



Accreditation of Applied Sociology, Clinical Sociology, Public Sociology and Sociological Practice Programs: Policies and Procedures

**Copyright © 2009 by
Commission on Applied and Clinical Sociology**

**Executive Office: University of Connecticut
School of Social Work
1798 Asylum Avenue
West Hartford, CT 06117-2698
Phone: 860-429-6422 Fax: 860-429-5907**

E-Mail: eleanor.lyon@uconn.edu Web: www.sociologycommission.org

Accreditation of Applied Sociology, Clinical Sociology, Public Sociology and Sociological Practice Programs: Policies and Procedures

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Commission on Applied and Clinical Sociology (hereafter referred to as the Commission) was incorporated by the predecessors of the Association for Applied and Clinical Sociology (specifically the Society for Applied Sociology and the Sociological Practice Association) in 1995 to develop, promote, and support quality sociological education and practice in applied and clinical areas. As of incorporation the Commission has served as an independent 501 (c) 6 nonprofit organization.
- 1.2 In support of the above stated goals, the Commission has developed an accreditation review process. This review process involves four components: 1) a program self-study and report, 2) a site visit, 3) a review of the self-study report and site visit findings by a review team, and 4) final action by the Commission. A suggested timeline based upon past program experience can be found in *Appendix A*.
- 1.3 Programs accredited by the Commission will be listed in *The Registry of Accredited Applied Sociology, Clinical Sociology, Public Sociology and Sociological Practice Programs* (hereafter referred to as the *Registry of Programs*) at the Baccalaureate and Master's Level. The Commission assumes no liability or obligation arising out of the use of this *Registry of Programs* by individuals or organizations.
- 1.4 Graduates from accredited programs will be listed in *The Registry of Graduates in Accredited Applied Sociology, Clinical Sociology, Public Sociology and Sociological Practice Programs* (hereafter referred to as the *Registry of Graduates*) at the Baccalaureate and Master's Level. The Commission assumes no liability or obligation arising out of the use of this *Registry of Graduates* by individuals or organizations.
- 1.5 Deadlines for each step in the accreditation review process, including payment of specified fees, must be met by the Applicant Program (hereafter referred to as the Program) for it to continue in the process.
- 1.6 Any member of the Commission who has a potential conflict of interest is expected to exclude her or himself from all actions in an accreditation review process.
- 1.7 Results of the accreditation review process will be released only by official action of the Commission. No individual member of the Commission, accreditation review team member or chair, staff member or others involved in the process shall make any disclosure about individual program evaluations during or after the completion of the review process.
- 1.8 The documents used by the Applicant Program for the accreditation process at the Baccalaureate or Master's level are:
 - a) Initial Application for Accreditation
 - b) Standards for Applied Sociology, Clinical Sociology, Public Sociology and Sociological Practice Programs at the Baccalaureate or Master's Level
 - c) Accreditation of Applied Sociology, Clinical Sociology, Public Sociology and Sociological Practice Programs: Policies and Procedures
 - d) Guidelines for Completing the Accreditation Self-Study Report
 - e) Accreditation Review Process Guidelines
- 1.9 Programs seeking initial accreditation or re-accreditation must provide complete and detailed documentation for use by the Commission in determining conformity with the Standards. The burden of proof rests with the Program.

- 1.10 In assessing each program for accreditation, the Commission shall base its conclusions on:
 - a) conformity to the Standards; and,
 - b) overall quality of the Program.
- 1.11 The Commission reserves the right to make accreditation decisions for individual programs based on review of available evidence.
- 1.12 The Commission may grant departures from the Standards based upon written justification from the Program.
- 1.13 Accreditation will be for a period of up to five (5) years. Accreditation may be *full, provisional, or probationary* (See Section 8.3).
- 1.14 Failure to apply for re-accreditation in a timely manner will result in loss of accreditation.

2.0 Eligibility Requirements

- 2.1 Application for accreditation is open to Baccalaureate and Master’s-level programs in sociological practice, applied sociology, clinical sociology and public sociology. Applicant Programs must meet the Preconditions for Review as outlined in the Standards (See Section 1.0 BA and MA) and as documented in the initial application form.

3.0 Fees

- 3.1 The current fee schedule is listed below. It is subject to periodic review.

Application Fee	\$ 100
Accreditation Fee	\$2,000
Annual Fee	\$ 500

- 3.1.1 A non-refundable application fee is due upon submission of a Program's application.
- 3.1.2 A Program will pay a set accreditation fee at the time of submission of its self-study report. This fee will be divided as follows: 1) The first half of this fee covers the initial committee review of the self-study report; this portion of the fee is non-refundable; 2) The remaining half of the fee covers the site visit and final report; this portion is refundable if the Commission decides that no site visit can be scheduled within the time permitted. Programs will have two years from the time of submission of the self-study report to the time of the site visit. The review committee will make a recommendation to the Commission after its initial review as to whether or not it believes a site visit can be scheduled within two years. If a site visit cannot be scheduled within two years, the review committee will make a recommendation to the Commission about whether to refund that half of the fee.
- 3.1.3 Other fees may be required.
- 3.1.4 The Program is responsible for payment of allowable expenses of the Site Visit Team. The Commission reimburses individual team members and bills the program directly for costs of the Site Visit.
- 3.1.5 Commission institutional dues and review/accreditation fees must be paid for a Program to be listed in *The Registry of Accredited Programs*.

4.0 Application for Accreditation or Reaccreditation

- 4.1 Application forms and other information related to the accreditation process are available from the Commission's Executive Office. Questions regarding the process should be directed to this office.
- 4.2 An application for accreditation or re-accreditation must be sent to the Commission's Executive Office to initiate the process. The application form must contain original signatures of the chief academic officer, academic dean, department chair, and program director. A program description from the catalog and/or published brochure describing the program must accompany the application.
- 4.3 An Initial Application for Accreditation shall be valid for 18 months from the date of receipt of that Application. Failure to submit the self-study report during that time will result in the need to resubmit a new Initial Application to the Commission's Executive Office.
- 4.4 A Program may voluntarily withdraw from the accreditation review process at any time.
- 4.5 An accredited Program may choose not to apply for re-accreditation. If an accredited Program chooses not to apply for re-accreditation, the Commission will withdraw its accreditation.

5.0 Self-study Report

- 5.1 Self-study Reports are required as part of the accreditation and re-accreditation process.
- 5.2 The Self-study Report must comply with the Commission's *Guidelines for Completing the Accreditation Self-study Report*, and include full text for all elements.
- 5.3 Upon receipt of the Self-study Report, the Commission Chair will review the Report for completeness. Reports deemed complete will be sent to an Accreditation Review Committee. Incomplete reports will be returned for resubmission resulting in possible delays. Refer to the *Accreditation Review Process Guidelines* for more detailed information on the submission, review, and acceptance of the Self-study Report.
- 5.4 After review and acceptance of the Self-study Report by the Accreditation Review Committee, a site visit will be scheduled. Programs will have two years from the time of submission of the self-study report to the time of the site visit.
- 5.5 The Commission can require an updated Self-Study Report if circumstances warrant (See Section 11.3 in this Document).

6.0 Accreditation Review Committee

- 6.1 The Chair of the Commission, in consultation with the Executive Committee, appoints the Accreditation Review Committee (hereafter referred to as the Committee).
- 6.2 The Committee shall consist of a chair plus four (4) additional members. Two (2) of the additional members shall serve as the Site Visit Team.
- 6.3 The Chair of the Committee serves as the primary contact with the Program.
- 6.4 Members of the Committee shall have appropriate training to carry out their responsibility.

- 6.5 Persons affiliated with the Program, such as a faculty member or former faculty member, students or former students, outside advisers, or others with potential conflicts of interest shall not serve on the Committee.
- 6.6 The Accreditation Review Committee reviews the Self-Study Report, conducts the pre-site visit screening, communicates deficiencies that may preclude a site visit to the program, schedules the site visit, communicates findings from the site visit report to the Program, and makes a recommendation concerning accreditation status to the Commission. These activities will be conducted in accordance with the *Accreditation Review Process Guidelines*.

7.0 Site Visits

- 7.1 Site visits will be scheduled only during the following months: September, October, November, February, March and April.
- 7.2 Site Visits will be conducted in accordance with the *Accreditation Review Process Guidelines* and will be two to three days in duration.
- 7.3 The Program will be responsible for the expenses of the Site Visit Team.
- 7.4 The Site Visit Team will conduct an exit meeting with the Program Director and other departmental representatives to provide an overview of the strengths and weaknesses, to allow the Program to make comments, and to review the subsequent steps in the accreditation review process.
- 7.5 The Site Visit Team will prepare a Site Visit Report to submit to the Chair of the Accreditation Review Committee.

8.0 Accreditation Review Committee Report and Recommendations

- 8.1 The Accreditation Review Committee will examine all documents submitted in connection with the accreditation review process. This review includes the Site Visit Report.
- 8.2 The Committee will prepare a Report of Findings, without accreditation recommendation, that will be sent to the Program for comment and clarification.
- 8.3 Following the receipt of a response from the Program, the Committee will prepare a full report to be sent to the Commission. The report will include a recommendation for one of the following accreditation statuses:
- ✓ **Full Accreditation:** a status granted to a Program when the available evidence indicates that an Applicant Program is in substantial compliance with all of the Standards of the Commission. Full accreditation is awarded for five (5) years.
 - ✓ **Provisional Accreditation:** a status granted to a Program when an Applicant Program is in substantial compliance with most of the Standards of the Commission, and any deficiencies are such that they can be corrected within a short period of time. Provisional accreditation shall not exceed two (2) years. During that time, if the Program can correct the deficiencies, the Program will be awarded Full accreditation for the remainder of the five (5)-year accreditation period. If the deficiencies have not been corrected within the two (2)-year period, the Program will no longer be accredited.
 - ✓ **Accreditation Denied:** when the available evidence indicates that an applicant Program is in substantial non-compliance with most of the Standards of the Commission.

9.0 Re-accreditation Process

- 9.1 A Program will be notified one (1) year in advance of the need to apply for re-accreditation.
- 9.2 A Program seeking re-accreditation will undergo the same accreditation review process as specified in this document. Re-accreditation will be for a period of up to seven (7) years.
- 9.3 Following the receipt of a response from the Program, the Accreditation Review Committee will prepare a full report to be sent to the Commission. The report will include a recommendation for one of the following re-accreditation statuses:
- ✓ **Full Re-Accreditation:** a status granted to a Program when the available evidence indicates that an Applicant Program is in substantial compliance with all of the Standards of the Commission.
 - ✓ **Probationary Re-Accreditation:** a status granted to a Program when an already accredited Program experiences changes that cause the Program to fall below substantial compliance of all the Standards of the Commission. Programs on Probationary status will be given a maximum of two (2) years to correct the problems that have caused them to fall below Commission Standards. If the Program successfully remedies the deficiencies, the Program will be restored to Full accreditation status. If the Program is unable to correct the deficiencies within the two (2)-year period, the Program will no longer be accredited.
 - ✓ **Revoked Accreditation:** when the available evidence indicates that an applicant Program is in substantial non-compliance with most of the Standards of the Commission.
- 9.4 If the Commission determines that a currently accredited program has valid reasons for requesting a delay in its scheduled review, the Commission may extend its accreditation for up to one (1) year.
- 9.5 If an accredited program chooses not to apply for re-accreditation, the Commission will withdraw its accreditation.

10.0 Commission Final Report on Accreditation/Re-Accreditation

- 10.1 The Commission will review the final report and recommendation of the Accreditation Review Committee and make a final determination on accreditation/re-accreditation of the Program.
- 10.2 The Program Director, the chief academic officer, and the president will be notified in writing of the Commission's decision and will receive a copy of the Commission Final Report on Accreditation/Re-Accreditation. Reasons for Provisional Accreditation, Probationary Accreditation, Revoked Accreditation or Non-accreditation will be specified.
- 10.3 A Program receiving Full, Provisional or Probationary accreditation will be listed in the *Registry of Accredited Applied and Clinical Sociology Programs* at the Baccalaureate or Master's Level.
- 10.4 A Program receiving Provisional accreditation or Probationary re-accreditation will be permitted to correct deficiencies within a period specified by the Commission and to submit evidence of compliance. At that time, the Commission will make a re-determination of the accreditation status of the Program.

11.0 Maintenance of Accreditation Status

- 11.1 To maintain accreditation during the period approved by the Commission and to remain listed in the

Registry of Programs, the Program must pay the annual fee as specified by the Commission.

- 11.2 An accredited Program must submit an annual report by July 1st to the Vice Chair of the Commission for review. This report will specify continuities and changes in the Program's resources, faculty, administration and curriculum. The annual report will become part of the Program's permanent accreditation file. Continued accreditation is contingent upon maintaining the standards by which the program was most recently accredited and/or making progress towards removing deficiencies identified by the Commission.
- 11.3 If the annual report is not received on time and/or does not receive formal acceptance, the Commission may decide to pursue further inquiry which may lead to probationary accreditation or a decision that the program's accreditation be revoked. The Vice Chair of the Commission will communicate to the Program the Commission findings.
- 11.4 If substantial changes occur, the Program shall notify the Commission of the nature of those changes. Substantial is defined as changes in preconditions of program eligibility and/or addition or deletion of a degree, major, or concentration. The Commission may require the Program to submit an updated Self-Study Report to maintain its accredited status; a site visit also may be required. Based on a review of the substantial changes and required information, the Commission may award Full accreditation, grant Probationary accreditation or decide that the Program's accreditation be revoked.

12.0 Appeal of Commission Decisions on Accreditation/Re-Accreditation

- 12.1 Grounds for appeal are that the final determination is clearly erroneous as to fact or interpretation of the Standards or that there was a procedural error in the accreditation/re-accreditation review process.
- 12.2 A Program initiating an appeal will retain its current accreditation status (See Section 8.3 or 9.3) until the appeal process is completed.
- 12.3 A Program wishing to appeal (hereafter referred to as the Appellant) must submit a request for a hearing to the Commission Chair in writing within 30 days of notification of the final decision on accreditation/re-accreditation. The request shall state specifically the basis of the appeal and include an agreement to bear all costs as indicated below in Section 12.10.
- 12.4 Within 30 days, the Commission chair shall provide the Appellant a list of six names of impartial persons (and brief biographical sketches) as potential members of the Appeals Panel (hereafter referred to as the Panel). Each of these persons shall have agreed that he or she is willing to serve and have been enjoined from discussing the matter with anyone. Members of the Commission and the Program's Accreditation/Re-Accreditation Review Committee are not eligible for panel selection.
- 12.5 The Appellant shall review the list of six (6) names and have an opportunity to strike no more than two (2) persons.
- 12.6 The Commission Chair will select three (3) persons from the remaining pool.
- 12.7 The three (3) persons selected will constitute the Appeals Panel. The Commission will notify the Panel members of their selection. Within thirty (30) days of such notification, the Panel members will select one of their members as chair and so notify the Appellant and the Commission.
- 12.8 Within thirty (30) days of selection, the Panel Chair shall determine the date and the site of the hearing in conjunction with the Appellant and the Commission. After consultation with the Commission Chair and the Appellant, the Panel Chair shall decide whether the hearing is open or closed and who will be in attendance. The Panel Chair shall then formally notify the Appellant and the Commission chair of the date and location of the hearing at least 30 days in advance of the hearing. Such hearing must be held within 90 days of the selection of the Panel Chair.

- 12.9 The Commission will provide each Panel member and the Appellant with:
- a) a copy of the appeal request stating the grounds for the appeal,
 - b) a copy of the Accreditation Self-Study Report,
 - c) a copy of the Site Visit Team Report,
 - d) a copy of the Accreditation/Re-Accreditation Review Committee Report and Recommendation
 - e) a copy of the Commission Final Report on Accreditation/Re-Accreditation,
 - f) copies of annual reports, if applicable,
 - g) a copy of the Standards,
 - h) a copy of Accreditation of Applied Sociology, Clinical Sociology, Public Sociology and Sociological Practice Programs: Policies and Procedures,
 - i) a copy of the Guidelines for Completing the Accreditation Self-Study Report,
 - j) a copy of the Accreditation Review Process Guidelines, and
 - k) any relevant correspondence and documentation on file.
- 12.10 The Appellant shall pay all travel expenses of the Panel members and all other costs associated with the hearing except the Commission's legal fees, if any.
- 12.11 At least two (2) weeks before the hearing, the Appellant may request in writing that a transcript of the hearing be made. The Appellant must pay for the transcript costs. If the Commission desires a transcript, the costs will be shared equally.
- 12.12 The hearing must be conducted in the presence of all Panel members. The procedures must include the right of the Appellant and Commission to appear before the Panel, to be represented by counsel if so desired, to present oral and documentary evidence, to cross-examine witnesses, and to present oral argument within the time limits prescribed by the Panel Chair.
- 12.13 The final decision of the Panel shall be based on all of the evidence presented.
- 12.14 Within thirty (30) days of the completion of the hearing, the Panel shall submit its decision and rationale in writing to the Appellant and Commission.
- 12.15 The decision of the Appeals Panel is binding upon both parties.
- 12.16 Public statements concerning the Appellant's accreditation/re-accreditation status shall be withheld until the Panel has notified both parties of the Panel's final decision.

Appendix A

Accreditation and Re-Accreditation Process: Suggested Timeline

1. Process Begins: Program submits application for accreditation with *application fee* of \$100 to Commission Chair. If preconditions are met per application information, program begins work on self-study report. The Program will refer to the following documents throughout this process: *Accreditation Standards (BA or MA)*, *Guidelines for the Accreditation Self-Study Report (BA/MA)*, *Accreditation of Applied Sociology, Clinical Sociology, Public Sociology and Sociological Practice Programs: Policies and Procedures*, and *Accreditation Review Process Guidelines*.
Estimated time: 2-3 weeks

2. Program prepares Self-study Report.
Estimated time: 2-3 months

3. Program submits Self-study Report (1 copy) *with accreditation fee* of \$2000 to Commission Chair. Chair reviews Self-study Report for completeness. If Self-study Report is deemed complete Chair forms an Accreditation Review Committee and requests an additional 5 copies of the Self-study Report for distribution to this committee.
Estimated time: 3-4 weeks

4. Accreditation Review Committee reviews Self-study Report and schedules conference call and additional conference calls as necessary.
Estimated time: 2-3 months

5. If Self-study Report is deemed acceptable by Accreditation Review Committee a site visit is scheduled.
Estimated time: 2-3 weeks

6. Site visit (September, October, November, February, March and April; see Section 7.1)
Estimated time: 3 days (Refer to *Accreditation Review Process Guidelines* for details)

7. Site visitors write report and submit to full Accreditation Review Committee.
Estimated time: 2-3 weeks

8. Accreditation Review Committee writes final report with recommendations.
Estimated time: 2-3 weeks

9. Accreditation Review Committee submits final report with recommendations to Commission Board (summer meeting/August or winter meeting/February); Board accepts or rejects recommendation.
Estimated time: 1 day

10. Process ends:

Programs recommended and accepted for Full accreditation (5 years).

Programs recommended and accepted for provisional accreditation (2 years).

Programs recommended and accepted for Full re-accreditation (7 years).

Programs recommended and accepted for probationary re-accreditation (2 years).