



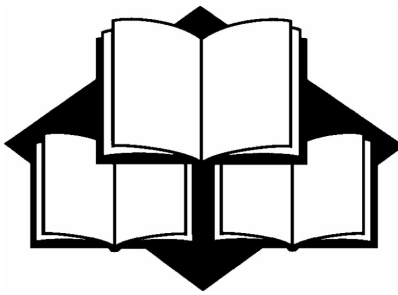
Overview of the Application Process

**The American Academy for Liberal
Education**

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Additional copies of the information regarding membership may be secured from:

The American Academy for Liberal Education
1050 17th St. NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC. 20036

Or by going to the Academy's website: www.aale.org

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Overview of the Application Process for The American Academy for Liberal Education

US and Foreign Universities and Colleges

Note: *Colleges wishing to apply for membership within the Academy, should contact the AALE offices to ensure that the most recent revisions of forms and manuals are available on the Academy website. While we do our best to keep the documents on this website up-to-date, at any given time at least one of them is typically under revision.*

Introduction

The US Secretary for the Education Department recognizes the American Academy for Liberal Education as a national, voluntary association accrediting institutions and programs that offer quality general education in the liberal arts, and that meet the Academy's academic, administrative, and fiscal criteria. The Academy's accreditation standards and criteria are clearly focused on matters of educational significance, including curricular design and quality, commitment to excellence in teaching, and evidence of student learning. Universities, colleges, and degree programs within such institutions may apply for accreditation by the Academy.

Domestic Categories of Membership/Accreditation

The Academy is authorized by the Secretary of the U. S. Education Department to offer **three** types of accreditation within the United States. For Colleges awarding the associates or baccalaureate degrees, the Academy offers ***Institutional Accreditation and Preaccreditation*** (also known as “candidacy” by other accreditors for new schools or those not presently accredited); for degree-granting programs within Universities and Colleges, the Academy offers **Program Accreditation**; for colleges that do not offer degrees or for academic requirements below the program level, the Academy offers **Certification**.

For detailed information regarding which category of accreditation is appropriate for a particular institution or program, please consult with Academy staff. Further information is available on the [Accreditation Materials](#) page.

Institutional Pre-accreditation

Pre-accreditation is an AALE “candidate” membership status intended to allow recently formed institutions, institutions that are not presently accredited, or institutions that have not been accredited previously, to establish a formal and publicly recognized association with the Academy as they progress toward full compliance with the Academy's standards and criteria. It is understood that a school may be largely though perhaps not completely in compliance with AALE standards, but that the school will be in compliance prior to full **Accreditation** being granted. **Preaccreditation** is granted by the AALE Board for a period of up to three (3) years and renewable once.

Pre-accreditation enables institutions to establish eligibility to participate in Federal student financial assistance programs administered by the Department of Education under Title IV of the Higher Education Act, as well as in student financial assistance programs established under other Federal or state legislation requiring accreditation by a recognized agency. It is understood that schools will move from **Pre-accreditation** to **Institutional Accreditation** at such a time that the school and the AALE Board are in agreement that the school has developed a track record of full compliance with all of the Academy's requirements.

Institutional Accreditation

Accreditation is a full membership status that allows institutions to establish a formal and publicly recognized association with the Academy. Full membership implies that the school has fulfilled the Academy's requirements in their entirety. **Accreditation** is granted for a period of up to ten (10) years and is renewable.

Accreditation by the Academy enables institutions to establish eligibility to participate in Federal student financial assistance programs administered by the Department of Education under Title IV of the Higher Education Act, as well as in student financial assistance programs established under other Federal or state legislation requiring accreditation by a recognized agency.

Program Accreditation

Program accreditation is an AALE full membership status that allows programs leading to a baccalaureate degree within institutions (e.g., Honors College, School of Arts and Sciences, etc.) of higher learning to establish a formal and publicly recognized association with the Academy. Program accreditation is granted for a period of up to ten (10) years and is renewable.

Certification

For colleges that do not offer a degree or for core requirements below the Program level (e.g., block requirements that are part of a larger degree program), the Academy offers **Certification** membership for up to five (5) years.

Categories of Membership for Colleges Outside the US

Beginning in the Fall of 2004, the Academy began accepting membership of Colleges, Universities and Programs outside the US *and* not considered a branch campus of a US institution. There are **three[3]** types of membership available: **Accreditation, Certification and Affiliation**. Each is briefly described below.

Program Accreditation

Program Accreditation is the highest level of recognition that the Academy can grant outside the US. [Note: *Institutional Accreditation and Preaccreditation are particular to domestic institutions due to US Department of Education requirements governing Title IV financial aid funds for US students. For colleges wishing to gain financial aid for their US students, they should contact the US State Department.*] The category signifies that the college or school meets all of the same high standards of curriculum quality that any US school in the same category. Schools wanting this level of membership must meet the same standards and criteria for their liberal arts core as any US school – with such exceptions as indicated in the Standards and Criteria for Non US Colleges and Programs. Both whole institutions or schools or programs within a college may apply, provided that the school awards the equivalent of a US Baccalaureate Degree.

Program Certification

Institutions, schools within a university, programs within a college or free-standing liberal arts programs may receive this level of recognition. Certification is appropriate for any of the aforementioned that do not offer the equivalent of a US Baccalaureate Degree and/or do not sufficiently meet the Standards and Criteria for Program Accreditation. Both schools that wish to move up to Program Accreditation and those that do not may apply for this level of distinction. Like Program Accreditation, the school will go through the self-study and third-party review process.

Affiliation

This category was created to reflect the core of Academies mission; to foster liberal education *wherever* it may exist. This level of recognition is for a) new schools with a commitment to liberal education, but without a track record of excellence or without a fully developed liberal arts core, b) more established schools which wish to add or expand their liberal core to eventually come into compliance with the Academy's Program or Certification standards or c) those schools that want to establish their support for the liberal core, regardless of its level of accomplishment. Third-party evaluation and review is available to Affiliated members.

Typical Application Process for all Applicants

The time required to complete the AALE accreditation process will vary from case to case, the typical process takes 18 - 30 months *after* submitting a complete application. The most time consuming aspects are the writing of the **Self-Study** and scheduling of the final third-party site review. A description of the key steps in the application process are below.

Step I. Institution or Program submits a completed application

The formal accreditation process begins with submission of a completed **application** form and **supporting materials**, together with a letter of intent **signed by the CEO** of the applicant institution, and the **application fee**. Application forms are available for downloading from the Academy's website as well as in printed form by request. The Academy's eligibility requirements for each category of accreditation are addressed through the respective application forms. All relevant materials about the colleges' full curriculum, processes and finances, including most recent audit, a proposed 3 to 5 year budget and strategic plan should be submitted for review. The appropriate application fee must be submitted before the Academy can review the materials.

Step II. Academy staff reviews application materials

When an application is received, Academy staff will review all information and materials supplied to determine whether the institution or program may proceed with the application process, or whether further information or materials are required. If all is in order, Academy staff will notify the applicant to begin developing a self-study for accreditation. This review includes a financial review as well as a curriculum evaluation. The college will be notified with 180 days of the staff's

determination of compatibility with the Academy's Criteria and whether the college should proceed with the accreditation process at that time.

Step III. Academy staff visit to school site scheduled

The Academy's Board has mandated that **ALL institutions seeking a membership with the Academy are to receive a preliminary staff site visit.** This gives the Academy the ability to consult with the administration and staff on AALE standards and criteria, see the facilities and go over the writing of the Self-Study. A staff visit will be scheduled within 180 days of final review of application materials.

Step IV. Institution begins writing self-study

Institutions and programs applying for membership with the American Academy for Liberal Education are required to prepare a self-study report. A self-study report is an applicant's formal and rigorous examination of its performance in light of the Academy's [Standards and Criteria](#) as well as of its own mission and educational objectives. The process leading to the final draft of the self-study should involve broad participation by faculty and administrators, and should be well-integrated with the institution's or program's regular review and planning efforts. The self-study report is a central element in the accreditation process.

The process of preparing for, drafting, and completing a self-study for accreditation typically takes anywhere from one semester to one (1) year or more, depending on the size and complexity of the applicant institution or program. The Academy's **Guide to Preparing a Self-Study** for accreditation is available for download from the Academy's website, as well other helpful materials related to understanding how the Academy's *Criteria* should be addressed.

Step V. Institution completes and submits self-study

Step VI. AALE review of submitted self-study

For domestic schools, particularly schools new to AALE, the Academy recommends that the self-study be reviewed by AALE staff or an external evaluator from one of AALE's member schools, prior to final submission to the site visit team, AALE Council of Scholars and Board. There is a fee for this service domestically. For school outside the US, this is mandatory and included in the application fee.

Site Evaluation Visit

The Academy requires that all institutions and programs applying for accreditation or pre-accreditation receive a site evaluation visit by a team of peer reviewers. A typical site evaluation team consists of three to five members representing appropriate areas of experience and expertise. The Academy provides applicants in advance with the names, titles, and institutional affiliations of each proposed candidate for the evaluation team, and provides an opportunity for comment. Applicants may also submit names, titles, and institutional affiliations of candidates for review and consideration by the Academy. See the Academy's *Site Evaluation Manual*.

Step VII. AALE selects a team to conduct the site evaluation visit

Upon receipt of the final self-study draft, the Director of the Academy will assign a team of 1 to 4 persons – depending upon the size of the school and type of membership being sought – for the third-party evaluation site visit. The school will be notified of the potential team members well in advance and have an opportunity to comment on any possible conflicts of interest among the potential visitors. The visit must be conducted at least 45 days prior to the next ALLE Board meeting to be considered at that meeting.

Step VIII. Evaluation team conducts site visit (3 days), prepares report

Site team members are charged with responsibility for evaluating an applicant's fulfillment of the Academy's Standards and Criteria for accreditation or pre-accreditation, and for presenting their findings to the Academy's Council of Scholars and Board of Trustees through a site visit report. Institutions and programs applying for accreditation may submit responses to the site visit report, related to substance or factual errors.

Please note that the site evaluation team report and any statements therein regarding compliance with the accreditation standards and criteria of the American Academy for Liberal Education represent only the considered opinion of the evaluation site team members at the time of the visit. Definitive evaluation of compliance and the accreditation decision will be made solely by the Academy's Board of Trustees, upon recommendation from the Council of Scholars, following a thorough review of application materials including, but not limited to, the self-study, the site evaluation team report, and any factual or substantive responses to the site team report.

For detailed information on the nature and conduct of site evaluation visits, please refer to the Academy's [Site Visit Manual](#).

Step IIX. Application materials to Council and Board for review

Review by the Council of Scholars and Board of Trustees

A distinguishing feature of the Academy's accreditation process is its two-tier system for reviewing applicants' educational quality. The Council of Scholars is comprised of distinguished teachers and scholars committed to the purposes of liberal education. The Council independently reviews the academic requirements, practices, and performance of each applicant institution or program and reports its findings to the Board of Trustees, which is comprised of prominent educators and other notable public figures.

The Board, which is charged with responsibility for all accreditation actions, then conducts its comprehensive review of applicants' educational, administrative, and fiscal performance. This system of dual review ensures that the educational performance of applicant institutions and programs receives the highest level of professional and independent appraisal.

Accreditation Action

Definitive evaluation of applicants' compliance with the Academy accreditation standards, and the accreditation decision, *are made exclusively Academy's Board of Trustees, upon recommendation of the Council of Scholars, following a thorough review of application materials including, but not limited to, the institutional self-study, the site visit evaluation report, and any responses to the site team report submitted by the institution.*

The actions that may be taken by the Board of Trustees include **approval** of an application, **denial** of an application, and **deferral** of an application.

Approval: In the event of an approval of an application for accreditation, the institution or program will be notified in writing within thirty (30) business days of the Board's decision. The Board's *Letter of Notification* will include any conditions or requirements. Institutions or programs have ten (10) business days to respond to the decision of the Board of Trustees of the Academy, indicating their acceptance of the Board's decision including any conditions or requirements. Institutions accepting accreditation may indicate their affiliation through an approved statement of membership. These are described in the Academy's Policies and Procedures Manual, "Statements of Membership." Appropriate state and federal agencies will be notified by the Academy.

Denial: In the event an application for accreditation is denied, the institution or program will be notified in writing within thirty (30) business days of the Board's decision. The Board's letter will indicate the reason(s) for its decision to deny the application for accreditation. Institutions or programs that have been denied accreditation may seek a reconsideration of the decision or appeal the decision. For detailed information please refer to the Academy's Policies and Procedures Manual, "Reconsideration" and "Appeals," or to the Manual for Appeals. Appropriate state and federal agencies will be notified

Deferral: In the event of a deferral of action on an application for accreditation, the institution or program will be notified in writing within thirty (30) business days of the Board's decision. The Board's letter will indicate the reason(s) for its decision to defer action. For more information on deferrals of action on applications for accreditation, please refer to the Academy's Policies and Procedures Manual, "Deferral of Accreditation Action." A deferral is not considered a negative action, nor is it an official action at all and do not require public notification.