an institution might fulfill the Liberal Learning Assessment section, as well as the manuals related to writing the self-study.

## **Standard Two: Program Mission**

The Academy understands undergraduate liberal arts programs to have three broad educational aims: *introducing students to the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake as well as for the good it brings to self and society, cultivating thoughtful and responsible persons and citizens, and preparing young men and women for the world of work.* The Academy recognizes that liberal arts programs will seek to achieve these broad goals in a great variety of ways, providing their students with excellent yet distinctive educations.

It is important that liberal arts programs *define clearly their special character, traditions, and educational objectives.* It is equally important that these distinctive aims and characteristics are communicated accurately and effectively to students, parents, educators and administrators, and the general public.

The Academy's **Mission** standard invite programs to reflect and report on the nature of their mission and educational objectives, and on the ways they communicate these to the various communities they serve.

### **Mission Standard**

The program's mission statement reflects the importance and centrality of liberal education and states the program's purposes and goals in a manner that corresponds to the way in which the curriculum is actually organized and taught.

#### ***Criteria for Mission***

- 1 The program's promotional and informational materials and activities are truthful, accurate, and current with regard to its educational mission and purposes. This statement is approved by the appropriate governance procedure, appropriately published and disseminated, and is understood by faculty, administrators, and students. The program's mission statement or statement of purposes is made readily available to prospective applicants and to the general public.
- 2 The program regularly reviews its mission statement or statement of purposes as part of its ongoing efforts to assess and improve its performance.
- 3 *The program has well-defined educational objectives that are consistent with its mission and appropriate to the degrees and certificates it awards. These educational objectives are stated clearly, published and disseminated appropriately, and govern expectations for student achievement. The program regularly reviews its educational objectives as part of its ongoing efforts to assess and improve its performance.*

4. The program agrees to inform the Academy in a timely manner of any substantive changes to its mission, organization, or educational objectives. The program understands that any substantive changes must be evaluated and approved by the Academy. Substantive changes include, but are not limited to, changes in mission, ownership, governance structure, curriculum, degree programs and requirements, and general education Please consult the *AALE Policies and Procedures Manual* for a complete definition of substantive changes.
5. For distance education programs, the mission must be consistent with the goals of liberal learning in a traditional campus setting.

**Mission Standard: Liberty of Thought and Speech**

Liberty of thought and freedom of speech are supported and protected, bound only by such rules of civility and order as to facilitate intellectual inquiry and the search for truth.

**Criteria**

1. The program has a clear, published, and appropriately disseminated policy defining its commitment to liberty of thought and freedom of speech.
2. Any limitations on freedom of speech related to a program's affirmation of particular religious principles or beliefs must be clearly specified, published, and appropriately disseminated. *It is especially important that such limitations be clearly described in a program's recruitment and informational materials for students, faculty, and administrative personnel.*
3. For distance education programs, liberty of thought and freedom of speech must be demonstrated to be upheld as they would on a traditional campus or classroom.

## **Standard Three: General Education and Curriculum**

At most institutions of higher learning students receive a foundation in the diverse skills and subject areas of the arts and sciences through a program of general education. This broad foundation is usually complemented by a more focused exploration of the knowledge and methods of one disciplinary area or major.

The Academy's **General Education and Curriculum** standards invite programs to reflect and report on the ways their curricula acquaint students in rigorous and substantial ways with both the breadth and the depth of liberal learning. *Variations from the particular academic norms described in these standards are acceptable in cases where the demonstrated excellence of the general education program as a whole assures substantial fulfillment of these standards.*

### **General Education and Curriculum Criterion One**

The program defines and enforces academic entrance requirements that prepare students to take the required college-level general education courses.

#### **Criteria**

- 1 The program's catalogs, student handbooks, or other publications clearly and accurately describe:
  - a. Admissions requirements;
  - b. Academic requirements and responsibilities for enrolled students;
  - c. Policies regarding academic dismissal, suspension, probation, and readmission;
  - d. Policies regarding the collection and retention of student academic records; and
  - e. Procedures for lodging appeals or complaints.

This information is made readily available to faculty, prospective students, and students enrolled in the program, including those enrolled in distance education courses.

- 2 The program regularly reviews its admissions requirements and requirements for enrolled students as part of its ongoing efforts to assess and improve its performance.
- 3 The program ensures that information concerning admissions requirements and requirements for enrolled students is truthfully and accurately communicated by the program's admissions staff and representatives to prospective students.

- 4 The program ensures that its promotional and informational materials and activities are clear, accurate, and current with regard to its admissions requirements and requirements for enrolled students, as well as its enrollment, retention, graduation, graduate acceptance, and job placement data. This information is made readily available to prospective students, to students enrolled in the program, and to the general public.

### **General Education and Curriculum Criterion Two**

The baccalaureate requirements in the liberal arts and sciences call for *not less than a third of the student's course work to be taken within the **general education requirement***, except when equivalent attainment is proven by examination.

#### **Criteria**

- 1 The program's catalog, as well as its promotional and informational materials are clear, accurate, and current with regard to its general education requirements. They are also clear, accurate and current with regard to placement and exemption policies for particular courses within the general education requirement. This information is published and made readily available to prospective and enrolled students.
- 2 The program has well-defined policies concerning the transfer of general education credit from other institutions. These policies ensure that incoming transfer students fulfill the requirement that not less than one third of a student's course work is taken within the general education requirement or equivalents. These policies are communicated clearly and accurately by the program's admissions staff and representatives, as well as in its published informational material.

### **General Education and Curriculum Criterion Three**

The general education requirement ensures a basic knowledge of the arts and sciences. This foundation will generally include, but need not be limited to, a basic knowledge of mathematics and the physical as well as biological science, including laboratory experience; intermediate knowledge of a foreign language; the study of literature and literary classics; and the study of the political, philosophical, and cultural history of Western civilization, and the foundations and principles of American society. Variations from these norms are acceptable in cases where the excellence of the general education program as a whole ensures substantial fulfillment of this standard or where non-Western or non-American components are obviously not warranted; e.g., for colleges outside the US.

## Criteria

- 1 The program's catalog and promotional and informational materials are clear, accurate, and current with regard to its general education course and subject requirements. This information is published and made readily available to prospective and enrolled students.
- 2 The program has a regular process for general education curriculum formation and review. The roles of the faculty, administration, and governing board in this process are clearly defined. Curricular offerings and programs not requiring governing board approval are subject to appropriate governance procedures.
- 3 The program has well-defined policies concerning the transfer of general education credit from other institutions. These policies ensure that incoming transfer students fulfill the program's general education course and subject requirements or reasonable equivalents. These policies are communicated clearly and accurately by the program's admissions staff and representatives, as well as in its published informational material.
4. The Academy believes the purposes of general education can most be met by a required course of study including, but not limited to, the arts and sciences noted in the above standard. Institutions that have adopted alternative approaches in constructing their general education programs should explain how their general education program fulfills this standard.
- 5 The program's faculty assumes responsibility for and exercises oversight over *distance education*, ensuring both the rigor of the program and the quality of the instruction.
- 6 Should *distance education* be offered through a contractual relationship, the program retains the responsibility for the academic elements.

### **General Education and Curriculum Criterion Four**

The program evaluates student progress in learning the elements of general education taught under Standard Eight and ascertains how well it meets the educational goals it has set for itself, either by means of a general examination or some academic equivalent.

## Criteria

The Academy believes that student learning in the elements of general education should be evaluated *in verifiable and consistent ways*. The assessment methods and instruments used should emphasize the quality of knowledge acquired as well as the development of the intellectual abilities and characteristics associated with liberal education.

In addition to providing responses to the criteria below, institutions and programs should describe and document their approaches to the assessment of student learning in their comprehensive responses to the Academy's unique **Liberal Learning Assessment** standards.

- 1 The program conducts regular and on-going assessment of the effectiveness of its general education and degree programs, in light of the liberal arts mission and educational objectives. Assessment processes are clearly defined, comprehensive and integrated into the overall institutional planning and evaluation strategy. These assessment processes are consistent with the *Policy on Learning Assessment for Liberal Arts Institutions* (or Programs) (See Appendix II).
- 2 The faculty are responsible for the evaluation of student achievement.
- 3 The program *identifies and publishes learning aims for its general education and degree programs, including online or distance education courses*. Through regular assessment, the program demonstrates that students who complete these programs have fulfilled these aims.
- 4 The program provides evidence that its assessment activities are used to improve teaching and learning effectiveness.
5. Programs that utilize online or distance education mechanisms for course delivery, are to demonstrate that the assessment methods and data are accurate measures of student achievement and that assessment feedback is used to improve teaching and student learning in the program and to ensure comparability to campus-based programs. Prospective students must be given access to assessment data.

#### **General Education and Curriculum Criterion Five**

The curriculum's prerequisite structure, as defined and enforced, ensures an orderly progression from elementary to advanced levels of knowledge, and the course definitions in the catalogue distinguish clearly among those considered fundamental (either to a general education or to mastery of a major), those less so, and those that belong to specialized subjects.

#### **Criteria**

- 1 *The program regularly reviews its general education, major, and degree requirements in the light of its mission, educational objectives, and commonly accepted academic norms*. The roles of the faculty, administration, and governing board in this process are clearly defined. Activities and programs not requiring governing board approval are subject to appropriate governance procedures.

- 2 The program ensures that students and faculty have a clear understanding of the educational goals and requirements of its majors, as well as of the methods of evaluation used.
- 3 The program ensures a reasonable correspondence between program length and degree awarded and between credit hours awarded and clock hours of instructional time, including lectures, laboratory, and other learning experiences. Distance education courses should be reasonably comparable with on-campus courses.
- 4 The program faculty determine residency requirements, number of courses or credit hours required for each major or degree, minimum acceptable grade point averages, appropriate means of assessing student learning, and allowable time frames for degree completion.
- 5 For each major there is at least one full-time, competent faculty member responsible for oversight and coordination.
- 6 The program's promotional and informational materials and activities are clear, accurate, and current with regard to its curriculum content and structure, major requirements, and degree program requirements. This information is published and made readily available to prospective and enrolled students and is communicated clearly and accurately by the program's admissions staff and representatives, as well as by its academic advisors.
7. For *distance education*, the college or program assesses student capability to succeed in the program and ensures that the enrolled students have the background, knowledge, and technical skills needed to undertake the distance education program.
- 8 The *distance or online* program must be shown to be coherent and complete.

### **General Education and Curriculum Criterion Six**

Students write substantial essays during every stage of progress as undergraduates and thereby demonstrate their proficiency in written English.

#### **Criteria**

- 1 The program ensures that students and faculty have a clear understanding of the educational purpose and goals of its English writing requirements.

- 2 The program regularly reviews its requirements, instruction, and evidence of student learning in English writing as part of its ongoing efforts to assess and improve its performance.
3. For distance education programs, it must be demonstrated that students are required to write throughout the curriculum and that consistent and coherent feedback is given to students.

## **Standard Four: Teaching and Educational Resources**

The faculty is the body principally responsible for implementing the curriculum of a liberal arts program, as well as for ensuring that its educational objectives are met. Accordingly, the Academy believes that the primary activity of a liberal arts faculty is teaching, understood both in the special sense of classroom instruction and, more broadly, as the guidance and mentoring essential to the formation of liberally educated persons. In addition to the faculty, certain educational resources - the library and other information sources foremost among them - are vital to a liberal arts program's ability to achieve its educational objectives.

The Academy's **Teaching and Educational Resources** standards invite programs to reflect and report on the ways their teaching faculty, pedagogical and advisement practices, and educational resources enable them to carry out their mission and achieve their educational objectives. For institutions utilizing **virtual classrooms and instruction**, it must be clearly demonstrated that the resources available are adequate and parallel those of traditional classrooms.

### **Teaching and Educational Resources Criterion One**

The importance of teaching is featured, supported, and rewarded in the life of the program.

#### **Criteria**

- 1 The program employs faculty who are qualified to carry out its educational purposes, who are properly prepared to teach the courses to which they are assigned, and who demonstrate effective teaching.
- 2 The program employs regular procedures for monitoring teaching effectiveness.
- 3 The program observes regular procedures for recruitment, appointment, evaluation, and promotion of its faculty, both full and part-time. These procedures should honor excellence in teaching and, where appropriate, in scholarship as well. These procedures are published and appropriately disseminated.
- 4 The program maintains appropriate documentation of academic credentials for all faculty, both full and part-time, and makes clear through its publications the status (e.g., full-time, part-time, adjunct), titles (e.g., professor, associate professor, assistant professor, adjunct professor, lecturer, tutor), and academic credentials of its faculty.
5. For distance education programs, it must be demonstrated that a regime is in place to ensure that faculty are both qualified and assessed for teaching effectiveness

and that resources are afforded the students and faculty as they would be in a traditional classroom setting. The college is to demonstrate that their faculties are competent to teach in a virtual classroom setting, through training or some other mechanism.

### **Teaching and Educational Resources Criterion Two**

Class size is appropriate to subject matter, level of instruction, and need for class discussion.

#### **Criteria**

- 1 The program defines and enforces class size or course enrollment policies that are appropriate to its mission and to the educational objectives of its general education curriculum as well as its majors.
- 2 The program regularly reviews its class size and enrollment policies as part of its ongoing efforts to assess and improve its performance.
3. For distance education courses, the program must demonstrate that it treats the size of the virtual classroom as it would a traditional one.
- 4 Distance and online courses provide a mechanism for timely and appropriate interaction between students and faculty as well as among students.

### **Teaching and Educational Resources Criterion Three**

Regular faculty members, including senior ones, teach introductory general education courses, as well as introductory courses within majors, and are regularly engaged in academic counseling.

#### **Criteria**

- 1 The program regularly reviews and assesses its instructional and advisement policies to ensure that these are appropriate to its mission and to the educational objectives of its general education curriculum, as well as its majors.
- 2 The program regularly reviews and assesses its academic counseling policies to ensure that these are appropriate to its mission and to the educational objectives of its academic programs, including distance education courses.

### **Teaching and Educational Resources Criterion Four**

The library and other information resources, including online or electronic resources, are adequate to the demands of the institution's programs and students are encouraged or required to utilize scholarly resources.

#### **Criteria**

1. The program owns or provides its students with access to library and other information resources adequate to the demands of its educational programs, including online and distance education programs or courses.
2. The program regularly assesses the adequacy of its library and other information resources as part of its ongoing efforts to assess and improve its performance and resources. Review and approval processes ensure the appropriateness of the technology used in all programs, including distance education.
3. The college has clear policies concerning ownership of material, faculty compensation, copyright issues, and the utilization of revenue derived from the creation and production of software, tele-courses, or other media products.

### **Standard Five: Program Standards**

#### **Criteria**

##### **Institutional and Program Finances**

1. The institution ensures that it has sufficient financial resources to support the program applying for accreditation. The institution's recent financial history indicates that it is financially stable and able to support all its functions in a continuous manner consistent with the Academy's standards and with the institution's mission and educational objectives.
2. The institution ensures that per student funding of the program applying for accreditation compares favorably with the per student funding of its other academic programs.
3. The institution undergoes annual fiscal audits by independent certified public accountants or an appropriate governmental auditing agency. The institution submits or agrees to submit the results of such audits to the Academy and other agencies as required.

4. The institution utilizes an accounting system that follows generally accepted principles of institutional accounting as these appear in the appropriate NACUBO or AICPA regulations.
5. The institution's long-range planning, budgeting, and policy development processes reflect the facilities, staffing, equipment and other resources essential to the viability and effectiveness of all programs, including *distance education*.

#### **International Students**

6. Programs enrolling international students ensure that such students are admitted and served responsibly. Those programs ensure that their admissions staff and representatives clearly and accurately convey information concerning admissions requirements and financial obligations to prospective international students. Academic policies, requirements, and expectations are the same for international students as for other students.

#### **Student Athletics**

7. The institution ensures that its intercollegiate athletics programs adhere to an officially approved written statement of policy consistent with the institution's mission and educational objectives. Academic policies, requirements, and expectations are the same for students involved in intercollegiate athletics as for other students.

#### **Student Complaints**

8. The program permits the Academy to review student complaints on matters related to the Academy's measures of accreditation. The institution makes available to students in appropriate way the Academy's mailing address, e-mail address, and telephone number.

#### **Student Records and Privacy**

9. The program maintains appropriate academic records for students and secures these records adequately. The program has well-defined and published policies concerning the types of information to be included in students' permanent records and the security, release, retention, and disposal of such information
10. The program has clear and published policies concerning the confidentiality of student academic record and students' right to privacy.

#### **Facilities**

11. The program provides for its students and faculty a setting and atmosphere conducive to inquiry, discussion, learning, and contemplation.

11. The program's instructional, research, co-curricular, and support facilities are adequate to the needs of the program in relation to its stated mission, educational objectives and programs, and other integral activities.
12. The program regularly reviews the adequacy of its instructional, research, co-curricular, and support facilities in relation to its stated mission, programs, and activities as part of its ongoing efforts to assess and improve its performance.
13. The program ensures that student support services provided by the institution are adequate to the needs of the students enrolled in the program. Evidence should be provided that these services are adequate to the needs of students enrolled in the distance education courses as well.

**Branch Campuses, Off-Campus Teaching Sites, Distance Education Programs**

13. The program ensures that the educational standards of degree-granting programs offered at branch campuses, off-campus teaching sites, or through distance learning media conform to those in force on the main campus.
14. The program provides students doing coursework at branch campuses, off-campus teaching sites, and through distance learning media with adequate library and information access and support services.

# Appendix I

## *Liberal Learning Assessment Standards*

### **Suggested Areas for Inquiry and Investigation**

#### **1. Effective Reasoning**

##### **Areas for inquiry and investigation**

- **Curriculum:** Is the curriculum designed to encourage and foster effective reasoning across the areas of fundamental skills and knowledge (e.g., fluency in reading, writing, and oral communication and mastery of the basic principles of logical, mathematical, and scientific reasoning)? Do program and course descriptions, syllabi, and study guides consistently frame development of students' reasoning abilities as principal objectives? Are course readings and requirements, especially in those courses that form part of a program's core or general education, systematically designed to foster development of these abilities? Is the curriculum designed to ensure that students attain and demonstrate the necessary foundational abilities in effective reasoning - fluency in reading, writing, and oral communication - during their first year of coursework? How are programs and courses monitored and evaluated for their success in developing students' ability to reason effectively?
- **Teaching:** What pedagogical methods and practices do faculty regularly employ to encourage and enable their students to develop the ability to reason effectively? What institutional or collegial procedures are in place to monitor, evaluate, and improve the effectiveness of teaching in developing students' ability to reason effectively?
- **Learning:** What curricular policies and procedures are in place for monitoring and documenting student progress in the various elements of effective reasoning? How are standards formulated for gauging student achievement in effective reasoning? How are students apprized of these standards, of their progress in meeting them, and of the steps they might take to enhance their progress or redress deficiencies? How is evidence of student achievement archived and made available to outside evaluators, potential employers, or graduate admissions offices?
- **Student Life:** What resources or policies are in place for encouraging and assisting activities beyond the classroom (student-led publications, conferences, performances, special interest organizations, etc.) that are likely or expressly designed to help students develop and demonstrate their ability to reason effectively?

## 2. Broad and Deep Learning

### Areas for inquiry and investigation

- **Curriculum:** Is the curriculum designed to encourage and foster the ability to relate and integrate the knowledge and methods of study and analysis gained in its different parts? Are courses and programs designed to facilitate comparative or cooperative projects between different areas of learning, e.g., between the sciences and humanities? Does the curriculum feature interdisciplinary or cross disciplinary courses, programs, or requirements (e.g. capstone courses, independent study) which encourage students to explore the ways that materials and methods from various disciplines can be related, compared, or integrated with one another? How are programs and courses monitored and evaluated for their success in developing students' breadth and depth of learning?
- **Teaching:** Do faculty from different disciplines, or with different areas of knowledge cooperate in ways that exemplify fruitful relations that are possible between specialists in disparate fields of learning? Does the faculty effectively encourage and enable students to relate, compare, and integrate knowledge across different disciplines or areas of study, or between general education and major field courses and programs?
- **Learning:** What curricular policies and procedures are in place for developing, monitoring, and documenting the depth and breadth of student learning? What are the standards for gauging student achievement in relating, comparing, and integrating knowledge across different areas and fields of study? How are students apprized of these standards, their progress in meeting them, and the steps they can take to enhance their progress or redress deficiencies? How is evidence of student achievement made available to outside evaluators, potential employers, or graduate admissions offices?
- **Student Life:** What resources or policies are in place for encouraging and assisting activities beyond the classroom (student-led publications, conferences, performances, special interest organizations, etc.) that are likely or expressly designed to develop students' ability to relate, compare, and integrate in meaningful ways the knowledge gained through their coursework or by other means (service learning programs, study abroad, internships, etc.)?

## 3. The Inclination to Inquire

### Areas for inquiry and investigation

- **Curriculum:** Is the curriculum designed to encourage and foster individual and cooperative inquiry? Are courses and programs designed to help students learn to become active inquirers and participants in the search for knowledge, rather than passive consumers of information? Are institutional resources and curricular offerings (both in general education and major programs) sufficient to allow

students to pursue their intellectual inquiries in intellectually cogent and significant ways (e.g., through independent study or research projects)? How are programs and courses monitored and evaluated for their success in developing students' inclination to inquire?

- **Teaching:** Does the faculty regularly use teaching methods and styles designed or likely to encourage students' intellectual inquisitiveness and independence? What institutional or collegial procedures are in place to monitor, evaluate, and improve the effectiveness of teaching in developing an inclination to inquire in students? Do teachers exemplify for their students the challenges and rewards of a life motivated by the love of inquiry for its own sake and for the good it contributes to self and society?
- **Learning:** What curricular policies and procedures are in place for monitoring and documenting students' intellectual enterprise? How are standards formulated for gauging student achievement in this area? How are students apprized of these standards, their progress in meeting them, and the steps they might take to enhance their progress or redress deficiencies? How are students encouraged or enabled to engage in frank intellectual self-assessment? How are the results of these self-assessments used to frame new intellectual pursuits and challenges for students? How is evidence of student achievement archived and made available to outside evaluators, potential employers, or graduate admissions offices?
- **Student Life:** What resources or policies are in place for encouraging and assisting activities beyond the classroom (student-led publications, conferences, performances, special interest organizations, etc.) that are likely or expressly designed to develop thoughtful and inquisitive dispositions? Do student and alumni surveys indicate that their educational experience has enabled or encouraged them to extend their pursuits of meaningful knowledge and skills beyond the classroom or the academy?

## **Appendix II**

### ***Policy on Learning Assessment for Liberal Arts Programs***

AALE expects members to develop and implement assessment plans for determining success in meeting their liberal arts mission and educational aims. AALE does not prescribe specific methods or instruments of assessment; rather, institutions are urged to develop assessment plans appropriate to their mission and to the character and context of their educational program. AALE does expect that assessment will be both regular and comprehensive, and that members will use the results to improve teaching and learning. Faculty should have a central role in developing this process and evaluating results.

To make well-rounded judgments concerning the effectiveness of educational programs, it is important to have access to a wide range of information. For this reason, assessment plans should make use of multiple approaches and kinds of information; both qualitative and quantitative evaluations of student achievement should be considered, as appropriate. The following list of approaches and data is intended to be illustrative and exemplary and not prescriptive or exhaustive:

- Systematic evaluation of student examinations, theses or portfolios;
- Results of surveys addressing the undergraduate learning environment, e.g. the National Survey of Student Engagement;
- Results of standardized examinations for graduate or professional school admissions;
- Retention and degree-completion rates;
- Rates of employment and/or other relevant occupational data;
- Matriculation rates for graduate or professional study;
- Results of applicable licensing examinations;
- Studies of alumni achievement and satisfaction;
- Trends in data reported through AALE's Graduate Achievement Data Form.