Journalism and Mass Communications Accreditation

2011 – 2012
ACEJMC publishes *Journalism and Mass Communications Accreditation* in August each year. The Council also maintains a website, accessible at www2.ku.edu/~acejmc, and publishes an online newsletter, accessible at www.ku.edu/~acejmc/ASCENT/ASCENT.shtml (no breaks; maintain upper and lower case).

Susanne Shaw
ACEJMC Executive Director
July 2011

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Council and Committee Officers

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ACEJMC Mission Statement

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications is dedicated to fostering and encouraging excellence and high standards in professional education in journalism and mass communications.

The Council believes that students can best prepare for careers in journalism and mass communications by studying in accredited professional programs at colleges and universities. The Council embraces the value of a liberal arts and sciences curriculum as the essential foundation for a professional journalism and mass communications education.

The Council recognizes that freedom of expression and freedom of the press are indispensable to a free society and that the professional education offered by accredited programs should encourage dissent, inquiry and free expression as guaranteed by the First Amendment.

To serve this mission, the Council establishes educational requirements and standards and provides a process of voluntary program review by professionals and academicians, awarding accredited status to units that meet its standards. In this role, the Council assures students, parents, journalism and mass communications professionals, and the public that accredited programs meet rigorous standards for professional education.

The Council recognizes and safeguards the institutional diversity of each accredited program and encourages educational innovation by units as they strive to meet accreditation requirements and standards.

Approved by the Accrediting Council on May 6, 1994.
ACEJMC Vision Statement

Journalism and mass communication transmit and interpret culture and bind society together, making them among the most vital forces in the maintenance of any society and fundamental to democratic government and a free society. They embody the spirit of a free press and are central to the preservation and advancement of the values provided under the First Amendment.

Because of their importance to society, journalism and mass communication demand the highest possible level of integrity, fairness, understanding and skill from both practitioners of journalism and mass communications and the educators who teach the practitioners.

To sustain and advance its mission of fostering and encouraging high standards for the educational preparation of journalism and mass communication professionals, the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications dedicates itself to providing leadership in:

1. Establishing, preserving and advancing rigorous standards of quality in professional education in journalism and mass communications.

2. Providing a forum for dialogue and interaction among journalism and mass communications educators and practitioners that can identify trends and developments, assess their impact on the media and suggest changes in the educational requirements and standards that are at the heart of the accrediting process.

3. Monitoring, surveying and reporting on trends and developments in the fields of professional practice served by accredited units in journalism and mass communications.

4. Assisting journalism and mass communications programs at colleges and universities in interpreting established quality standards and preparing to seek accredited status.

5. Conveying to students, parents, educators, journalism and mass communications practitioners and the public the value and benefits of accreditation and the assurance that accredited units meet rigorous standards of quality in professional education in journalism and mass communications.

Approved by the Accrediting Council on May 6, 1994.
Journalism and mass communications are vital forces in democratic societies, and sound intellectual training and competence are essential for those who engage in them.

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC) is a voluntary agency that strives to stimulate and encourage sound educational programs in these fields. The Council seeks to define and gain wide acceptance for standards of education for careers in journalism and mass communications.

Accreditation serves students, parents, faculty, employers, universities and the public at large. It is intended to ensure continued improvement in the quality of instruction in journalism and mass communications through re-evaluation, including a thorough and useful self-study, at six-year intervals.

Further, accreditation provides administrators and faculty with the stimulation that comes from exchanging viewpoints with persons outside their own institutions and outside the academy. The accreditation process provides a forum for hearing and acting on complaints by students, faculty and the public.

Finally, it ensures that journalism and mass communications education continues to provide both breadth and depth of exposure to the liberal arts and sciences.
Accreditation Defined

“Accreditation in higher education is defined as a collegial process based on self- and peer assessment for public accountability and improvement of academic quality. Peers assess the quality of an institution or academic program and assist the faculty and staff in improvement. An accreditation of an academic program or an entire institution typically involves three major activities:

“The faculty, administrators, and staff of the institution or academic program conduct a self-study using the accrediting organization’s set of expectations about quality (standards, criteria) as their guide.

“A team of peers, selected by the accrediting organization, reviews the evidence, visits the campus to interview the faculty and staff, and writes a report of its assessment including recommendation to the commission of the accrediting organization (group of peer faculty and staff, professionals, and public members).

“Grounded by a set of expectations about quality and integrity, the commission reviews the evidence and recommendation, makes a judgment, and communicates the decision to the institution and other constituencies if appropriate.

“Accreditation is an integral part of our system of higher education. Our system consists of both public and private institutions with a wide range of types of missions, from national research universities and regional comprehensive institutions to liberal arts colleges and very small faith-related colleges to community colleges and vocational institutions. The genius of this system is that, unlike other countries, we do not have mandatory national curricula for colleges; we do not have a national ministry of education that regulates academic standards; and students are free to choose what type of education they pursue depending on their ability and educational goals. Because it developed from this diverse set of institutions, accreditation is a flexible and adaptive process. Institutions that seek accreditation can do so from a wide range of accrediting organizations — from national bodies that are oriented to a particular type of institution, to regional organizations that encompass a wide range of types of institutions, to specialized organizations that focus on a single discipline or profession.”

— The Council for Higher Education Accreditation
History and Structure of ACEJMC

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications is the agency formally recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) for accrediting programs for professional education in journalism and mass communications in institutions of higher learning.

The structure for evaluating and accrediting journalism and mass communications programs was established in 1945, when the American Council on Education in Journalism was formed. Its name was changed to the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications in 1980. The Council originally was an association of journalism education and newspaper organizations. Its membership now includes national associations representing newspapers, broadcasting, advertising, public relations, professional societies, and education in journalism and mass communications. Its three public members are affiliated with neither industry nor education in journalism and mass communications.

Membership on the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications is open to all membership associations of educators or professionals (including foundations related to such associations) that are involved with the professional education of students for careers in journalism, mass communications, telecommunications and other media. Admission to the Council is subject to approval by a majority of the Accrediting Council.

The Council is assisted in its work by the office of an executive director, an Accrediting Committee, an Executive Committee, teams that conduct site visits and an Appeals Board. The executive director maintains records, provides assistance regarding the self-study process, and arranges site visits and meetings for the Council.

The Council elects an Accrediting Committee composed of journalism and mass communications educators and industry representatives to advise it on the accreditation status of journalism and mass communications units. A majority of Accrediting Committee members are educators. The Committee meets each spring to make its recommendations based on the reports prepared by the visiting teams and responses from the institutions.

The members of a visiting team are persons competent to evaluate the units and curricula offered by a particular institution. The institution to be visited approves visiting team members before invitations are made to the individuals.
The Council consists of representatives of its member associations and three public members. Its rules give industry and educator members equal votes. The Council makes final decisions about the accreditation of visited units, the periodic revision of its standards and procedures, and the publication of information about accreditation of journalism and mass communications programs. The Council usually meets twice each year.

The Council elects a president and a vice president from the representatives who compose it. The Council also selects its executive director.

The president and vice president of the Accrediting Council and the executive director compose the Executive Committee. This committee assists the executive director and the Council president in responding to questions and in providing guidance and recommendations for decisions the president may have to make before the next full Council meeting.

The Appeals Board, appointed each year by the president, hears appeals from schools and departments regarding accreditation decisions made by the Council.
ACEJMC adheres to certain principles designed to recognize, protect and ensure the integrity of the academic institutions that participate in the accrediting process.

**Mission of journalism and mass communications:** The mission of journalism and mass communications professions in a democratic society is to inform, to enlighten and to champion freedoms of speech and press. These professions seek to enable people to fulfill their responsibilities as citizens who mean to govern themselves. They seek to help people protect, pursue and promote their rights and interests in their personal lives and in their work in public and philanthropic service, in commerce and industry and in the professions.

**Mission of education in journalism and mass communications:** Professional programs should prepare students with a body of knowledge and a system of inquiry, scholarship and training for careers in which they are accountable to: the public interest for their knowledge, ethics, competence and service; citizens, clients or consumers for their competencies and the quality of their work; and employers for their performance.

**Commitment to diversity and inclusiveness:** To inform and enlighten, the professions of journalism and mass communications should understand and reflect the diversity and complexity of people, perspectives and beliefs in a global society and in the multicultural communities they serve.

Programs seeking accreditation should develop curricula and instruction that educate faculty and prepare students with the multicultural knowledge, values and skills essential for professional practice.

Programs should document their efforts to ensure the representation of women and people of diverse racial and ethnic identity in the student body and faculty and to expand these students’ opportunities for entry into the communications professions.

**Institutional uniqueness:** The Accrediting Council does not define specific curricula, courses or methods of instruction. It recognizes that each institution has its unique situation, mission and resources, and this uniqueness is an asset to be safeguarded. The Council judges programs against the objectives that units and institutions set for themselves and against the standards that the Council sets forth.
Curricular balance: The content and quality of a student’s entire degree program are of vital educational importance and are the responsibility of journalism and mass communications units. To ensure that units monitor carefully each student’s entire degree program for appropriate balance between liberal education and professional preparation, the Council requires that students take a minimum of 80 semester hours (or 116 quarter hours) in courses outside the major area of journalism and mass communications, with no fewer than 65 semester hours (or 94 quarter hours) in the liberal arts and sciences.

The Council urges journalism and mass communications programs to advise students to acquire appropriately supervised experience in campus media and professional internships.

The journalism and mass communications degree: The Council embraces the value of a liberal arts and sciences curriculum as the essential foundation for professional education in journalism and mass communications. Professional education applies the knowledge and perspectives of arts and sciences disciplines to the understanding of the modern world and to the evolution and workings of diverse communities within society.

Professional values and competencies: Individual professions in journalism and mass communication may require certain specialized values and competencies. Irrespective of their particular specialization, all graduates should be aware of the following 12 core values and competencies and be able to:

• understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located, as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of freedom of expression around the world, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances;
• demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
• demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications;
• demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society;
• understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
• demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
• think critically, creatively and independently;
• conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
• write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
• critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
• apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
• apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

Assessment of student learning: The Council seeks to promote student learning and encourages experimentation and innovation. The Council evaluates curricula and instruction in the light of evidence and expects programs seeking accreditation to assess students’ attainment of professional values and competencies.

Assessment is a system of evaluation of student learning at the course or unit level (as opposed to grading at the individual level). Three criteria should guide assessment of student learning:

Awareness: familiarity with specific information, including facts, concepts, theories, laws and regulations, processes and effects.

Understanding: assimilation and comprehension of information, concepts, theories and ideas.

Application: competence in relating and applying skills, information, concepts, theories and ideas to the accomplishment of tasks.

Student learning is evaluated to develop curriculum, improve teaching and enhance student learning; document what students have learned; and provide accountability.

Evaluation of student learning also enables the Council and its representatives to make fairer and more consistent judgments across units and programs.

Schedule for assessment plans: The Council in September 2001 adopted a schedule for the development and implementation of assessment plans. Schools seeking accreditation or reaccreditation
Principles of Accreditation

were required to have plans for the assessment of educational outcomes by September 2003 and to collect information for assessing student learning during the 2003 – 04 academic year. Schools were required to begin applying findings from the assessments to improve curricula, instruction and learning by September 2004.

The Council has published a guide to assessment methods already in use by accredited schools. Copies were sent in October 2001 to administrators of all accredited schools. Additional copies are available (see contact information, p. 82).

**Transfer Credit:** The Council recommends that accredited schools accept for transfer from junior colleges no more than 12 semester hours (or equivalent) in journalism courses.

**Role of Practitioners:** The Council recognizes that, although the academic community must firmly control academic policies and programs, the accrediting process provides a means by which practitioners have a voice in evaluating the teaching of professional practice. They also can participate in the wider effort of the academic community to formulate educational standards.

**The Burden of Accreditation:** The Council tries to keep the burden of accreditation as light as possible. It recognizes the time and expense involved in preparing the self-study report and in hosting the visiting team. It endeavors to respect the institution under review and to minimize in every way the distractions and expense of the process.
Eligibility for Accreditation: ACEJMC accredits units that offer professional programs that prepare students for careers in journalism and mass communications. The Council has jurisdiction only over such professional programs.

The unit bears the responsibility of defining — and justifying as appropriate for review — those components that it considers to be within the authorized scope of the Council’s assessment. Some units, for example, might define media studies or telecommunication policy components as non-professional and therefore beyond the scope of review; others might define them, because of their structure or effect on the professional components of the unit, to be within the scope of ACEJMC review.

Schools seeking initial accreditation are required to arrange a pre-visit with the ACEJMC executive director within three to five years before an initial accreditation review. Schools pay only the expenses for travel, lodging and meals.

An invitation to accredit must be made for a unit: a permanent, budgeted administrative entity that establishes the professional curriculum, has a full-time, definable faculty, is formally represented in the organizational chart of the institution and receives a separate designation in its catalog.

The unit may be a college, school, or department that offers professional education in journalism and mass communications. Whatever the unit designation, its professional components must have sufficient autonomy to establish their curriculum and freedom to act as a faculty. Therefore, the Council normally will not review a unit with less than departmental status. It will not review interdepartment or intercollege majors except where there is a clearly designated and articulated budget, faculty and administrative structure. Each unit under review will be required to provide a budget and faculty breakout for all professional components and to provide evidence of designated leadership of those professional components.

The executive officer of the institution seeking accreditation must invite a review of a distinctive unit as defined above. Sometimes the invitation may be to review two separate departments that may be located in one or more colleges.

The visit team will focus its examination on all the professional educational activities that are carried on by the unit under review.
It will, however, examine the entire administrative unit in which the effective control of such education is vested by assessing the relationships among the unit’s professional and non-professional components. It will, for example, examine the ways in which the non-professional components enhance or detract from the professional programs in journalism and mass communications through their effect on the budget, curriculum, hiring of faculty, awarding of tenure and the establishment of general policy regarding professional education.

The team will assess the quality of the unit’s professional components in terms of their stated objectives and in light of the specific standards of accreditation outlined in this publication.

If a unit that consists of professional and non-professional components is accredited, all Council publications will list only its professional components and will note only those components that fall within the scope of review of ACEJMC.

ACEJMC will not evaluate units within institutions that are not recognized by a regional or nationally recognized accrediting agency. This recognition, where such a body exists, is a prerequisite for accreditation of a unit by ACEJMC. ACEJMC will not renew a unit’s accreditation or consider initial accreditation while the institution is the subject of an interim action by a regional or national accrediting agency, or by a state regulatory agency, potentially leading to loss of accreditation status or of legal authority to provide postsecondary education; or while the due-process procedures required by such interim action remain incomplete.

Review of Professional Graduate Programs: The Council evaluates only professional, not academic, master’s programs. The Council does not evaluate Ph.D. programs or other graduate and undergraduate programs that are designed as preparation for academic careers or that provide non-professional education. A professional master’s degree program in journalism and mass communications is one that prepares students to:

- Meet ACEJMC’s basic competencies, with the added competency of contributing to knowledge appropriate to the profession.
- Think intelligently, strategically and critically about the fundamental and complex social and cultural issues of the profession.
- Master the skills and responsibilities of the profession with grounding in professional experience.
- Perform the profession’s roles ethically.
Graduate professional programs must distinguish themselves from undergraduate professional programs by offering advanced, rigorous courses. The majority of courses must be taught by graduate faculty.

A professional master's degree program would require that a majority of its courses are of a professional nature and require a professionally oriented thesis, project or comprehensive examination.

If a unit requests that its professional graduate program(s) be evaluated for accreditation, it integrates material about the graduate program into its self-study report, with information about the graduate program clearly identified in the Indicators and Evidence sections for each standard. The burden of proof is on the unit to explain how its professional graduate program meets appropriate indicators.

Site-visit teams will make a separate overall recommendation for the accreditation status of the graduate program. It is possible that a team could recommend (and the Committee and Council approve) a different status for a unit's undergraduate program and its professional graduate program. Site-visit teams also will write a separate summary for each standard for graduate programs.

**Conflict of Interest:** This policy applies to the entire accrediting process, from the selection of site visit teams through the final deliberations of the Council. The Executive Director of the Council will share this policy with each site team invitee. The Chair of the Accrediting Committee and the President of the Accrediting Council will call attention to the policy at the start of each of their respective meetings.

Every precaution must be taken to ensure that all participants in the accrediting process develop and express objective opinions and make decisions free from self-interest and personal bias. It is essential that the accrediting process be as free as possible from even the appearance of conflict of interest.

Accordingly, members of site visit teams, the Committee and the Council must disqualify themselves from accepting site visit invitations or participating in the discussion of and voting upon accreditation issues in which they have a conflict of interest. The Council’s administrative staff members also must guard against conflicts of interest in all accreditation activities.

The primary responsibility for determining potential conflicts of interest rests with each participant in the accrediting process. Participants who question whether they have a conflict of interest should consult with the President of the Council.

Those with conflicts of interest include, but are not limited, to:

a) graduates of the institution under review;
b) former employees of that institution;
c) those who have been consultants to the unit within the past 15 years;
d) those who have been under consideration for employment as finalists in a search by the unit;
e) employees of the same education system;
f) those who have any other relationship with the unit that might cause them to remove themselves from the process.

Committee or Council members whose units are being considered for accreditation or reaccreditation may not vote on those units. Such Committee or Council members must leave the table, but may remain in the room. Such members may not participate during the discussion but may respond to questions when requested to do so by other Committee or Council members.

Committee or Council members who have been a part of a site team for the unit under discussion may not vote on that unit. They may remain at the table and respond to questions from other Committee or Council members, but must not introduce more information into the discussion than is already available from the formal written materials before the Committee or the Council. The purpose here is to create fair and equitable conditions for those units whose site teams may not be represented on the Committee and Council.

Conflict-of-interest challenges will be resolved by the Chair of the Committee and the President of the Council at their respective regular meetings.

This policy refers to the concept of conflict of interest in the context of accreditation decisions. The prohibitions and limitations are not intended to exclude participation and decision-making in other areas, such as policy development and standard setting.

Appeals Process: The president of ACEJMC appoints a three-person board each October to hear accreditation appeals. This Appeals Board is composed of two journalism/mass communications educators and one journalism/mass communications practitioner. None can be a member of the Council, the Accrediting Committee, or the site team that visited the institution initiating the appeal. No one who has a conflict of interest shall serve on the Board.

When the Council decides to award provisional accreditation or to deny accreditation altogether, the president of the Council, in a letter, informs the president of the institution and the administrator of the journalism/mass communications unit and gives the reasons
for the Council’s action. The appeal procedure open to the institution is explained in this letter.

If the president of the institution desires to appeal the decision, it must be done in writing within thirty (30) days of notification of the accrediting decision by the ACEJMC president. Appeals of accreditation decisions must be based on one or both of the following grounds: 1) evidence that the Council failed to adhere to applicable adopted procedures; 2) evidence that, based upon the record before the Council, the decision was arbitrary and capricious or not supported by substantial evidence. Appeals must be made in writing and must be based on concrete evidence that was in the record before the Council at the time of the original decision.

The ACEJMC president shall, within thirty (30) days after receiving a statement of appeal, send each of the members of the Appeals Board a copy of the statement. The chair of the Appeals Board immediately shall notify the members of the visit team, sending to each member a copy of the statement of appeal. The visit team members shall, within fifteen (15) days, respond to the appeal statement in writing addressed to the chair of the Appeals Board, who shall send copies of the visit team’s responses to each member of the Board.

The Appeals Board will meet in open session at some time preceding the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Council. The chief administrative officers of the institution making the appeal and the site team chair shall be notified of the time, date and place of the meeting. They may attend the meeting, present oral and written arguments and receive questions from the Appeals Board. The institution has the right to representation by counsel in any appeal proceedings.

Ordinarily, the Appeals Board will base its recommended decision upon relevant written documents, but at its discretion it may consider the points raised in the oral and written presentations. The chair writes a summary of the Appeals Board’s recommendation to ACEJMC. The Appeals Board’s recommendation and the chair’s written summary should be given to Council members not later than the night before the ACEJMC meeting. The chair of the Appeals Board presents the recommendation to ACEJMC members.

ACEJMC then considers the recommendation by the Appeals Board and exercises its responsibility for making the final accreditation decision. The ACEJMC president will notify the chief administrator of the institution and the administrator of the journalism and mass communications unit in a letter of the decision on the appeal and the reasons for the decision.
All expenses of the appeal, including travel, shall be paid by the institution initiating the appeal. Eighty percent of the estimated costs of the appeal hearing must be sent to the ACEJMC office two weeks before the date of the scheduled Appeals Board meeting.

While an appeal is pending and before a decision on the appeal is made by ACEJMC, there shall be no change in the accredited status for the institution making the appeal.

**Complaints Process:** ACEJMC invites all students, faculty, staff, administrators and other persons to report incidents in which they can present evidence that a unit or ACEJMC has violated accreditation standards, policies or procedures. The Council requires administrators of accredited units to inform their units of this invitation. The information must include the address and telephone number of ACEJMC. Such reports must be made in writing and should be addressed to the president of ACEJMC. ACEJMC maintains records of all complaints it receives and their resolution.

Complaints must be accompanied by documentation showing that there has been a specific, substantive violation of one or more standards, policies or procedures. The Council does not adjudicate, arbitrate or mediate individual faculty or student grievances against a program, nor does it act as a court of appeals in individual matters of admissions, appointment, promotion or dismissal of faculty, staff or students.

In considering complaints, the Council will give careful attention to due process for both the complainant and the unit.

Within ten (10) days of receipt of a complaint against an accredited unit, the president will direct the executive director to invite a response to the complaint from the institution and to gather such other relevant information as the nature of the complaint indicates. No more than thirty (30) days will be allowed for this process. Within ten (10) days of receipt of the response and other information, the president will convene the Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee may decide to: 1) dismiss the complaint; 2) find the unit out of compliance with one or more standards; or 3) find the unit in violation of one or more standards to a degree that requires a change in its accreditation status.

Within ten (10) days of receipt of a complaint against ACEJMC, the president will direct the executive director to gather relevant information and provide a response to the complaint. In the case of complaints against a member of the Executive Committee, the president will direct the complaint to the Appeals Board for investigation.
and action. No more than thirty (30) days will be allowed for this process. Within ten (10) days of receipt of the response and other information, the president will convene the Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee may decide to: 1) dismiss the complaint; 2) determine that an individual representing or employed by ACEJMC may have violated a standard, policy or procedure, and counsel the individual; or 3) take further action as circumstances warrant, up to and including termination of the individual as a representative or employee of ACEJMC.

The president of the Council will notify the unit, the complainant and the Council of the decision in writing within ten (10) days. Decisions of the Executive Committee or Appeals Board may be appealed to the full Council for consideration at the Council’s next regularly scheduled meeting.

The Council also requires all units seeking accreditation to maintain records of student complaints and their resolution. As part of the site visit, a visit team member examines the unit’s record of student complaints. The Council expects this record to show timely, equitable and fair resolution of student complaints that are pertinent to the unit’s compliance with accreditation standards.

**Open Meetings:** All meetings of the Accrediting Council and its committees are open to the public. This includes meetings of the Accrediting Committee and the Appeals Board. Votes on accrediting decisions are taken in open session. The Council may go into closed session when the discussion centers on individuals; however, no official action may be taken in closed session, and all other discussions that do not focus on individuals will be open. (For information on open records, see p. 27, “Records.”)

**Review of Standards and Procedures:** The Council uses several systematic methods to ensure that its accreditation standards are valid and reliable indicators of the quality of education or training provided by accredited programs and are relevant to the education or training needs of affected students. The Council also reviews the validity, reliability and relevancy of the processes used to apply the standards.

If any of these methods reveals potential problems, the Council may appoint a committee to examine any standard and determine whether it remains a valid, reliable and relevant indicator of educational quality. This examination may lead to a recommendation for revision of the standard. Potential problems of validity, reliability or relevancy of the Council’s processes may be resolved similarly, or may be resolved administratively.
The Council measures the validity of its accreditation standards and the processes by which they are applied by determining whether they actually assess: 1) the quality of a journalism/mass communications program; and 2) the efforts of a program to improve its quality. The Council measures the relevancy of the standards and processes by determining whether they are related to the current educational and training needs of students of journalism and mass communications. The Council measures the reliability of the standards and processes by determining whether they provide a consistent basis for assessing the educational quality of different programs.

The Council uses the following methods to ensure the validity and relevancy of its standards and processes:

**Congruency with external agencies’ recognition criteria:** The Council’s staff examines the standards and processes annually to determine whether they remain congruent with the recognition criteria set by the Council on Higher Education Accreditation.

**Validation by affected parties:** After each annual accreditation review cycle, the Council’s staff sends a questionnaire to each site team chair and the administrator of each program that has been reviewed. This questionnaire specifically asks these individuals to assess the validity, reliability and relevancy of the Council’s standards and processes.

**Broad contributions to revision:** The Council ensures and documents that the broadest possible communities of interest contribute to developments or revisions of the standards and processes.

**Review of noncompliance findings:** The Council’s staff reports annually to the Council the number of noncompliance findings reported for each standard.

**Regular review of standards:** Every 10 years, the Council appoints a Standards Review Committee. This committee undertakes a full review of the accrediting standards, using the records of the above-mentioned processes and any other appropriate sources. This committee may recommend revision of the standards.

The Council uses the following methods to ensure the reliability of its standards and processes:

**Preparation of site team members:** The Council conducts training sessions designed to increase site team members’ knowledge of the accrediting process. Attendance at these sessions is not required of experienced team members but is strongly encouraged for potential new team members. Each site team member receives a manual that explains the activities and responsibilities of a site team.
Evaluation of site visits: After each site visit, the unit administrator and the chair of the site visit team are each asked to provide an evaluation of the site visit and the work of the team members. The evaluations are sent to the executive director. The purposes of this review are to evaluate the process and the procedures used in making site visits, to guide the executive director and others in the selection of team members for subsequent visits and to develop general information about the work of site visit teams for training sessions for prospective team members.

Experience of site team chairs: Individuals are assigned to the position of site team chair only after they have served as members of several site teams and have demonstrated leadership and an understanding of the accreditation process.

Records of previous decisions: The Council’s staff maintains records that show, for each accreditation decision, findings of noncompliance with standards, accreditation recommendations by site teams and the Accrediting Committee, accreditation decisions by the Accrediting Council and explanatory comment. These records may be used to ensure that current decisions are congruent with previous decisions.

Public Notice of Accrediting Actions: The Council publishes the names of units to be reviewed for initial accreditation or reaccreditation well in advance of the reviews. This notice is accompanied by an explicit invitation for comment by third parties, limited to written comment speaking directly to a unit’s compliance with the Council’s published accreditation standards.

Within 30 days of the decision, the Council notifies other appropriate accrediting agencies, appropriate state regulatory agencies and the public of: final decisions to award accreditation, reaccreditation, or provisional accreditation; final decisions to deny, withdraw, suspend, or terminate any unit’s accreditation, or take other adverse action; and final decisions by units to voluntarily withdraw from accreditation or allow their accreditation to lapse.

Within 60 days of a final decision to deny, withdraw, suspend, or terminate any unit’s accreditation, or take other adverse action, the Council makes available to other appropriate accrediting agencies, appropriate state regulatory agencies, and the public on request, a brief statement of the reasons for the decision, accompanied by any comments the affected unit may wish to make regarding the decision.

The Council submits to the Council for Higher Education Accreditation copies of its annually updated directory of accredited programs; any proposed changes in its policies, procedures, or accreditation
standards that might alter its scope of recognition or compliance with CHEA requirements; any annual report it may prepare; and any annual data summary or other information that CHEA may request.

**Publicity:** Among the benefits of accreditation, two are especially important. One is the substantial value of the self-study and peer review that the process requires. The other is the assurance of quality and standards that accreditation gives to parents and prospective students, prospective employers and the general public. This second benefit is supported by the Council’s commitment to full public disclosure of its actions.

Shortly after its meetings, ACEJMC releases a report of the Council’s actions regarding the accreditation status of institutions that it reviews. The public announcement of its actions is made after ACEJMC notifies the institutions and provides them an explanation of the decisions.

Schools that receive provisional status will carry that designation in all of the Council’s published information. These schools are required by the Council, when they use the term “accreditation,” to list themselves as having provisional status. Schools seeking accreditation for the first time may be granted provisional status; however, they will not be listed in any Council material until they obtain full accreditation.

ACEJMC also encourages its accredited institutions to publicize the accredited designation in school literature and on school web pages. Institutions should ensure that such publicity about accreditation accurately reflects ACEJMC actions. Such publicity should include the specific academic or instructional programs covered by accreditation status and the name, address and telephone number of ACEJMC. The institution should ensure that making public a portion of the team report does not present a misleading picture of the content of the overall evaluation.

The Council president or executive director will notify the president of an institution when ACEJMC becomes aware that the school’s use of the term “accreditation” or the release of a portion of the team’s report is not in accord with ACEJMC action or is otherwise misleading. ACEJMC will ask the institution to correct the situation. If the institution is unwilling to do so, the Council may release the full report or issue a statement to clarify the accreditation status of a unit or specialty.
**Records:** The Council keeps complete and accurate records of its two most recent full accreditation reviews of each program, including: site team reports; responses by units to team reports; reports of any interim, periodic, or special reviews; and the program’s most recent self-study report. The Council also keeps complete records of: all accreditation decisions; minutes of Council and Committee meetings; correspondence and supporting documents relating to appeals and complaints; general correspondence; and other documents related to its accrediting activities.

Site team reports and some self-studies are available to the public upon written request. (Note: documents are not available from before the 1989-90 academic year, when ACEJMC’s open-meetings policy went into effect.) Copying, handling and postage fees may apply. To request a copy of a report or to borrow a self-study, contact Cheryl Klug (see p. 82 for contact information).
**Invitation from the Institution:** For both initial accreditation and renewal of accreditation, the process starts when the chief executive officer of the college or university seeking accreditation sends a letter of invitation to the ACEJMC executive director. After the initial site visit, visits are made at six-year intervals upon subsequent invitations.

The Council works on a multi-year cycle for scheduling visits. A new school must inform the executive director at least three years before it expects a visit in order to be placed on the schedule. In fact, almost all schools or departments seeking initial accreditation schedule the visit three to five years in advance.

An institution that has invited ACEJMC to examine its program and render an accreditation judgment may withdraw its invitation at any time before the final decision by the Accrediting Council on the accreditation status of the unit. ACEJMC may withdraw the accreditation of a unit if, after due notice, the institution does not permit a re-evaluation. When the time for renewal nears, the executive director of ACEJMC reminds the institution.

**Postponement of Accrediting Visits:** The Council will not routinely postpone accrediting visits except under extraordinary circumstances. For example, it will not grant one-year postponements for purposes of convenience, scheduling, new buildings, internal review, or for a change of administrators.

The executive director has the authority to grant postponements for one year. The full Council considers requests for a second year's postponement. If the executive director denies a postponement request, the school has fifteen (15) days after receipt of notification of the denial to appeal the decision to the Council’s Executive Committee. If a postponement is approved, an asterisk will be placed beside the school’s listing in the back of this publication indicating that the school has delayed its accreditation visit.

The deadline for requesting postponements is July 1 of the year before a visit is scheduled. The deadline for postponing a visit for the 2012-13 academic year was July 1, 2011. Deadline for postponing a 2013-14 visit will be July 1, 2012. **It is very important for schools seeking postponements to meet the deadlines outlined above.**

Self-study materials are sent to schools in September of the academic year before the visit occurs.
The Self-Study: The heart of the accrediting process is the self-study, a systematic examination by the unit of the environment in which it operates, its mission, range of activities, accomplishments and plans for the future. The twin objectives of the accrediting process — quality assessment and quality enhancement — depend on a thorough self-study. A majority of a unit's faculty and administrators should accept the findings of the study.

The self-study should concentrate on the extent to which a unit achieves its goals. Thus, the quantitative judgments about equipment, faculty, budgets and the like should be evaluated to show how they help the unit to fulfill its purpose. The team reports will contain a mission statement provided by the unit to help the Accrediting Committee and the Council determine how well the unit is accomplishing its goals.

The periodic self-study is a mechanism for change. It permits a unit to address the need to change its mission or its programs and activities. A self-study preceding an accrediting visit might very well clarify a need to shift emphasis. By the time of the site visit, the shift might not be completed, so that the unit might not be able to accomplish its newly identified purpose. However, the unit should be able to demonstrate that it has made sufficient plans and has won the institution's endorsement to accomplish that new purpose in the future. If evidence also exists that the unit has accomplished its purposes in the past, the site visit team shall take such a change of emphasis arising from the self-study process as a positive sign.

The Self-Study in Relation to Accrediting Standards: Another major focus of the self-study conducted as a part of the accreditation process is the extent to which the unit complies with accreditation standards. In the planning and design phase, a unit may identify additional purposes for the self-study. In any case, most of the accreditation standards fall naturally within the scope of a comprehensive self-study.

The self-study is not done for ACEJMC alone. An effective self-study depends upon internal motivation, and several factors in the process contribute to internal motivation. The unit participates voluntarily in the accrediting process as a means of quality assessment and quality enhancement. Participation includes the evaluation of the unit's program and activities against ACEJMC standards. Thus, the evaluation of the unit against those standards becomes a unit purpose.
Organizing the Self-Study: The self-study shall be conducted during the academic year before the team’s visit. The self-study in advance of a site visit generally is conducted every six years.

The design of the self-study will be unique to the unit, depending on its size, the range of its responsibilities and the specific purposes of the self-study beyond an assessment of the extent to which the unit complies with the accrediting standards. However, the following elements are common to self-studies:

A self-study has two general objectives. First is the assessment of the extent to which the unit is accomplishing its goals, including its compliance with accrediting standards, and its capacity to do so in the future. Second is the development of a plan of action. Two questions to measure the success of the self-study process are: “Did it make things happen? Were they for the better?”

The size and complexity of the unit will affect the structure of the self-study. It is often useful to designate a coordinator to lead the work. The coordinator may work through a steering committee, which will be particularly active in the planning and design phase and in the development of the final report and recommendations. This committee may delegate to others both inside and outside the unit the responsibility for collecting data and evaluating parts of the program.

The unit reviews existing planning documents, previous accrediting reports and the current standards. It develops a list of key questions to be addressed in the self-study.

At this stage, the unit may set a tentative timetable, draft a preliminary outline for the report, identify the methods that it will use to evaluate its program and activities, develop a list of data needed for the study, decide how the recommendations and action items will be developed and assign someone to write the report.

The study usually includes an examination of the environment in which the unit functions (within the institution as well as outside), an assessment of the number and quality of students served, the values of the faculty and the institution, the competitive advantages that the unit enjoys and the strengths and weaknesses of the unit.

These assessments may be followed by an examination and revision of the mission of the unit and the identification of goals, programs and activities to accomplish the mission. A next step would be the assessment of the extent to which the unit is able to accomplish its goals. Finally, the unit develops plans to enhance the chances of its success and identifies a mechanism to evaluate those plans.
Having developed a mission statement, a unit might go on to examine its goals and decide whether they are clear and appropriate to the mission. Next, a unit will consider whether the programs and activities it has undertaken to accomplish those goals are consistent with the goals, whether they are working, what problems exist, possible solutions and the adequacy of resources to meet the goals. Last, a unit will probably wish to explore the extent of its compliance with accreditation standards and how to bring itself into fuller compliance.

The Council views a good self-study as being essential for a successful site visit. The visiting team is asked to assess the quality of the self-study, and the team report includes that summary opinion.

**Preparing the Self-Study Report:** The executive director sends each unit that has requested a review by ACEJMC a set of electronic files to use in the preparation of the text and tables in the self-study report. These template files provide a coherent structure for gathering and presenting the quantitative and qualitative information that establishes the foundation of an effective self-study document. They are sent in September of the academic year before the visit occurs.

The self-study report contains two parts: Part One, a set of responses to questions about the unit; and Part Two, more detailed information about compliance with the accrediting standards and supporting documentation.

Part One is essentially an introduction to the report. It covers such basics as size of enrollment in each academic specialty, the unit’s mission, membership of the faculty, accreditation history and compliance with the 80/65 curricular balance provision of the curriculum standard. The information in Part One is included in the site team’s report to the Committee and Council.

Part Two of the report has two parts: supplementary information about the unit’s mission and scope; and a series of sections in which the unit documents its compliance with the accrediting standards. The supplementary information section summarizes the unit’s history and traditions, its purposes and activities and its goals and plans for the future. The sections on each standard contain text and tables providing detailed information related to the standard.

The best self-studies are well written and concise and focus on key issues. They present a candid and balanced view of the unit’s strengths and weaknesses and provide a systematic analysis of the unit’s compliance with the accrediting standards. Assembly of information for the self-study is not intended to burden a unit unduly.
Whenever possible, the unit should present information and data in forms readily available.

**Submission and Review of the Self-Study Report:** The unit submits its self-study report in print and digital formats to the Council’s executive director by Sept. 1 of the academic year in which the site visit is to be made, or three months before the visit, whichever is later. The executive director will review the report to determine whether it provides a satisfactory foundation for the site visit. Occasionally, that examination will identify large inadequacies. The executive director has the authority to postpone or cancel an accrediting visit if the self-study is not of sufficient quality for the team to evaluate a unit. In other cases, the executive director may ask that additional information be supplied for the site visit team. The executive director also may cancel an accrediting visit if the unit misses its self-study deadline. After determining that the self-study report provides a satisfactory foundation, the executive director will notify the unit to send copies to the chair and members of the visiting team.

It is the responsibility of the unit to inform the Council of significant changes that occur between the submission of the self-study and the visit or between the visit and the Committee and Council meetings.

**Waiver requests:** If a unit seeks a waiver from the expectations of a specific indicator, it must provide reasons and evidence for the waiver in its self-study. When the unit submits its self-study for review, it must specifically request the waiver and identify the standard(s) and page(s) where it makes its case. When the unit submits its self-study to each team member, it must repeat this request. The site team has responsibility to grant or deny the request and must justify its decision in its site report.

**The Self-Study Report and the Site Visit Team:** The principal responsibility of the visit team is quality assessment. The team must prepare its own report regarding the extent to which, in its judgment, the unit meets the standards of good practice expressed in the general principles and the accrediting standards of ACEJMC. The team must recommend to the Accrediting Committee and to the Accrediting Council the approval, denial, continuation, or change in the accreditation status of a unit.

From its examination of the self-study report before the visit, the team will develop questions about the unit to explore during the visit. The report is the basis of the team’s initial understanding of the unit, its mission, the range of its programs and activities, its evaluation of itself and its plans for the future. Thus, a report that merely
describes the unit is not a satisfactory base on which to build a useful site visit.

A self-study report developed from a careful analysis of the unit’s programs and activities will eliminate the tension that sometimes develops between the team and the personnel of a unit concerning what a team might “find” during the visit. A well done self-study should eliminate surprises. It also indicates that the unit enjoys good management, establishes its priorities accurately and uses its resources effectively.

Visiting teams are especially vigilant to determine whether deficiencies recorded in the previous visit report have been corrected. Teams also determine whether schools meet any major claims they have made of outstanding performance in areas other than the 9 standards normally examined by a team.

Beyond its primary functions of quality assessment and the development of a recommendation about the accreditation status of the unit, a site visit team may be useful to the unit in other ways. The self-study may have identified questions that the unit might wish to ask the experts on the team to address during the visit. In that way, the team members could function in areas beyond the measurement of the unit’s compliance with the standards. A request for such assistance should be discussed with the executive director and the chair of the team in advance of the site visit.

Some units couple a program review for accreditation with an internal program review. ACEJMC teams have found that it is best to ask the accrediting team to visit the campus first and to make its report. Based on that report, the administration of the institution can identify additional review steps.

**Selection of the Site Visit Team:** Site visit teams are chosen by the executive director in consultation with the officers. The institution seeking accreditation has the right to review the composition and *curricula vitae* of the visit team. It has the right to ask that team members who may have a conflict of interest be replaced and to expect that a majority of members will be from peer institutions and from industry groups and organizations with interests in the programs that the institution offers. Persons invited to serve as members of site visit teams are expected to disqualify themselves if they are aware of any situation or circumstance that might be a conflict of interest (or be construed as a conflict of interest) and thus call into question the independence of their judgments and decisions. See pages 19-20 for complete information on the Council’s conflict-of-interest policy.
ACEJMC maintains a pool of potential team members, including female and racial/ethnic minority practitioners and educators.

The Council strongly encourages that every effort be made to include on each site visit team at least one industry representative or educator who is a member of an ethnic/racial minority group and at least one female practitioner or educator. The site visit team also should include at least one person who is not a member of the Accrediting Committee or the Accrediting Council.

**Responsibility of the Institution for the Site Visit:** During the visit the team will try to learn firsthand all that it can about the unit, its specialties and its place within the institution. Visiting teams examine every aspect of the unit and institution that might affect the quality of the program. Team members assess quality through interviews with faculty, administrators, students and representatives of other schools; class visits; examination of student records, alumni records and communications, equipment and buildings; and analysis of budgets.

Visits are staggered over a period starting in the early fall and ending late February. Precise visit dates are determined by the ACEJMC executive director and the unit administrators. The administrator of the unit being visited is responsible for arranging hotel accommodations for the visit team.

Visits normally start on Sunday night and run through Wednesday morning, but both the days and length of the visit can vary depending on the complexity of a unit’s program and other circumstances. The unit administrator is asked to prepare a detailed schedule for the accrediting visit. He or she should consult with the team chair on planning the schedule. Forms for the schedule are supplied by the executive director.

The school’s administrator has dinner with the team on the first night. It is inappropriate for sequence heads and other faculty members to attend the first night’s dinner. It is permissible for the school’s associate dean or director to attend. The administrator can clarify points in the self-study, answer questions about the visit and schedule and provide updated or supplementary information. The team chair may wish to arrange for a tour of the building the first night.

Visit teams normally have breakfast with the faculty and lunch with some of the institution’s administrators on the first day of the visit. Although this is not absolutely necessary, it does provide an opportunity to become acquainted. With these exceptions, during the visit team members may not accept invitations to social affairs, such as receptions, cocktail parties or meals.
The visit includes one 30-minute appointment with the chief executive officer of the institution to present the report and a separate 30-minute appointment with the dean or provost to whom the unit administrator reports. Team members attend classes and interview faculty members. The team conducts two 45-minute group interviews with students, on separate days of the visit. Each interview should be with 20 or more students, if possible. If the unit offers more than one sequence, the unit administrator should arrange for meetings on the second day of the visit with students in the sequences.

The team needs a workroom in the department or school equipped with computers, Internet access and printing equipment. The executive director provides to each school the basic report form prepared in common word processing file formats for either Windows or Macintosh machines.

The report form then can be copied to the hard disk of each computer provided to the team members. Instructions for selecting and testing the most appropriate file formats accompany the files. The school is expected to confirm the proper operation of the report files, well before the team’s arrival, on the computers the team will use.

Many administrators find it useful to distribute a memo about the visit to faculty and students before the team visit. They also should inform them of the team’s recommendation after the team leaves. Often, administrators give faculty a copy of the team report.

**Site Visit Report and Response from the Institution:** On the last day of the visit, the team must prepare a written report. The report is an important document, the culmination of the visit, and a draft must be completed before the team leaves the campus. The team is required to leave copies of it, including the team’s recommendations regarding the accreditation status of the unit, with the head of the journalism/mass communications unit and with the chief executive officer of the institution (or the highest administrator of the institution on the campus at the time of the visit). Each administrator receives a copy of the report and an invitation to respond with questions, suggestions, objections and corrections of facts.

Although the on-campus reporting process may vary because of schedules of campus officers, the team usually discusses its draft first with the journalism/ mass communications unit administrator, then with the chief executive officer of the institution. If possible, unit administrators should give the chief executive officer a copy of the report before the meeting between the CEO and the team.
At those meetings, the team chair should explain that the recommendation to accredit rests, first, with the Accrediting Committee, and the final decision with the Accrediting Council.

The team chair shall request errors of factual information or interpretation (if any) be corrected in a report to be sent immediately to the chair, with an informational copy sent to the executive director. Institution officials may file challenges of fact and judgment with the team chair during the three weeks following the visit. Upon receipt of this additional report from the unit and/or the institution, the team chair shall confer with other members of the team and make such alterations in the team’s report as they collectively deem appropriate.

After three weeks, the team’s chair forwards its formal recommendation and report to the executive director with copies to appropriate institution officials. The decision to publicly release the team report rests with the school or department administrator before the report is sent to the executive director. When the team chair sends the report to the executive director, the executive director may release it.

The cover sheet of the team report includes a statement that it is a draft and may contain errors; that the school or institution may respond and offer corrections; and that the Council makes final accrediting decisions. Visit team reports and accompanying responses shall be available to the public for a fee from the Council office.

**Time Limits in Site Visit Process:** The physical site visit establishes the frame of reference for the entire accrediting process. The accreditation decision is based on what is in place in the unit at the time of the site visit. The reaccreditation process is based on the activities, programs and materials that the unit provided to students, faculty, alumni, parents and other interested parties since the previous site visit.

The site team makes its recommendation based on its observations, the self-study, and the catalog and other materials that the unit provides, and in comparison to the ACEJMC standards in place at the time of the visit. In a reaccrediting visit, the site team will pay particular attention to the report of the previous site visit team in terms of strengths and weaknesses of the unit and note any significant changes.

**Accreditation Decisions:** The Accrediting Committee meets once a year, usually in March, to review site team reports. Site team chairs present an executive summary of the site visit. Committee members often seek additional information from team chairs about the site visit and clarification of information in the site report. The Committee then forwards its recommendations to the Accrediting Council, which meets in the spring to consider accreditation decisions. The
Committee chair presents the Committee’s recommendations to the Council.

Committee and Council meetings are open, and unit administrators or representatives may attend to observe and to respond to questions from Committee or Council members.

The Council makes final decisions of accreditation status for the units under review. The president of the Council writes a letter to the institution’s chief executive officer with a copy to the unit administrator informing them of the Council’s decision.

The letter contains a statement of any deficiencies noted and, when the decision is for provisional accreditation or denial, provides notice of the right to appeal.

**Accreditation Status:** Council decisions fall into three categories—accreditation, provisional accreditation and denial. The meaning of accreditation or denial is self-evident. A unit may receive provisional accreditation when the Council has found weaknesses that can be corrected in a relatively short time. The term of provisional accreditation is two years. Schools retain the option to schedule a revisit in one year. Provisional accreditation cannot be extended beyond established terms. An individual not previously involved in the visit will accompany the team chair on the revisit.

When the accreditation is provisional, the Council president includes in the letter to the chief administrator of the institution details of the deficiencies and the process for Council reconsideration. Teams and schools should not think of provisional accreditation as being punitive; it is often the initiative needed to get faculty and administrators to correct serious weaknesses.

Accreditation is for a six-year period. If accreditation is denied, a school may apply for a revisit after two years. For purposes of calculating fees, the revisit invitation shall be considered as if it were an initial invitation.

If a college or university containing a unit accredited by ACEJMC is placed on probation status or has its accreditation revoked by a recognized regional or national agency, ACEJMC will review the unit’s accreditation status within 90 days to determine whether cause exists for withdrawal or other alteration of its status.

**Revisit Procedure:** In the case of provisional status, the unit has the option of a one-year or two-year provisional period. Request for a revisit must be sent in writing to the ACEJMC office by July 1 preceding the academic year in which the visit will occur. The executive director will coordinate with the unit and team chair to schedule
the revisit between November and early February. The unit will receive a report template and copy of the original site visit report. The report should be submitted electronically to the ACEJMC office and the revisit team no later than six weeks before the revisit date.

**Fees:** Fees paid by units seeking accreditation or reaccreditation are intended to pay the total costs of the site visits and a portion of other expenses associated with the accreditation process - Accrediting Committee and Council meetings and staff work. The Council establishes the amount of the accreditation fees. The Council also receives support toward the accomplishment of its purposes from its member organizations and from institutions in the form of annual dues.

Units seeking accreditation for the first time pay a $1,000 application fee, which is due at the time ACEJMC is invited to evaluate the unit. Should the invitation to ACEJMC be withdrawn before the site visit, this fee will not be returned. Accredited units pay $1,000 in annual dues, payable by October 1 of each year.

In addition, units seeking initial accreditation or reaccreditation reimburse the Council for the direct costs incurred by the team during the site visit and by the team chair during presentation of the team’s report to the Accrediting Committee. The Council adds $1,000 to the site visit expenses to cover photocopying, postage and other internal expenses associated with the visit.

As soon as the unit’s visit team has been confirmed, the ACEJMC executive director will send a bill to the unit for 80 percent of the estimated cost of the visit, and this amount will be due at least two weeks before the date of the visit. After the visit has been completed and the expenses of the team members have been received, the executive director will send a bill to the unit for the remaining cost of the visit. ACEJMC must receive this payment for the site visit costs before the Council meeting at which the institution’s accreditation is considered.

After the team chair’s presentation to the Accrediting Committee, the executive director will bill the unit for costs of the presentation.

When the two-person team revisits a school on provisional accreditation or reaccreditation, the school will pay the expenses for the revisit and for the person to attend the Accrediting Committee meeting to present the revisit report.

Estimated costs of accreditation site visits are: three-member teams, $3,500; four-member teams, $4,500; five-member teams, $5,000; six-member teams, $5,500.
Process of Accreditation

### Principal Dates in the Accreditation Cycle

#### Units seeking initial accreditation

**3-5 YEARS IN ADVANCE:**
- Inform ACEJMC executive director of intent to seek accreditation.
- Arrange required preliminary site visit through ACEJMC executive director.

#### 2011-13 Accreditation timeline:

The accreditation review cycle covers a two-year academic period beginning in September when self-study files are distributed. The second year includes submission of the self-study, the site team visit, review by the Accrediting Committee and final deliberations at the spring Council meeting.

**SEPTEMBER 2011:**
- Invoices for 2011-12 membership dues sent to accredited schools.
- Schools seeking initial accreditation: Application fee and CEO’s invitation due.
- Guidelines for the self-study report and template file disks sent to schools.

**OCTOBER 2011:**
- Payment due for annual membership fees.

**DECEMBER 2011:**
- Visit dates set for the 2012-13 academic year; notice also given of self-study due dates.

**MARCH 2012:**
- Accrediting Committee meets March 17-18 in Chicago; makes recommendations on schools visited 2011-12.
  (Schools to be reviewed the following year encouraged to attend and observe.)

**APRIL 2012:**

**SUMMER 2012:**
- Teams selected for 2012-13 site visits.

**SEPTEMBER 2012:**
- First due date for self-study reports. (Reports are due Sept. 1 or three months before the visit, whichever is later.)

**OCTOBER-FEBRUARY 2012-13:**
- Site visits made, team reports delivered to schools and ACEJMC; responses to team reports received from schools.

**MARCH 2013:**
- Accrediting Committee meets, makes recommendations.

**APRIL 2013:**
- Responses to Committee recommendations received from schools.

**APRIL/MAY 2013:**
- Accrediting Council meets, makes final accreditation decisions. Notification letters sent.
Preamble

Institutional uniqueness

The Accrediting Council does not define specific curricula, courses or methods of instruction. It recognizes that each institution has its unique situation, cultural, social or religious context, mission and resources, and this uniqueness is an asset to be safeguarded. The Council judges programs against the objectives that units and institutions set for themselves and against the standards that the Council sets forth for preparing students for professional careers in journalism and mass communications in the United States and in other nations. ACEJMC will apply its standards and indicators in compliance with applicable laws and regulations and, where appropriate, with religious or cultural prescriptions and practices.

Format for each standard

Each begins with a statement of the basic principle of the standard.

Indicators

Units should demonstrate that they meet the expectations defined for each of the indicators. However, the site team may recommend a waiver of the expectations for any indicator if the unit provides a compelling reason for the waiver. In such cases, the team must provide justification in the site report for its decision as part of its discussion of the standard. Units that request evaluation of professional master’s program(s) are expected to demonstrate how those programs meet all appropriate indicators.

Visit teams will not specify compliance/non-compliance for each individual indicator, but will state judgments of compliance/non-compliance for each standard as is currently done.

Evidence

Each standard concludes with a list of various forms of documentation and evidence that the unit should include in its self-study report to demonstrate that it meets the expectations defined for indicators. The site team will supplement this evidence by inspection of the facilities and equipment, by observation of the activities of the unit, by meetings and interviews with university administrators and faculty from other units and with unit faculty, staff and students, and by calls to professionals who hire the unit’s students as interns and full-time employees.

The list of evidence for each standard is only a guide to possible forms of evidence.
1. Mission, Governance and Administration

The policies and practices of the unit ensure that it has an effectively and fairly administered working and learning environment.

**Indicators:**

(a) The unit has a mission statement and engages in strategic or long-range planning that provides vision and direction for its future, identifies needs and resources for its mission and goals and is supported by university administration outside the unit. A professional graduate program must have a separate mission statement and designated administrative oversight for that program.

(b) The unit has policies and procedures for substantive faculty governance that ensure faculty oversight of educational policy and curriculum.

(c) The unit’s administration provides effective leadership within the unit and effectively represents it in dealings with university administration outside the unit and constituencies external to the university.

(d) The institution and/or the unit defines and uses a process for selecting and evaluating its administrators.

(e) Faculty, staff and students have avenues to express concerns and have them addressed.

**Evidence:**

A mission statement
A strategic or long-range plan
Documents demonstrating administrative oversight for the professional graduate program
A faculty policy manual, handbook or other document specifying the roles of faculty in governance and the development of educational policy
Minutes of faculty meetings, committee meetings and reports
Assessment of unit administrator by faculty and by administration outside the unit
Files on searches and hiring decisions
Files on concerns and complaints
### 2. Curriculum and Instruction

The unit provides a curriculum and instruction that enable students to learn the knowledge, competencies and values the Council defines for preparing students to work in a diverse global and domestic society.

### Professional Values and Competencies:

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications requires that, irrespective of their particular specialization, all graduates should be aware of certain core values and competencies and be able to:

- **understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located, as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of freedom of expression around the world, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances;**
- **demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;**
- **demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications.**
- **demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society;**
- **understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;**
- **demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;**
- **think critically, creatively and independently;**
- **conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;**
- **write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;**
- **critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;**
- **apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;**
• apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

Units requesting evaluation of a graduate program must also demonstrate how their master's graduates attain this additional core competency:

• contribute to knowledge appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.

**Indicators:**

(a) The unit requires that students take a minimum of 80 semester credit hours or 116 quarter credit hours outside of the unit, of which a minimum of 65 semester credit hours or 94 quarter credit hours are in liberal arts and sciences (as defined by the institution) outside of the unit. ACEJMC expects at least 95 percent of the graduating classes in the two academic years preceding an accreditation visit to meet this requirement.

ACEJMC requires each unit to determine the percentage of students meeting the 80/65 or 116/94 requirement in the two years preceding an accreditation visit.

(b) The unit provides a balance between theoretical and conceptual courses and professional skills courses to achieve the range of student competencies listed by the Council.

(c) Instruction is demanding and current; achievements in teaching and learning are recognized and valued.

(d) Student-faculty classroom ratios facilitate effective teaching and learning in all courses; a student-teacher ratio of 15-1 in skills and laboratory sections is strongly recommended and the ratio in each section should not exceed 20-1.

(e) The unit advocates and encourages opportunities for internship and other professional experiences outside the classroom and supervises and evaluates them when it awards academic credit. Schools may award academic credit for internships in fields related to journalism and mass communications, but credit should not exceed one semester course (or its equivalent) if the internship is away from the institution, and, for the most part, supervised by media professionals rather than academics.

Students may take up to two semester courses (or their equivalent) at an appropriate professional organization where the unit
can show ongoing and extensive dual supervision by the unit’s faculty and professionals. Students may take up to three semester courses (or their equivalent) at a professional media outlet owned and operated by the institution where full-time faculty are in charge and where the primary function of the media outlet is to instruct students.

**Evidence:**

Student records and transcripts  
Unit bulletins and brochures  
Syllabi and other course materials  
Records of teaching awards and citations, curricular and course development grants, attendance at teaching workshops, and publications and papers on teaching  
Class rosters  
Records and statistics on and evaluations of internships, with and without academic credit

For units requesting evaluation of a professional graduate program:

**Indicator:**

(f) At least half of the required credit hours must be in professional skills courses that are appropriate to professional communication careers.

**Evidence:**

Course syllabi and other documents demonstrating that the unit has a professional graduate curriculum that prepares master's degree graduates for significant professional careers that provide leadership and influence.  
Undergraduate student records and transcripts demonstrating student experience equivalent to liberal arts education.
3. Diversity and Inclusiveness
The unit has a diverse and inclusive program that serves and reflects society.

**Indicators:**

(a) The unit has a written plan for achieving an inclusive curriculum, a diverse faculty and student population, and a supportive climate for working and learning and for assessing progress toward achievement of the plan.

(b) The unit’s curriculum fosters understanding of issues and perspectives that are inclusive in terms of gender, race, ethnicity and sexual orientation, including instruction in issues and perspectives in a range of diverse cultures in a global society in relation to mass communications.

(c) The unit demonstrates effective efforts to recruit women and minority faculty and professional staff and provides an environment that supports their retention, progress and success.

(d) The unit demonstrates effective efforts to help recruit and retain a student population reflecting the diversity of the population eligible to enroll in institutions of higher education in the region or population it serves, with special attention to recruiting underrepresented groups.

(e) The unit has a climate that is free of harassment and discrimination, in keeping with the acceptable cultural practices of the population it serves, accommodates the needs of those with disabilities, and values the contributions of all forms of diversity.

Accreditation site visit teams will apply this standard in compliance with applicable federal and state laws and regulations.

**Evidence:**

A written plan
Syllabi and other course materials
Records and statistics on faculty and staff hiring and on promotion and tenure decisions
Records and statistics on student recruitment, retention and graduation
Records on part-time and visiting faculty and speakers
### 4. Full-Time and Part-Time Faculty

The unit hires, supports and evaluates a capable faculty with a balance of academic and professional credentials appropriate for the unit’s mission.

#### Indicators:

(a) The unit has written criteria for selecting and evaluating the performance of all full-time and part-time faculty and instructional staff.

(b) Full-time faculty have primary responsibility for teaching, research/creative activity and service.

(c) Credentials of the unit’s faculty represent a balance of professional and scholarly experience and expertise kept current through faculty development opportunities, relationships with professional and scholarly associations, and appropriate supplementation of part-time and visiting faculty. Faculty teaching in the graduate program must meet the criteria for graduate instruction at that university.

(d) The unit regularly evaluates instruction, using multiple measures that include student input.

(e) The faculty has respect on campus for its university citizenship and the quality of education that the unit provides.

#### Evidence:

Faculty and staff manuals or relevant policy procedural documents  
Vitae for full-time and part-time faculty  
Course evaluations and other methods of determining teaching effectiveness  
Evaluation process for annual review of faculty contributions and performance  
Search and hiring records  

For units requesting evaluation of a professional graduate program:  
Faculty vitae that demonstrate a clearly defined graduate faculty who meet the criteria for graduate instruction at that university
5. Scholarship: Research, Creative and Professional Activity

With unit support, faculty members contribute to the advancement of scholarly and professional knowledge and engage in scholarship (research, creative and professional activity) that contributes to their development.

**Indicators:**

(a) The unit requires, supports and rewards faculty research, creative activity and/or professional activity.

(b) The unit specifies expectations for research, creative activity and/or professional activity in criteria for hiring, promotion and tenure.

(c) Evaluation criteria for promotion, tenure and merit recognition account for and acknowledge activities appropriate to faculty members' professional as well as scholarly specializations.

(d) Faculty members communicate the results of research, creative and/or professional activity to other scholars, educators and practitioners through presentations, productions, exhibitions, workshops and publications appropriate to the activity and to the mission of the unit and institution.

(e) The unit fosters a climate that supports intellectual curiosity, critical analysis and the expression of differing points of view.

**Evidence:**

Faculty guides or manuals on tenure and promotion

Records of sabbatical and other leaves, travel funds and grant support

Records on faculty promotion, tenure and other forms of recognition

Faculty vitae and unit reports on research and creative and professional activities
6. Student Services
The unit provides students with the support and services that promote learning and ensure timely completion of their program of study.

Indicators:

(a) Faculty and/or professional advising staff ensure that students are aware of unit and institutional requirements for graduation and receive career and academic advising.

(b) Faculty are available and accessible to students.

(c) The unit keeps students informed about the activities, requirements and policies of the unit.

(d) The unit and the institution provide students with extra-curricular activities and opportunities that are relevant to the curriculum and develop their professional as well as intellectual abilities and interests.

(e) The unit gathers, maintains and analyzes enrollment, retention, graduation rates and other aggregate information for improving student services and reducing barriers to student success.

Evidence:

Student records, transcripts and files
Advising guides, manuals, newsletters and internal communication
Statistics on enrollment, scholarships, retention and graduation
Examples of student media and information about student professional organizations

For units requesting evaluation of a professional graduate program:
Documents and records demonstrating that the graduate program has appropriate admissions and retention policies
7. Resources, Facilities and Equipment
The unit plans for, seeks and receives adequate resources to fulfill and sustain its mission.

Indicators:
(a) The unit has a detailed annual budget for the allocation of its resources that is related to its long-range, strategic plan.
(b) The resources that the institution provides are fair in relation to those provided other units.
(c) The facilities of the unit enable and promote effective scholarship, teaching and learning.
(d) The institution and the unit provide faculty and students with equipment or access to equipment to support its curriculum and the research, creative and professional activities of the faculty.
(e) The institution and the unit provide sufficient library and information resources to support faculty and student research and professional development.

Evidence:
A detailed budget
Inspection tour of the library, facilities and equipment
8. Professional and Public Service

The unit advances journalism and mass communication professions and fulfills its obligations to its community, alumni and the greater public.

**Indicators:**

(a) The unit is actively engaged with alumni, professionals and professional associations to keep curriculum and teaching **current** and to promote the exchange of ideas.

(b) The unit provides leadership in the development of high standards of professional practice through such activities as offering continuing education, promoting professional ethics, evaluating professional performance and addressing communication issues of public consequence and concern.

(c) The unit contributes to the improvement of journalism and mass communication as academic disciplines by supporting the faculty’s involvement in academic associations and related activities.

(d) The unit contributes to its communities through service projects, internship and job placements, and faculty involvement in civic activities related to journalism and mass communication.

(e) The unit supports scholastic journalism through such activities as faculty workshops, visiting lectures and critiques of student work.

**Evidence:**

Faculty vitae
Unit records, brochures and publications of public service activities related to its mission and strategic plan
Alumni newsletters, surveys, reunions and other activities
Travel and other support for faculty involvement in academic and professional organizations
Information about courses and services available to professionals and the public
9. Assessment of Learning Outcomes

The unit regularly assesses student learning and uses results to improve curriculum and instruction.

**Indicators:**

(a) The unit defines the goals for learning that students must achieve, including the “Professional Values and Competencies” of this Council. (See 2. Curriculum and Instruction.)

(b) The unit has a written assessment plan that uses multiple direct and indirect measures to assess student learning.

(c) The unit maintains contact with its alumni to assess their experiences in the professions and to gain feedback for improving curriculum and instruction.

(d) The unit includes members of journalism and mass communication professions in its assessment process.

(e) The unit collects and reports data from its assessment activities and uses the data to improve curriculum and instruction.

**Evidence:**

A written statement on competencies
A written assessment plan
Alumni newsletters, surveys, reunions and other activities
Records on information collected from multiple measures of assessment and on the application of this information to course development and improvement of teaching

For units requesting evaluation of a professional graduate program:

Outcomes appropriate to a professional graduate program could include: a professional project, thesis or comprehensive exam that demonstrates that graduate students have developed analytical and critical thinking abilities appropriate to the profession.
“College,” “School,” “Department” or “Division” in the following listings identifies the academic unit that has been evaluated for accreditation.

Listings are organized as follows: the name of the institution; the unit name and address; the unit administrator; in some cases, the parts of the unit reviewed for accreditation [in brackets]; accredited degrees offered; the most recent date of accreditation; telephone, fax, e-mail and website information.

The listing shows the bachelor’s and professional master’s degree programs that were examined during the unit’s most recent accreditation review. Some units offer degrees in addition to those listed here. ACEJMC does not accredit programs leading to the doctor of philosophy degree, which is considered a research (and not a professional) degree.

Accreditation evaluations normally are made by ACEJMC at six-year intervals. An asterisk (*) beside a school’s listing indicates that the school received a one-year delay of its accreditation visit. A double asterisk (**) indicates the program will no longer be accredited after May 2012.

ACEJMC does not rate units or put them in any rank order. The listing of a unit as accredited indicates that the unit has been judged by ACEJMC to meet its standards. That judgment is rendered after a self-study prepared by the faculty and administration of the unit and an independent evaluation of the unit by educators and practitioners.

ACEJMC currently accredits 111 programs in journalism and mass communications at U.S. colleges and universities, including one at a university outside the country.

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The Accrediting Council is composed of representatives of professional and educational organizations and three public members. In addition, the Council president is a non-voting member.

The Accrediting Committee has 15 members. Eight are educators and seven represent the industry. In addition, the Council president is a voting, ex-officio member of the Committee.
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