



**Accrediting Council for Collegiate
Graphic Communications**

Accreditation Manual

Version 9.2

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DEFINITION, TAXONOMY, LEARNING OUTCOMES

Graphic Communications is a term used for both an industry and an academic discipline. The graphic communications industry provides society with a vast variety of visual consumer information services and products. Examples include products as varied as signage and store decor, individualized postal and email advertising, media rich websites of all kinds, printed and digital edition publications, packaging and labeling in both digital form (for eCommerce sites) and physical form (for product containers), as well as many dozens of other forms of commercial visual media in both printed and digital form.

ACCGC defines the academic discipline of graphic communications as a branch of technology with focus on the history, creation, production, management, and commercial application of visual products in digital and physical form. Graphic communications degree programs include various combinations of a wide range of instructional content, shown in figure 1.0 as a taxonomy.

Associate Degree and Bachelor's Degree Learning Outcomes

As a collegiate academic discipline, students graduating from graphic communications Associate degree programs are expected to have gained the skills and knowledge that will enable them to:

1. Integrate design aesthetics, functionality, and relevancy into graphic communications products, optimizing user experience.
2. Impact production efficiency and product quality across a variety of media by applying knowledge of graphic communications materials, technologies, and practices.
3. Contribute to graphic communications project teams for design, production, and management.
4. Recognize and practice legal and ethical responsibilities concerning the creation, use, and distribution of graphic communications assets or products.
5. Communicate ideas through written, visual, and oral mediums to a wide range of audiences.

Bachelor's Degree-only Learning Outcomes

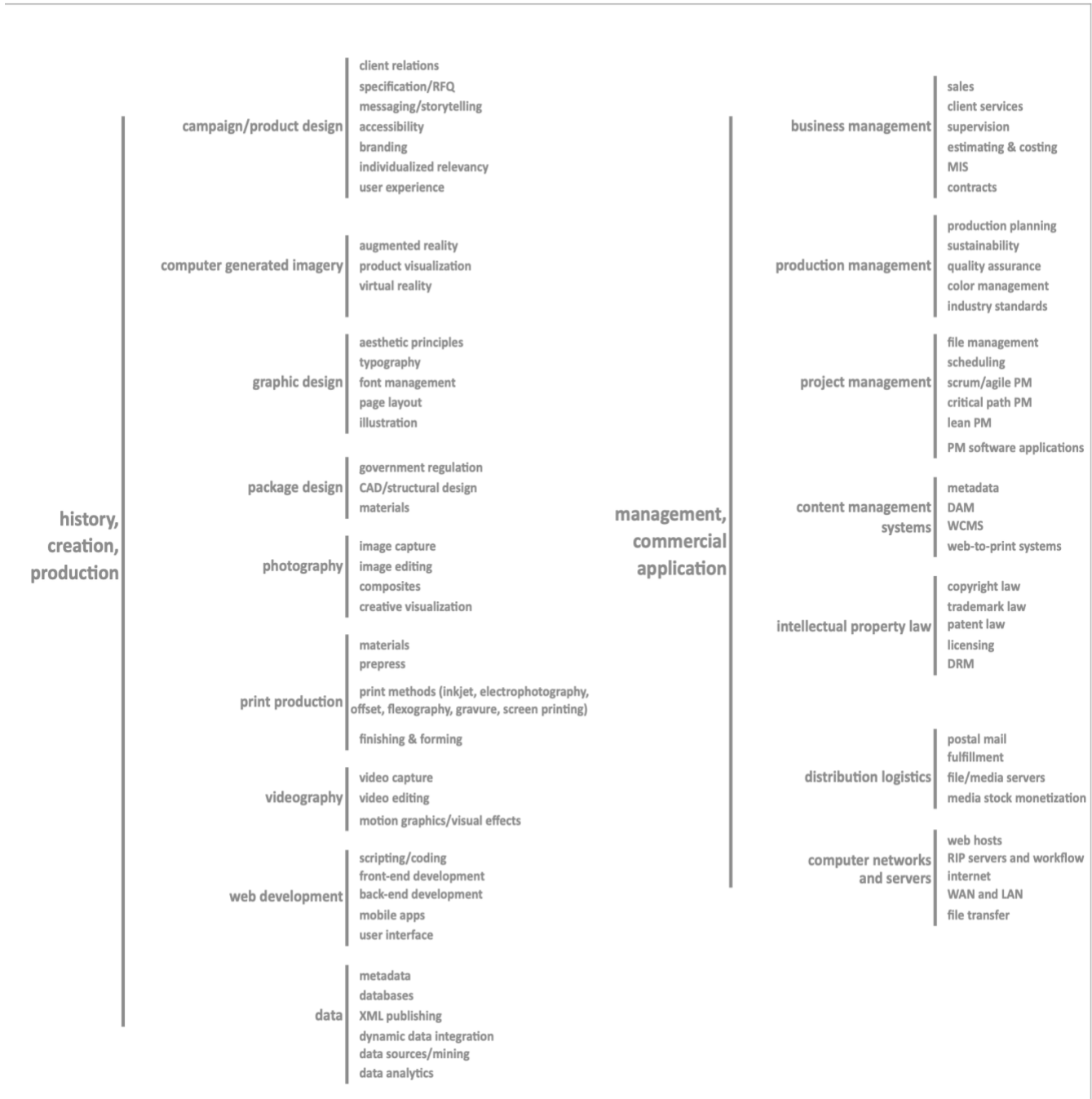
6. Research and apply new information to solve graphic communications design, production, and management problems.
7. Apply tools and principles in graphic communications business development and production management.

Master's Degree-only Learning Outcomes

Students graduating from graphic communications master's degree programs are expected to have gained the skills and knowledge addressed by at least five out of the first seven student learning outcomes, and fulfill the final criteria, number eight.

8. Students demonstrate mastery through a culminating final experience above and beyond the bachelor's degree level. Examples include a thesis, applied research project, portfolio review, or comprehensive exam.

Figure 1.0 Graphic Communications Content Taxonomy



Purpose of ACCGC Accreditation

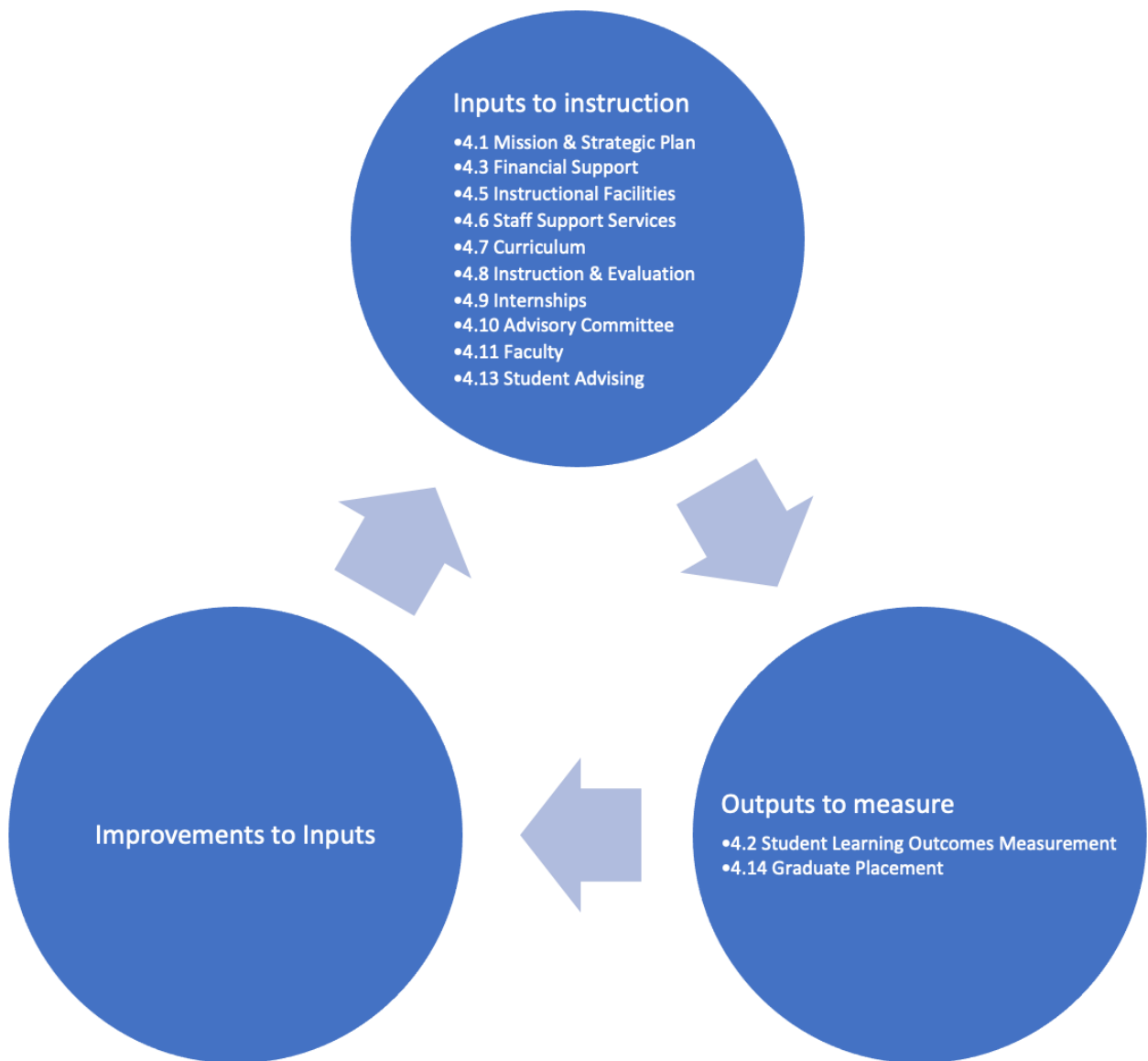
The accreditation process is designed to assist collegiate educators in the analysis, metrics, and continuous improvement of degree programs. ACCGC accreditation is designed to be a vehicle for assuring academia, industry employers, and society that accredited programs (a) provide students

pursuing college degrees in graphic communications the academic rigor necessary to develop as more literate, inclusive, adaptable, and productive citizens, and (b) serve students and employers by providing contemporary skillsets required for successful employment in the graphic communications industry.

Principles of Continuous Improvement

Undertaking ACCGC accreditation involves all stakeholders (administration, faculty, students, advisory board) in a process to set benchmarks for learning outcomes, analyze the entire educational environment, and then continually measure and improve learning outcomes over time (see figure 2). This program analysis and learning outcomes measurement system is captured in a document called a

Figure 2 Principles of Continuous Improvement



self-study. Once completed, an external team of peers reviews the self-study and provides feedback and perspective.

Mission

The mission of the Accrediting Council for Collegiate Graphic Communications is to provide viable, credible, and defensible accreditation standards that can be used by colleges and universities offering graphic communications programs, thereby:

- a. Developing and strengthening graphic communications programs at the collegiate level.
- b. Helping to enhance and maintain quality of instruction through periodic review.
- c. Stimulating the exchange of ideas between academia and industry.
- d. Providing recognition to those collegiate programs that achieve and maintain acceptable standards.

Program Criteria

Associate and bachelor's degrees. A major in graphic communications requires a minimum of 30 semester hours of graphic communications course work. A concentration (such as a minor, sequence, emphasis, pattern, etc.) requires at least 18 semester hours of graphic communications courses. Programs with less than these recommended minimums could still be considered, but the institution administrator would need to provide justification and the ACCGC board of directors would need to approve the program.

Graduate degrees. Master's degrees must be based on a foundation of preparing individuals for advanced knowledge related to the graphic communications discipline. At least half of the hours should be relevant to a career in graphic communications.

Accreditation Authority

The Accrediting Council for Collegiate Graphic Communications, Inc. (ACCGC) is an independent body of industry and education professionals devoted to promoting excellence in graphic communications education. The ACCGC is dedicated to the improvement of collegiate-level curricula in graphic communications. The Council derives its authority and responsibility for accreditation from its Bylaws.

MEMBERSHIP AND ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

The ACCGC consists of elected representatives from the following groups: (a) educators from within graphic communications programs at the associate and baccalaureate level, and (b) personnel from the graphic communications industry, including individuals representing graphic communications trade associations and foundations. The ACCGC consists of an executive committee, an accreditation committee, an appeals committee, and various ad hoc committees as needed. A managing director provides staff-level administrative support to the Council.

Accrediting Council

The Council is a board of directors consisting of up to nineteen elected representatives from the following groups:

- A maximum of eleven full-time educators from within graphic communications collegiate degree programs. These educators hold at least a tenure track assistant professor position and have at least three-years-experience in industry or as college faculty. A maximum of five of the eleven educators may be involved in associate degree-programs, with the remaining educators involved in baccalaureate and graduate-degree programs.
- A maximum of eight leaders from various facets of the graphic communications industry.

Executive Committee

A president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, and chair of the accreditation committee comprise the five-member executive committee. The immediate past president may be included as an ex-officio sixth committee member. The executive committee formulates and proposes policy to the Council and guides the activities of the Managing Director.

Accreditation Committee

This accreditation committee consists of at least ten Council members and has the function of granting ACCGC accreditation based on the documentation after the review process.

The chair of the accreditation committee appoints a three-member site visit team for each institution that applies for accreditation, subject to confirmation by the institution. A site visit team will review the self-study, visit the institution and its representatives, and report findings to the accreditation committee. Site visit teams will consist of at least two accreditation committee members. One team member will be an industry representative. Two team members will be active or retired graphic communications educators from collegiate degree-granting educational institutions. One of the two educators serve as team chair.

Appeals Committee

The appeals committee consists of a chair and five additional council members who are not current members of the accreditation committee and are not affiliated in any way with the appealing institution. The appeals committee responds to appeals from institutions denied ACCGC accreditation by the accreditation committee. The appeals committee votes to uphold or reverse the decision of the accreditation committee. The decision of the appeals committee is final.

Managing Director

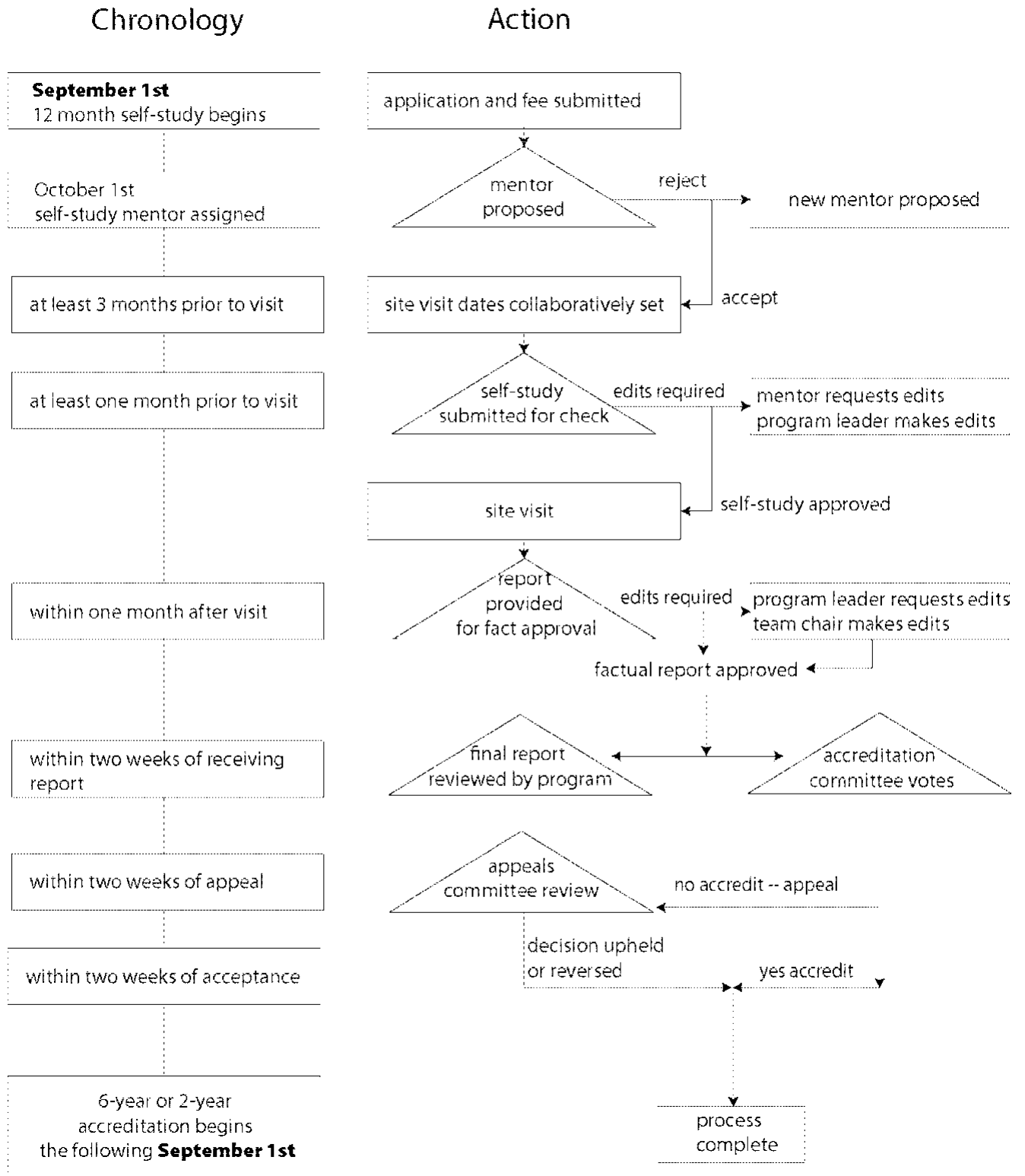
The managing director is responsible for the administration of the Council's work. This includes coordinating the accreditation process, maintaining Council records, facilitating and reporting financial matters, providing secretarial support, coordinating site teams and visits, and arranging meetings for the Council. The managing director is appointed by the executive committee, confirmed by the board of directors, and serves at the discretion of the board of directors under the general supervision of the executive committee.

ACCREDITATION PROCESS AND POLICIES

Application for Accreditation

The application for accreditation review along with a fee of \$200.00 must be submitted by a high-ranking administrator (president, academic vice president, or college/school dean). The completed application form and fee will trigger a review by the accreditation committee to determine the suitability of the program for ACCGC accreditation. If an affirmative decision is made on program suitability, the application submitter will be notified and the full-fee for accreditation will be required, less the application fee (-\$200). The accreditation process will begin September 1st following the receipt of the application fee.

ACCGC Accreditation Process and Chronology



Selection of a Mentor and Site Visit Team

The chair of the accreditation committee appoints a chair for the site visiting team. The chair for the site visiting team is appointed subject to confirmation by the administrator who made the request for accreditation review. During the self-study process, the chair for the site visiting team acts as a mentor to the representatives of the institution, aiding them as needed in preparing the self-study report and the site visit schedule. The chair of the accreditation committee, before receiving the completed self-study report, appoints the remaining members of the site visiting team. These appointments are also subject to confirmation by the institution's administrator who requested the accreditation review.

Self-Study Report

Within 12 months of ACCGC receiving the application for accreditation review, the program self-study report should be prepared and submitted for review to each member of the site visiting team and ACCGC managing director at least one month prior to the scheduled site visit.

If this timeline cannot be met, it is the responsibility of the institution program coordinator to work with the ACCGC managing director and chair for the site visiting team in determining when the self-study report will be completed. A reasonable time extension may be granted, but if the delay is more than 6 months, it will be necessary to complete an extension application that includes a rationale and a \$500.00 fee. The accreditation committee will decide on whether to grant the extension. Should the extension not be granted, all fees will be returned to the institution.

Site Visit

The site visiting team will meet with institution representatives over a 3-day period, with some meetings scheduled online the week prior to the on-site visit. Among other activities, team members will confer with institutional personnel to review plans, tour facilities, conduct interviews, observe classroom and laboratory activities, review documented support material, and meet with appropriate personnel including administrators, program faculty, program students, and the program advisory board. An exit meeting will be held with the faculty and administration at which time preliminary findings of the ACCGC visiting team are provided.

The Council's managing director will provide relevant information to the site visiting team no later than six weeks prior to the scheduled site visit regarding the travel reimbursement policy.

ACCGC must assure candid interviews, thus no institutional representatives outside of the intended interviewees can be present unless approved by the visiting team's chair.

Instructional Materials Preparation Guidelines

Team members will review only discipline-specific graphic communications course materials within the degree curriculum.

PDF curriculum portfolio. Prepare and share a single PDF of all course materials with a hyperlinked table of contents for ease of navigation. For each graphic communications course in the curriculum, include the following in chronological order: (a) the syllabus, (b) presentation materials followed by related assignments with grading criteria (rubrics), (d) quizzes and exams, (e) reference materials. Digital media such as video presentations and demonstrations guides can be included as links to external video servers.

Collection of student work. Physical and digital examples should be assembled for review. Choose a variety of major projects from only 2 or 3 courses at each grade level that together represent instruction across all Student Learning Outcomes. For each project selected, provide the visiting team with 3 or 4 different student work examples, and include graded rubrics (showing the criteria for the assignment). Any examples of materials should hide student names or identifiers.

Site Visit Report

Within 30 days of the site visit, the team leader completes and sends a site visit report to the ACCGC managing director and team members. The report should contain the front matter as presented in the program self-study, plus a summary of the findings from each ACCGC standard evaluated by the team.

The team members will review the report and respond to the team leader within 10 days. The team leader will then make two versions of the report: (1) a preliminary report version and (2) a final report version.

Fact-Checking Report. The preliminary report is shared with program personnel for fact checking review. This report will contain no evaluative comments, ratings or recommendations. The Council's managing director will forward the fact-checking report to the institutional representative for verification. The institutional representative should respond to the managing director within 2 weeks.

Final Report. The chair of the visiting team then finalizes a final site visit report (including evaluative comments, ratings and recommendations). The managing director coordinates sharing the report with the accreditation committee prior to voting on an accreditation decision.

Accreditation Term Lengths

Program accreditation may be recommended for either two years or six years and is activated on September 1 following the accreditation approval.

Six-year accreditation. For a six-year accreditation, an application for a re-accreditation review should be made at least 18 months prior to the expiration of the current accreditation term (at the end of the 4th year). The site-visit will take place during the final year of an accredited term (within the 5th year).

Two-year accreditation. A two-year accreditation period will be recommended if the site visiting team concludes that accreditation standards have largely been met, but a response is required to strengthen a standard or standards. A two-year accreditation requires one external reviewer assigned by the accreditation committee to review compliance with specified standards within the two-year accreditation time span. The external reviewer will report findings to the accreditation committee. The accreditation committee will recommend either (a) accreditation expiration or (b) an extension of four more years to equal a total accreditation span of six years.

If an institution is not granted accreditation, the institution may re-apply after a period of one calendar year from the date of notification.

Accreditation Committee Action

The final visiting team report is reviewed and voted upon by the accreditation committee. The accreditation committee makes the recommendation to either (a) accredit or (b) to deny accreditation based on a review of this information. The Council's managing director provides the accrediting decision and final report to the institution's representatives.

Appeal Status

The institutional representative may submit a written request for an appeal to the Council's managing director within 30 days of receipt of notification of the accreditation decision. The appeals committee will review the institution's appeal and all accreditation documentation regarding the accreditation decision. The appeals committee may request further information from the institution and the site visiting team members to clarify specific appeal issues. The appeals committee members vote to uphold or reverse the decision of the accreditation committee. The Council's managing director will notify the institution's representatives of the appeals committee decision. The decision of the appeals committee is final.

New Accreditation Fees

Application fee. An application is made and reviewed for approval by the accreditation committee. The application fee is a \$200.00.

Self-study fee. An \$1800.00 fee is required for the bachelor's degree during the self-study period. A \$1000.00 fee is required for master's degree, associate degree, or emphasis/concentration/minor within a bachelor's degree during the self-study period.

Visiting team fees. Visiting team travel expenses are covered by the host institution.

Accreditation Review for Programs Outside the Continental USA

Due to the potentially unfamiliar logistics of travel, international institutions are requested to coordinate, arrange and pay for hotel and food accommodations for the team.

Annual Maintenance Fee

After gaining accreditation status, a maintenance fee is due by August 31st of each year.

- Sequence, minor, emphasis, or concentration within a bachelor's degree: \$1200.00
- Associate degree: \$1200.00
- Bachelor's degree: \$2000.00
- Master's degree: \$1200.00
- Multiple program fee: not to exceed \$3000.00

Reaccreditation Fees for Continuous Accreditation

No additional fee is required beyond the maintenance fee for a reaccreditation application and self-study process. Visiting team travel costs are the responsibility of the institution's program under review.

Missing Payment

Institutions not current in their annual fee will be given a grace period for the first year after non-payment. Accreditation status will be withdrawn after the second year of non-payment.

Accreditation Delay

Institutions under accreditation review that are granted permission to delay the team visit to a subsequent year will be assessed a \$500.00 annual administrative fee for each year of the delay.

Multiple Programs at One Campus

A request to accredit multiple degree programs in a single visit will be reviewed by the accreditation committee with two possible outcomes:

One visiting team and one accreditation fee for all programs. In this case, the programs are deemed similar in curricular content, faculty, and facilities such that a 3-member visiting team could reasonably review the programs in a single visit. Should one visit for multiple programs be approved, the self-study should be organized to highlight the differences between programs in terms of curriculum and student learning outcomes, as well as any other key differences.

A separate self-study for each program and a separate visiting team for each program. In this case, each program is unique in terms of curricular content, faculty, and/or facilities such that one visiting team would not be able to review more than one program in a single visit.

Multiple Campuses Offering One Program

ACCGC will accredit multiple campus systems offering a single graphic communications degree program. An independent reviewer will be appointed by the accreditation committee to verify that the multiple campuses within the system all offer the same program. The reviewer fee is \$500.00.

Multiple campus programs deemed appropriate for single accreditation will conduct a single self-study that will include appropriate information about each campus in the system. The visit team will be assigned one extra team member, comprising a four-member Site Visit Team. The team will visit the main campus as a group and conduct a full review. A fourth team member will then visit each campus in the system to conduct an audit, assuring that information in the self-study is accurate and complete.

The cost structure for a single accreditation for multiple campus programs is the same as a single campus system with one exception: the expenses incurred for the additional (4th) team member visit additional campus sites will be paid by the institution.

ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

ACCGC has defined 15 standards that accredited collegiate graphic communications programs must meet or exceed. For each standard, the self-study involves collecting supportive evidence with an accompanying narrative.

1 Mission and Strategic Plan

Standard

The graphic communications program has a written mission statement that is aligned and supported by the department/school mission and institutional mission. The program has a strategic plan for year-to-year actions that assure the positive development of the program.

Evidence

Program mission

Departmental mission

College/school mission

Institutional mission

Program strategic plan with documented actions

Commentary

Describe how the missions align, including exclusive elements and mutually supportive areas of overlap.

Description of the short and long-term goals of the program, as well as planned and completed actions that assure the positive development of the program.

2 Governance/Administration

Standard

Administrative actions support the program. There is effective leadership of the graphic communications program.

Evidence

Administrative organization

Minutes of department/program meetings

Policies on program/department governance

Commentary

Commentary on program-level administration, as well as administrative input and support at the department and college levels.

3 Financial Support

Standard

The budget for graphic communications programs must be adequate to support program objectives and promote continuous program improvement.

Evidence

Fund allocation (from the institutional budget down to the program level)

External supplemental financial support (such as donations)

Commentary

Explanation of the balance of full-time vs adjunct faculty, norms in class sizes; condition and age of equipment and facilities, norms for faculty support for travel to workshops and conferences, and outside areas of support, like industry donations and partnerships.

4 Advisory Committee

Standard

A graphic communications advisory committee composed of a variety of industry professionals provides external guidance, validation, and advocacy for curricular content and program direction.

Evidence

Roster of industry advisory committee members (with diversity of specializations)

Bylaws (committee policies—member qualification requirements, member selection, and member responsibilities)

Meeting minutes (for the past 5 years)

Commentary

Describe the function of the advisory committee including frequency of meetings, areas of committee input, resulting actions over time, and the rationale for committee member composition.

5 Learning Outcomes Assessment

Standard

The following student learning outcomes (SLOs) are measured in a variety of ways, compiled annually for review, and the resulting data used to inform program improvements:

Bachelor's and Associate Degree Student Learning Outcomes

1. Integrate design aesthetics, functionality, and relevancy into graphic communications products, optimizing user experience.
2. Impact production efficiency and product quality across a variety of media by applying knowledge of graphic communications materials, technologies, and practices.
3. Contribute to graphic communications project teams for design, production, and management.
4. Recognize and practice legal and ethical responsibilities concerning the creation, use, and distribution of graphic communications assets or products.
5. Communicate ideas through written, visual, and oral mediums to a wide range of audiences.

Bachelor's-only Degree Student Learning Outcomes

6. Research and apply new information to solve graphic communications design, production, and management problems.
7. Apply tools and principles in graphic communications business development and production management.

Master's-only Degree Student Learning Outcome

8. Students demonstrate mastery through a culminating final experience above and beyond the bachelor's degree level. Examples include a thesis, applied research project, portfolio review, or comprehensive exam.

Evidence

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) aligned with ACCGC SLOs (if different)

Direct measures (with project and rubric examples)

Indirect measures of (a) graduating students, (b) employers, and (c) program alumni

Commentary

Provide commentary on the outcomes assessment system, its development, as well as examples of the use of measured outcomes to provide input to specific program changes.

6 Curriculum

Standard

The program curriculum exhibits the pedagogy and curricular diversity required to meet student learning outcomes.

Sources of evidence

Program admission requirements

Program course plan (requirements for graduation with prerequisite structure, including any prescribed general education)

Course syllabi related to the major (not general education)

Course content (objectives) aligned to support each SLO

Commentary

Provide context with a history of how the curriculum evolved. Provide the rationale for any degree-specific general education requirements. Provide a rationale for the balance of course content to support SLOs across the curriculum, including any concentrations/specializations.

Explain specific ways in which the graphic communications program encourages learning experiences that address skills and knowledge pertaining to sustainability and social responsibility that are guided by institutionally led programming and addressed through the application of sound practices pertaining to materials and processes (examples include philanthropy, environment conservation, diversity, labor practices, or volunteerism).

7 Instructional Facilities

Standard

The instructional facilities are adequate to support the instruction required to meet student learning outcomes.

Evidence

Floor plan(s) of instructional facilities

Classroom technology

Inventory of laboratory equipment and software

Equipment and software maintenance policy

Lab supervision and safety policy

Commentary

Explanation of how lab equipment and instructional facilities support the course objectives and student learning outcomes.

8 Staff Support Services

Standard

The unit has support services to provide sufficient instructional assistance to meet student learning outcomes.

Evidence

Office staff (availability to program)

Technical support staff (availability to program)

Student assistants (availability to program)

External support services (availability to program)

Commentary

Explain the ways in which the program utilizes office staff, technical support staff, student assistants, and external support services.

9 Internships/Practicums/Cooperative Study

Standard

Relevant practical experiences in the workplace, with or without academic credit, are support-ed. To meet compliance with the standard, internships/practicums/cooperative study are not required for graduation, however a program to support students in gaining relevant work experience should be in place.

Evidence

Data on annual student work experiences (credit and non-credit) related to the graphic communications industry.

Policies, procedures, and guidelines for internship/ practicum/ cooperative study.

Commentary

Explain how the program connects students with job opportunities, either for course credit or for non-credit experiences (part-time and summer jobs).

10 Faculty

Standard

Faculty are academically and professionally qualified according to institutional norms, with evidence for meeting responsibilities and expectations.

Evidence

Tenured, tenure-track, instructional, and adjunct faculty (with specializations and course responsibilities)

Workload balance (contact hours, scholarship, service, advising)

Policies on selection and appointment of faculty

Faculty vitae

Faculty professional development activity

Commentary

Provide context for the balance of full-time and part-time faculty.

Explain the institutional norms for faculty qualifications and expectations for service and scholarship.

Explain the process for professional development support.

11 Faculty Evaluation

Standard

A system of evaluation provides faculty with performance feedback and actionable plans for improvement.

Evidence

Policies for tenure and promotion

Student teaching evaluation policies and instruments

Policies and practices for faculty evaluation

Commentary

Summarize the faculty evaluation methods and how feedback for improvement and progress toward promotion is provided to faculty.

12 Instruction and Evaluation

Standard

The graphic communications faculty are well prepared and teach well, exhibiting student-centered instructional practices.

Evidence

Syllabi, course plans and support media, quizzes & exams examples, major projects & grading rubric examples

(See Instructional Materials Preparation Guidelines on page 7)

Commentary

Provide an overview of the policies, practices, and rationales regarding instructional assignments, class sizes, and modes of instruction (face-to-face, hands-on laboratory, hybrid/blended, on-line).

13 Student Records and Advising

Standard

A system for maintaining student records and advising students is established, in use, and effective. This includes logical transfer and articulation policies.

Evidence

Course offerings and enrollments by semester/quarter

The academic advising and recordkeeping system

Policies on student advisement schedules/requirements

Data on completion rates and time to graduation rates

Strategies/support services to assure retention, persistence, and completion rates

Student surveys/opinions on advising satisfaction

Commentary

Provide the context for how students are helped to plan the courses they take to graduate on time, including how prerequisites and course grades play a part.

Provide commentary on completion rates and time to graduation rates.

14 Graduate Placement and Follow-up

Standard

Initial placement assistance is provided. Graduate placement is tracked, both long-term and short-term. Regular follow-up studies of graduates are conducted for feedback on job titles, salaries, and satisfaction with the attainment of student learning outcomes.

Evidence

Career counseling services

Job opportunities through faculty contacts and job fairs

Graduating seniors and recent alums initial job placements (longer term job advancement and satisfaction)

Commentary

Provide commentary on programs that exist to help students prepare resumes, for interviewing, and for job searching; explain how the program tracks its graduates for job placement and advancement and its effectiveness.

15 Diversity and Inclusion

Standard

A culture of diversity is reflected in the student body of an institution, as well as among the faculty, staff, advisory board, administrators, trustees and other stakeholder groups.

Evidence

Current faculty and student diversity, retention, and graduation rates

Policies/trainings (that provide assurances for non-biased inclusion and the encouragement of gender and ethnic diversity)

Accommodation for the needs of those with disabilities

Commentary

Discuss the diversity and inclusion initiatives and diversity statistics in the student body and among institutional employees.