

## **Initial ALA Accreditation Step One: Precandidacy Application**

A report on the status of the program and a plan for achieving candidacy status are the two most critical elements of a precandidacy application. *Accreditation Process, Policies, and Procedures* (AP3), 4<sup>th</sup> ed., section I.8, details the requirements for achieving and maintaining Precandidacy status.

Precandidacy status represents a “commitment to achieving ALA accreditation.” A program is therefore not expected to be in compliance with the Standards at this point in the process.

### **PAST LESSONS**

Past applications have shown how difficult it is for those working within the program to describe it adequately or clearly. They are too close to the subject. Someone outside the program needs to review the application against the requirements. This is also true of the eventual Self-Study. Many accredited programs struggle with this. Office for Accreditation staffers provide advice and can offer names of qualified individuals to consult on the process.

#### **Be sure the application answers these questions:**

- What is the projected size of the faculty?
- What is the anticipated size of student enrollment?
- What is the relationship between the projected size of the faculty and the student body?
- What additional personnel and physical resources will be committed to support the Program?
- On what are these projections based?

#### **Standard I Systematic Planning**

Provide a clear statement of mission, goals, and objectives for the program, consistent with the values of the school and parent institution. Be sure that the goals and objectives clearly describe the constituencies served by the program. Describe how the objectives will be assessed. Describe the systematic planning process that will assure ongoing compliance with each area of the *Standards*.

#### **Standard II Curriculum**

This standard requires that “The curriculum is based on goals and objectives, and evolves in response to an ongoing systematic planning process involving representation from all constituencies.” Be sure to provide evidence of a planning and outcomes assessment process that informs a systematic plan for the curriculum. This standard further requires evidence that the “curriculum provides the opportunity for students to construct coherent programs of study that allow individual needs, goals, and aspirations to be met.”

#### **Standard III Faculty**

This standard requires evidence of plans for developing faculty stated in relation to program objectives. An application that includes plans to increase the faculty size must also show evidence of committed support from the parent institution for increasing the size of the faculty.

#### **Standard IV Students**

This standard requires that students be able to “construct a coherent plan of study that allows individual needs, goals, and aspirations to be met within the context of requirements established by

the program.” The application must detail plans to provide adequate courses a clear schedule of offerings.

### **Standard V Administration, Finances, and Resources**

This standard requires the program to show that “the parent institution provides the resources and administrative support needed for the attainment of program objectives.” The application must provide evidence of plans to ensure that the program would have a reasonable expectation of financial viability. For example, if a report expresses uncertainty about when new funding for additional faculty lines and other resources will be available, acceptance of the application could be delayed until more is known.

This standard also requires that the “physical facilities provide a functional learning environment for students and faculty” and that “instructional and research facilities and services for meeting the needs of students and faculty include access to information resources and services, computer and other information technologies, accommodations for independent study, and media production facilities.” Further, that “the program’s systematic planning and evaluation process includes review of its administrative policies, its fiscal and support policies, and its resource requirements.” The Committee has rejected applications with insufficient evidence that the program has met the requirements of this standard “regardless of forms or locations of delivery of the school’s program” (Standards, Introduction).

### **PRECANDIDACY TO CANDIDACY TIMELINE EXAMPLE**

By Oct. 1, 2016                              Submit application for COA review at its fall meeting, Nov. 2016

If precandidacy status granted:

Nov. 19, 2016                              Begin precandidacy period.

By Dec. 1, 2017                              Submit progress report and annual statistical information.

By Oct 15, 2018                              Submit application for **Candidacy status**, if program is ready to show that it is meeting the Standards and thus enter the comprehensive review process. (A program may remain in Precandidacy up to three years. At the end of three years, the COA may grant one extension of up to three years.)

If Candidacy status is granted, a comprehensive review visit is scheduled. That review results in one of three actions by COA: 1) grant initial accreditation status 2) maintain candidacy status, or 3) deny initial accreditation.

If Candidacy is *not* granted, the program may remain in precandidacy another year, the end of which it may be granted a one three-year extension. If a program remains in Precandidacy for six years without progressing to Candidacy, it will no longer be considered a precandidate and must wait two years before reapplying for Precandidacy.