

281—21.63(260C) Accreditation process.

21.63(1) *Components.* The community college accreditation process includes the following components:

a. Each community college will submit information on an annual basis to the department of education to comply with program evaluation requirements adopted by the state board of education.

b. The department will conduct a comprehensive on-site accreditation evaluation of each community college on a ten-year interval. An interim evaluation midway between comprehensive evaluations will also be conducted. The format, length and scope of the interim evaluation will be determined by the department based on the results of the most recent comprehensive evaluation and an analysis of desk review materials and annual outcomes data prepared by the department. The department will prepare a staggered evaluation schedule that sets no more than three comprehensive or interim evaluations in any one year. No comprehensive or interim evaluation will be required for continued accreditation prior to a community college's first evaluation under the schedule. The department has the authority to conduct focused evaluation visits as needed.

21.63(2) *Accreditation team.* The size and composition of the accreditation team is determined by the director of the department, but the team will include members of the department staff and staff members from community colleges other than the community college being evaluated for accreditation, and any other technical experts as needed.

21.63(3) *Accreditation team action.* After a visit to a community college, the accreditation team shall evaluate whether the accreditation standards have been met and shall make a report to the director of the department and the state board of education, together with a recommendation as to whether the community college shall remain accredited. The accreditation team will report strengths and opportunities for improvement, if any, for each standard and criterion and will advise the community college of available resources and technical assistance to further enhance strengths and address areas for improvement. A community college may respond to the accreditation team's report.

21.63(4) *State board of education consideration of accreditation.* The state board of education will determine whether a community college remains accredited. Approval of accreditation for a community college by the state board of education will be based upon the recommendation of the director of the department after study of the factual and evaluative evidence on record pursuant to the standards and criteria described in this chapter, and based upon the timely submission of information required by the department in a format provided by the department. With the approval of the director of the department, a focused visit may be conducted if the situation at a particular college warrants such a visit.

a. Accreditation granted. Continuation of accreditation, if granted, will be for a ten-year term with a comprehensive evaluation occurring once every ten years and an interim evaluation midway between comprehensive evaluations; however, approval for a lesser term may be granted by the state board of education if the board determines that conditions so warrant.

b. Accreditation denied or conditional accreditation. If the state board of education denies accreditation or grants conditional accreditation, the director of the department, in cooperation with the board of directors of the community college, will establish a plan prescribing the procedures that must be taken to correct deficiencies in meeting the standards and criteria and will establish a deadline for correction of the deficiencies. The plan will be submitted to the director within 45 days following the notice of accreditation denial or conditional accreditation. The plan will include components that address correcting deficiencies, sharing or merger options, discontinuance of specific programs or courses of study, and any other options proposed by the state board of education or the accreditation team to allow the college to meet the accreditation standards and criteria.

c. Implementation of plan. During the time specified in the plan for its implementation, the community college remains accredited. The accreditation team will revisit the community college to evaluate whether the deficiencies in the standards or criteria have been corrected and will make a report and recommendation to the director and the state board of education. The state board of education will review the report and recommendation, may request additional information and determine whether the deficiencies have been corrected.

d. Removal of accreditation. The director will give a community college that fails to meet accreditation standards, as determined by the state board of education, at least one year's notice prior to removal of accreditation. The notice will be sent by certified mail or restricted certified mail addressed to the chief executive officer of the community college and will specify the reasons for removal of accreditation. The notice will also be sent to each member of the board of directors of the community college. If, during the year, the community college remedies the reasons for removal of accreditation and satisfies the director that the community college will comply with the accreditation standards and criteria in the future, the director will continue the accreditation and will transmit notice of the action to the community college by certified mail or restricted certified mail.

e. Failure to correct deficiencies. If the deficiencies have not been corrected in a program of a community college, the provisions of Iowa Code section 260C.47(5) apply.

f. Appeal process provided. The action of the director to remove the state accreditation of a community college program may be appealed to the state board of education as provided in Iowa Code section 260C.47(7).

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