
Accreditation FAQs

1. What is the ACCJC?

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges ([ACCJC](#)) accredits associate degree granting institutions in California and Hawaii, as well as in the Territories of Guam and American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Republic of Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands. ACCJC is one of three commissions under the corporate entity known as the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC).

2. What is accreditation?

Accreditation is the process for evaluating and assuring quality education in the United States. Agencies that develop and apply standards are often called accrediting commissions. Accrediting commissions were created by the collective group of institutions that wished to engage in the quality review and assurance process, and those institutions were and are referred to as the member institutions of a commission.

3. How often are colleges evaluated for accreditation?

Once initial accreditation is awarded, a college enters a six-year cycle of review, during which time the college prepares a self-study to validate for ACCJC that the standards and other eligibility criteria continue to be met.

4. What is the purpose of the Self-Study?

The purpose of the Self-Study is to provide the college an opportunity to assess itself in relation to the basic criteria for institutional eligibility and accreditation standards. Palomar College commenced the preparation of its [Self-Study 2009](#) in Spring 2007 and completed it in December 2008. The Accreditation Steering Committee was the shared governance committee charged with oversight of the Self-Study. Students, faculty, administrators, and staff participated in writing the Self-Study.

5. What is the purpose of the Site Visit?

The purpose of the Site Visit is to provide the visiting team the opportunity to validate the findings of the Self-Study, to evaluate the institution, and to make recommendations. Palomar College's Site Visit occurred March 9-12, 2009.

6. Who is on the Site Visit Team?

Site visit team members are selected for their expertise from peer institutions within the accrediting region. The Palomar College Accreditation Site Visit Team was chaired by Dr. Steven Kinsella, Superintendent/President of Gavilan College, and was comprised of eight members from California and Hawaii.

7. What is the process by which ACCJC takes action?

After completing the site visit, the chair of the Site Visit Team prepares a draft Evaluation Report that incorporates comments of all team members. The report is sent to the college for factual corrections and are then submitted to the team chair. The college also has the opportunity to provide these factual corrections to the Evaluation Report to ACCJC. The college then has the opportunity to submit further information and address the Commission prior to the Commission taking action.

The Commission determines the accreditation status of the college and communicates that status via an "Action Letter."

8. What does it mean when a college is placed on "Warning" by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC)?

When the Commission finds that an institution has pursued a course deviating from the Commission's eligibility requirements, standards, or policies to an extent that give concern to the Commission, it may issue a "warning" to the institution to correct its deficiencies, refrain from certain activities, or initiate certain activities. The Commission will specify the time within which the institution must resolve these issues. During the warning period, the institution will be subject to reports and visits at a frequency to be determined by the Commission. **The accredited status of the institution continues during the warning period.** If warning is issued as a result of the institution's comprehensive review (Site Visit), reaffirmation of accreditation is delayed during the period of warning.

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9. **Will the credits students earn at Palomar College be eligible for transfer to other institutions while the college addresses the Commission's recommendations?** Yes. Academic credit units successfully completed at Palomar College prior to and during the term of the "Warning" status are fully transferable to those institutions currently accepting transfer credits.
10. **What impact does this "Warning" have on students' eligibility to receive Financial Aid?** None. There is no impact on eligibility to receive Financial Aid because the accredited status of the college continues during the warning period.
11. **Are academic programs at Palomar College in jeopardy?** No. Academic programs remain in good standing, and the accredited status of the institution continues during the warning period.
12. **What is Palomar College doing to address the recommendations contained in the Action Letter?**
The college began responding to the Commission's recommendations immediately after receiving the Evaluation (Site) Team's Exit Report. The Strategic Planning Council (SPC) and assigned individuals and groups began to address the recommendations made in the Exit Report. Bi-weekly reports from the assigned individuals and groups are being submitted in preparation of a Follow-up Report.
- Upon receipt of the Commission's Action Letter with the final recommendations, the college will incorporate the work already started and address the Commission's recommendations. All constituent groups (students, faculty, administrators, and classified staff) will participate in addressing the recommendations.
13. **What are the requirements for the Follow-Up Report?**
The format of a Follow-Up Report is specified by ACCJC. Palomar College will use the shared governance process to prepare the Follow-up Report specified in the Action Letter from the Commission. The Accreditation Steering Committee, Strategic Planning Council, and Faculty Senate will have primary responsibility for preparing a draft report showing progress and analysis of the responses to the recommendations and providing evidence to substantiate the report. The entire college community will have the opportunity to review and provide input into the report prior to approval by the Governing Board and submission to ACCJC.
14. **When is the Follow-Up Report due?**
The Follow-Up Report is due on March 15, 2010, and will be followed by a visit from ACCJC representatives.

Updates on accreditation will be posted on the [Palomar College Accreditation Website](#).