

281—24.6(260C) Accreditation process.

24.6(1) Components. The community college accreditation process shall include the following components:

a. Each community college shall 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 of education shall conduct an on-site accreditation evaluation of each community college during the same year as the evaluation by the Higher Learning Commission.

24.6(2) Accreditation team. The size and composition of the accreditation team shall be determined by the director of the department, but the team shall include members of the department of education staff and staff members from community colleges other than the community college being evaluated for accreditation, and any other technical experts as needed.

24.6(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 should remain accredited. The accreditation team shall report strengths and opportunities for improvement, if any, for each standard and shall 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.

24.6(4) State board of education consideration of accreditation. The state board of education shall determine whether a community college shall remain accredited. Approval of a community college by the state board of education shall be based on the recommendation of the director of the department after study of the factual and evaluative evidence on record pursuant to the standards described in this chapter, and based upon the timely submission of information required by the department of education in a format provided by the department of education. With the approval of the director of the department, a focus visit may be conducted if the situation at a particular college warrants such a visit.

a. Accreditation granted. Continuation of accreditation, if granted, shall be for a term consistent with the term of accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission; 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 of education, in cooperation with the board of directors of the community college, shall establish a plan prescribing the procedures that must be taken to correct deficiencies in meeting the standards and shall establish a deadline for correction of the deficiencies. The plan is subject to approval of the state board of education. The plan shall include components which 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 standards.

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

d. Removal of accreditation. The director shall give a community college which fails to meet accreditation standards at least one year's notice prior to removal of accreditation. The notice shall be sent by certified mail or restricted certified mail addressed to the chief executive officer of the community college and shall specify the reasons for removal of accreditation. The notice shall 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 in the future, the director shall continue the accreditation and shall 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 community college board shall take one of the following actions within 60 days from removal of accreditation:

- (1) Merge the deficient program or programs with a program or programs from another accredited community college.
- (2) Contract with another educational institution for purposes of program delivery at the community college.
- (3) Discontinue the program or programs which have been identified as deficient.

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