

NAEYC Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs

**ACCREDITATION POLICIES AND
PROCEDURES HANDBOOK**



Early Childhood Higher Education Programs

This handbook contains policies and procedures related to the NAEYC Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs process. This handbook is for programs using [Ensuring Quality in Early Childhood Education Professional Preparation Programs: NAEYC's Early Childhood Higher Education Accreditation Standards](#) (revised in 2021). Throughout this handbook these standards will be referred to as “NAEYC’s Higher Education Accreditation Standards”. Programs in the self-study phase and accredited programs are encouraged to review the handbook regularly to support their achievement or maintenance of accreditation.

Notice: This Accreditation Handbook and the accreditation requirements are subject to change. It is the responsibility of programs seeking or maintain accreditation to ensure they are using the most current version of the Accreditation Handbook. Accredited early childhood degree programs are subject to the NAEYC Accreditation Eligibility Requirements and NAEYC Higher Education Accreditation Standards in effect at the time of accreditation. It is the responsibility of the accredited program to maintain compliance with the standards throughout the period of accreditation. Any accreditation approval or renewal provided by the Commission does not relieve the accredited program from this obligation to comply with the standards. The accreditation process is an independent appraisal of an early childhood degree program by the Commission. Being accredited means that, based on the information reviewed by the Commission, the program has been found to meet the NAEYC Accreditation Eligibility Requirements and the standards at the time of accreditation; however, it does not guarantee the efficacy of services or courses offered by the accredited program. Neither NAEYC nor its officers, directors, employees, peer reviewers, individuals serving on the Commission, or others involved in the NAEYC Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs will be liable for loss, damage, or injury by reason of or in connection with any decision, action, or omission related to the accreditation application; denied or revoked accreditation; or the Accreditation Eligibility Requirements, or standards.

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Background and Development

Early childhood education degree programs are crucial to the development of more diverse and effective early childhood educators in the ECE profession. Supporting and recognizing the quality of these programs is an important function within the early childhood education ecosystem. As such, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs system sets a standard of excellence for programs that prepare early childhood educators at the associate, baccalaureate and master's degree levels.

The accreditation system, originally known as Early Childhood Associate Degree Accreditation (ECADA), launched in 2006. ACCESS, the national association for early childhood faculty at associate degree-granting institutions, has been a critical partner since the inception of the accreditation system. It provided start-up funding and continues to encourage its members to participate through application for program accreditation and as peer reviewers. ACCESS leaders served on the initial feasibility study group and the Advisory Council, and they often serve as members of the Commission. Sixty associate degree programs in six states--Arkansas, Illinois (the City Colleges of Chicago), Maryland, Massachusetts, North Carolina, and South Carolina--field tested the system's procedures and materials in 2005. Field testing of procedures concluded with the first peer review site visits and Commission decisions during spring 2006.

The accreditation system has continued to evolve over the years, most recently with a 2016 pilot—supported by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation—to expand the system to accredit programs at the baccalaureate and master's degree levels. Expanding the system gives degree programs at all three levels an opportunity to demonstrate their quality as it relates to the NAEYC Higher Education Accreditation Standards. The expansion also operationalizes NAEYC's strategic priority for advancing the early childhood profession through offering a level of quality control across all degree programs.

In 2020, NAEYC, along with 14 other national early childhood organizations, released the [*Unifying Framework for the Early Childhood Education Profession*](#). This document represents consensus across the early childhood field for creating a defined, well-prepared, well-supported, diverse and effective early childhood education profession. Amongst the core recommendations within the foundational document is an expectation that early childhood education professional preparation programs will be accredited, that these programs - and all components of the early childhood education profession- will be centered on the [*Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators*](#), and that early childhood education higher education programs need specific infrastructure supports to ensure that they can effectively prepare early childhood educators. Thus, [*NAEYC's Higher Education Accreditation Standards*](#) have incorporated these recommendations to ensure that the accreditation system is aligned to the expectations of the *Unifying Framework*. These standards were developed by professionals in early childhood education field, including early childhood faculty in higher education institutions, and approved by the NAEYC Commission on the Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs (the "Commission").

Overview of NAEYC Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs

Purpose

The purpose of NAEYC Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs is to promote excellence in the preparation of early childhood educators and to provide a valid and objective external evaluation of these programs as a service to the profession, to prospective candidates, and to the public.

Scope

The scope of NAEYC's higher education accreditation includes programs at the associate, baccalaureate, and master's degree levels that prepare candidates to work in the early childhood education profession. The degree program must be offered at an institution of higher education that is located in a U.S. state, district, or territory and that is currently accredited by an accrediting agency that is recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) and/or the U.S. Department of Education.

Mission

The mission of the NAEYC Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs system is to set a standard of excellence for early childhood education degree programs and to recognize programs that have demonstrated that they meet this standard, thereby benefiting the programs, and young children, families, and communities.

Guiding Principles

NAEYC Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs is a system that:

- Is rigorous yet not unduly burdensome for programs and institutions—supporting excellence rather than taking time away from excellence
- Improves diverse and nontraditional candidates' access to professional preparation programs
- Aligns with nationally recognized content standards
- Promotes articulation between programs at different degree levels
- Links with state efforts in setting standards for programs and licensure of early childhood professionals
- Links with national and state efforts to support and reward early childhood educators for achieving higher levels of education
- Includes or links with training and technical assistance that gives programs information needed to conduct self-study work and prepare for accreditation review
- Includes an evaluation and research component in the development and implementation of the system
- Results in benefits for programs and candidates, regardless of the outcome of the accreditation decision
- Seeks input from ACCESS (American Associate Degree Early Childhood Educators) and NAECTE (National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Education) and others as the most credible and influential organizations representing early childhood educator preparation
- Functions and is governed in a way that preserves the independence of the accreditation process and protects its founding organization from even the appearance of conflict of interest

- Maintains alignment with the recommendations in the *Unifying Framework for the Early Childhood Education Profession* and with future editions of the *Unifying Framework*
- Is guided by best practices in higher education accreditation, as outlined by organizations such as the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) and the Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditation (ASPA) (See Appendix A for ASPA Code of Good Practice).

Summary of Steps in the Accreditation Process



Step One: Application

A program must submit an Application for Accreditation Eligibility. The application form and fee are posted on the NAEYC website (www.naeyc.org/highered). The Accreditation Eligibility Requirements are mandatory, objective baseline requirements the program must meet to be considered for accreditation. They are listed on the application form, along with guidance regarding documents required as evidence of compliance with the Accreditation Eligibility Requirements.

Step Two: Self-Study

An eligible program carries out the self-study process, which culminates in the completion of the Self-Study Report. The program is encouraged to build its own timelines to include analysis and reflection, stakeholder involvement, data gathering, implementation of program improvements, collection of evidence of strengths related to compliance with the NAEYC Higher Education Accreditation Standards, and writing the program Self-Study Report—a process that takes most programs at least one year.

Step Three: Candidacy

Once a program completes the self-study process, it submits its Self-Study Report with the self-study review fee. NAEYC staff review the report for completeness. When the Self-Study Report is deemed complete, the program is recognized as being in the Candidacy phase. During this period a site visit is conducted by a team of peer reviewers. The team submits a written report of its findings (the Peer Review Report), and the program responds to the report with its Written Response to the Peer Review Report.

Step Four: The Accreditation Decision

The program's first-time or renewal Self-Study Report, Peer Review Report, and Written Response to the Peer Review Report are forwarded to the Commission on the Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs for review and deliberation. The Commission issues an Accreditation Decision Report with one of six decisions: Accredited, Accredited with Conditions, Accredited with Probation, Not Accredited, Accreditation Expired, or Accreditation Revoked. In rare cases, the Commission may defer making a decision on a program; in those situations, the program will be notified regarding next steps and the timeline for a decision.

Step Five: Maintaining Accreditation

An accredited program is required to maintain compliance with the Accreditation Eligibility Requirements and with the NAEYC Higher Education Accreditation Standards throughout its term of accreditation.

During its accreditation period, the program reports on major developments, ongoing program improvements, program data, and steps taken to address any conditions in the Accreditation Decision Report. The accredited program also submits an annual fee. Decisions regarding a program's continued accreditation are made by the Commission.

Step Six: Accreditation Renewal

In the sixth year of a program's seven-year accreditation cycle, it begins the renewal process by submitting a renewal Self-Study Report and by having a site visit. Decisions regarding a program's renewal accreditation are made by the Commission.

Governance, Operations and Finances

Delegation of Authority from the NAEYC Governing Board to the Commission

The NAEYC Governing Board has delegated authority to the Commission on the Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs to create the standards and develop and uphold the policies and procedures associated with NAEYC's higher education accreditation system. NAEYC's Bylaws state:

Section 6.7. Accreditation. The Board has established a system through which accreditation commissions and councils or other similar accrediting bodies (a) set standards for early learning programs for young children and for early childhood professional preparation programs in higher education institutions and (b) accredit programs that meet such standards. These accrediting bodies are delegated authority by the Board to be and remain separate, independent, and autonomous with respect to standard setting and all essential accreditation decisions.

The NAEYC Governing Board Policies state:

Purpose

The NAEYC Commission on the Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs will ensure the equity, integrity and accountability of the accreditation system.

Responsibilities

The Board delegates to the Commission responsibility for:

- a. Establishing the policies that govern its operations, including the appointment of new members.*
- b. Setting standards that govern the accreditation process for higher education degree programs. The standards will ensure programs are preparing candidates to meet the early childhood education profession's guidelines, including the Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators.*
- c. Making accreditation decisions, using the evidence submitted in the program Self-Study Report, Peer Review Team Report, and program's Written Response to the Peer Review Team Report.*
- d. Monitoring and annually reporting on the operations of the NAEYC Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs system, using performance standards for accountability.*
- e. Recommending to the Governing Board cooperative relationships with other systems that would advance the mission of NAEYC Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Accreditation.*

Appointment of Commission Members

The Commission shall appoint its members based on policies it establishes [as articulated in the [Commission Handbook](#)].

The Commission on the Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs

The principal functions of the Commission are to exercise professional judgment in making accreditation decisions and to set standards. The Commission works with staff to develop guidance documents and data-gathering instruments necessary to carry out these functions.

Composition

The Commission consists of not fewer than eight members, who serve staggered three-year terms. One member is elected as chairperson. Commissioners bring a demonstrated commitment to the aims of early childhood educator preparation at higher education institutions; an understanding of the nature of program accreditation systems, policy and procedures; and respect for the confidential, fair, and impartial nature of accreditation decisions. Membership must include at least one public member who is not a member of the early childhood profession. A current list of Commissioners is posted on the NAEYC website.

Responsibilities

The Commission meets to review the programs that have received a site visit during the preceding visit cycle, including all associated documentation, and to review reports from programs that are Accredited with Conditions or Accredited with Probation. The Commission also considers programs' requests regarding extensions; questions related to maintenance of Accreditation Eligibility Requirements; and other matters affecting programs' accreditation status. In addition to rendering accreditation decisions, the Commission develops and approves policies and standards for the accreditation system. Commission members participate in training and orientation.

Conduct and Confidentiality

Commission members abide by standards of personal conduct that help the Commission function effectively. They do this by thoroughly preparing for each Commission meeting; reviewing all applications, including the Self-Study Reports, Peer Review Reports, Written Responses to Peer Review Reports, and Interim Reports; assessing information critically and fairly; and conducting themselves in a professional, objective, fair manner.

During their term of service and thereafter, Commission members maintain confidentiality and refrain from conflicts of interest as outlined in the Confidentiality, Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest forms that they sign at the beginning of their terms (see Appendix C for a copy of these forms). Final accreditation decisions made by the Commission are public; however, the deliberations of the Commission in making the decisions are not public.

Early Childhood Higher Education Accreditation Staff

NAEYC staff are responsible for the daily operations of the accreditation office, including managing the execution of standards, policies, and procedures and implementing the strategic recommendations of the Commission. The senior leader of the higher education department at NAEYC serves as an ex officio member of the Commission. Staff follow NAEYC's conflict of interest and confidentiality policies and follow practices to ensure they do not have conflicts of interest with programs in the accreditation system.

Peer Reviewers

Peer reviewers are primarily faculty and administrators who currently serve—or have previously served—in early childhood programs in institutions of higher education. Professionals who serve in other areas of the early childhood field and are engaged in higher education, such as through serving as a mentor teacher/supervisor to candidates, may be eligible to serve as peer reviewers. Peer reviewers submit an application that documents their educational background and professional experience in early childhood educator preparation. Applicants who meet the qualifications (as set by the Commission) for serving as a peer reviewer participate in training prior to being assigned to a Peer Review Team. Peer reviewers adhere to policies laid out in the confidentiality and conflict of interest forms they sign (see Appendix C for a copy of the forms). Peer reviewers are responsible for following accreditation policies and procedures when preparing for and conducting site visits. See Appendix F for policies related to serving as a peer reviewer.

Accreditation Fees

The NAEYC Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs system is supported by program fees— application fees, self-study review fees, site visit fees, and annual fees. Fees may be increased in response to analyses of income, expenses, predicted growth, and capacity needs of the accreditation system. All fees are non-refundable except as described in the last paragraph of the policy on “accreditation fees”. The current fee schedule is available on the NAEYC website.

- Application for Accreditation Eligibility Review fee – This fee accompanies the submission of the Application for Accreditation Eligibility, and it covers the administrative review of the application.
- Self-Study Review fee – This fee accompanies the submission of the Self-Study Report for a program seeking accreditation for the first time. This covers the administrative review of the Self-Study Report.
- Site Visit fee¹ – This fee covers all travel costs (airfare, meals, ground transportation, etc.) for the peer reviewers and the administrative coordination of the site visit.
- Annual fee – An accredited program pays an annual fee as part of its requirements for maintaining its accreditation status. These fees support the system’s professional development offerings and the operations of the system. A program that remains in the candidacy phase beyond one year not due to circumstances caused by NAEYC will be asked to pay the annual fee in order to maintain candidacy status.
- Appeal Filing fee – A program seeking to appeal an accreditation decision must pay a fee when filing the appeal. This covers the administrative costs of reviewing and processing the appeal.
- Late fee – This fee is charged to an accredited program that is late in submitting its Renewal Self-Study Report, Interim Report, annual fees and/or site visit fees.

Discounts on fees may be available for higher education systems in which the vast majority of early childhood education degree programs have NAEYC accreditation and for currently NAEYC recognized programs.² If a discount is offered, higher education systems must have early childhood education degree programs in at least eight institutions within the system, and 75% of those degree programs must be

¹ A site visit fee may increase if the site visit requires a larger peer review team or lengthier visit schedule, or when geography requires substantially higher-than-usual travel costs. See p. 21 under the “Site Visits for Programs with Unique Features” for more details.

² NAEYC recognized programs are eligible for the discount for up to one year after their NAEYC recognition term expires.

NAEYC accredited. Once the 75% threshold is achieved (and as long as it is maintained), all accredited programs in the system are eligible for a discount on accreditation fees.

In some cases, a program might need to prepay its accreditation fees due to grant funding it is using or institutional funding that needs to be spent prior to the program being able to submit a Self-Study Report, host a site visit, or submit an Annual Fee. In these cases, the program can submit the funds as a deposit to NAEYC, and NAEYC can hold the fees for up to one year. On a case-by-case basis, NAEYC will consider requests to hold funds beyond one year. Once the program submits the relevant report or schedules the site visit, NAEYC will allocate those funds. In cases where an affiliate, foundation, state agency, or other entity is funding an accreditation cohort and needs to expend funds prior to the cohort completing the accreditation process, the entity should contact NAEYC regarding requests to hold the funds for a longer period of time. If the program is unable to complete the relevant accreditation step(s) within one year (or within the agreed-upon time period if NAEYC agreed to hold the funds beyond one year), it may request for NAEYC to refund the deposit. The request must be made within two weeks after the end of the holding period. Barring restrictions from the program's funding source (e.g., if a foundation requires that any unused funds be returned to it), if such a request is not made, the program forfeits the funds to NAEYC. The program will need to provide evidence of the funding source's restrictions.

Policies and Procedures in the Accreditation Process

Step One: Application for Accreditation Eligibility

This section explains the first step in the accreditation process: Confirming each higher education program's eligibility for accreditation.

Application for Accreditation Eligibility

The Application for Accreditation Eligibility form is available on the [NAEYC website](#). An institution submitting more than one program for eligibility consideration may include all programs in one application. Payment of the Application of Accreditation Eligibility review fee should be submitted at the same time as the application form. A current schedule of accreditation fees is available on the [NAEYC website](#).

Each program must have a primary contact. The primary contact will serve as the main contact for NAEYC staff and Commission communication related to the early childhood accreditation work. Most programs also name a secondary contact; this person may be either a program faculty member or an administrator who will provide support to the program's accreditation work. Either the primary or secondary contact must meet Eligibility Requirement 6 below.

Accreditation Eligibility Requirements and Evidence of Compliance³

The Accreditation Eligibility Requirements are objective, baseline criteria that programs must meet in order to pursue accreditation. The requirements affirm that the institution in which the program is housed is in good standing, and that the program meets a threshold regarding early childhood content and faculty who have early childhood academic credentials. Each degree program submitted for review must meet the following:

³ Programs in candidacy and accredited programs must maintain compliance with eligibility requirements.

1. The institution offering the degree program(s) must be located in a U.S. state, district, or territory and be currently accredited (without probation or equivalent status) by an accrediting agency that is recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) and/or the U.S. Department of Education. This eligibility requirement must be met at the time of the application submission.
2. A degree program leading to teacher licensure must demonstrate that it is a state-approved licensure program and that it is not designated as “low-performing” through Title II of the Higher Education Act. (Currently, this designation applies only at the baccalaureate and graduate degree levels.) This eligibility requirement must be met at the time of the application submission.
3. (a) The program(s) must be a specialized degree program in early childhood education or child development. This part of the eligibility requirement must be met at the time of application. (b) The program must include at least 18 credit hours of early childhood education coursework. This may include courses from other departments, such as child psychology, sociology of the family, or children’s literature, if these courses are aligned with NAEYC accreditation standards and faculty are willing to participate in site visit interviews. This part of the eligibility requirement must be met at the time of the Self-Study Report submission.
4. The program(s) requires field experiences. This eligibility requirement must be met at the time of the Self-Study Report submission.
5. (a) The program(s) must have graduated at least one individual. (b) Candidates are currently enrolled in the program, and/or new candidates have enrolled in the program within the past three years. Both parts of this eligibility requirement must be met by the time of the Self-Study Report submission.
6. The faculty for each associate degree program(s) must include at least one full-time faculty member (a) whose primary responsibilities are in the early childhood program(s) submitted for review and (b) who holds a graduate degree in early childhood education, child development, child and family studies, or a related discipline, with at least 18 graduate credits in early childhood/family studies. This faculty member must serve as either the primary or secondary contact, and one person may serve in this role for multiple programs.

The faculty for each baccalaureate and master’s degree program must include at least one full-time faculty member (a) whose primary responsibilities are in the early childhood program(s) submitted for review and (b) who holds a doctoral degree in early childhood education, child development, child and family studies, or a related discipline, with at least 18 graduate credits in early childhood/family studies. This faculty member must serve as either the primary or secondary contact, and one person may serve in this role for multiple programs.

This eligibility requirement must be met by the time of the Self-Study Report submission.

Accreditation Eligibility Requirements are mandatory components of accreditation throughout the period of candidacy and accreditation. The Commission may defer making a first-time accreditation decision for

a program in candidacy that no longer meets an Accreditation Eligibility Requirement. An accredited program may be subject to probation if the program no longer meets an Accreditation Eligibility Requirement, or revocation of accreditation if it no longer meets Accreditation Eligibility Requirement #1 (See policies for “Accredited with Probation” and “Accreditation Revoked”).

The Application Review

NAEYC staff review each application for completeness. Applications will not be considered until the application and application fee are received. The application review may include staff review of the program website and the website of the regional or national accrediting body identified by the program. Staff may also follow up with the primary contact listed on the application to clarify information or to confirm compliance with Accreditation Eligibility Requirements.

When the application review is complete and any questions about the application are clarified, NAEYC will inform the program whether it has met the application requirements to enter the self-study phase. If the institution applies for multiple programs to begin the accreditation process, each degree program will receive a notice that the application requirements have or have not been met.

In general, NAEYC will not allow programs within a multiple-institution system to apply to be accredited as a single early childhood education program, even if the system is regionally or nationally accredited as one institution. There are many factors that would preclude this: institutions are often governed by different administrative leadership; programs are overseen by different coordinators; courses across institutions do not include the same content; field experience policies and processes are managed separately; institutions serve different student populations and may have different roles and missions in the community. If the programs do want to be considered as one program, they must meet the definition of a Single Early Childhood Education Program. NAEYC retains the right to determine whether an early childhood education program is a Single Early Childhood Education Program (see Appendix A: Glossary), in its sole judgement.

An institution that has multiple campuses/sites might choose to have programs at each campus accredited separately or might be eligible to have its early childhood program accredited as one program. Its program must meet the definition of a Single Early Childhood Education Program.

Programs with components across multiple campuses are encouraged to contact NAEYC staff for assistance in determining which considerations apply.

Step Two: The Self-Study Phase

Once its application for accreditation eligibility is approved, the program enters the self-study phase of the accreditation process. During this time, the program works toward completing a Self-Study Report. Programs in self-study may not use the NAEYC accreditation logo or otherwise imply accredited status. NAEYC provides accreditation status language only for programs that are in candidacy or accredited and provides the accreditation logo only for programs that are accredited (see policies for “Candidacy” and “Use of Accreditation Logo” and “Program Display of Accreditation Status” for more details). NAEYC holds the trademark for the intellectual property of the NAEYC accreditation logo and accreditation brand. Misuse of the logo or brand is an infringement on this trademark.

Primary and secondary program contacts, as designated on the application, are given access to the online resource library, which includes the Self-Study Report template and additional resources. Access to the

online resource library is restricted solely to the individuals explicitly granted access by NAEYC. Individual login information must not be shared with other faculty at the program so as to comply with confidentiality requirements. NAEYC will communicate about the program's progress with the designated primary contact, who is responsible for sharing information with others at the institution, as deemed appropriate by the institution.

It is sometimes possible for an institution to combine more than one program at the same degree level into one Self-Study Report. If programs at the same degree level share the same key assessments, they can be included in the same Self-Study Report. If an institution is submitting materials for programs at multiple degree levels, it will likely need to submit separate Self-Study Reports for programs at each degree level. NAEYC will work with an institution seeking accreditation for multiple degree programs to coordinate one site visit, if possible; however, multiple programs with a total of more than six key assessments⁴ may require a longer site visit and/or larger review team. As noted in the fee schedule, these circumstances may result in an increased visit fee. An institution that includes multiple programs in its application is strongly encouraged to communicate with NAEYC early in the self-study process to determine whether multiple degree programs should be submitted together in one Self-Study Report or in separate Self-Study Reports.

A program that offers both on-campus and online courses should communicate with NAEYC to determine how to effectively present evidence related to the NAEYC Higher Education Accreditation Standards across both on-campus and online course sections.

A program must complete its Self-Study Report within five years of being notified of its accepted Application for Accreditation Eligibility. If the program does not submit the Self-Study Report within five years, it will need to request an extension (See Extension Policies on p.43) or reapply. If a program seeking first-time accreditation is receiving funds for accreditation support through a state, NAEYC, a NAEYC affiliate or other sources, the program may be subject to a shorter timeline set by the funding source.

[Overview of the Self-Study Report](#)

The Self-Study Report includes a section for each of the six accreditation standards as well as seven evidence exhibits that the program must complete. In addition, the program will affirm/reaffirm its compliances with the Accreditation Eligibility Requirements. Please review the full NAEYC Higher Education Accreditation Standards document, which includes additional guidance and a glossary of terms as you complete the Self-Study Report.

Part One: Addressing the Accreditation Standards

In this section, the early childhood degree program will describe what it does to support candidate learning in relation to the *Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators*. This is an opportunity for the program to describe its context and the community it serves, and how this informs the way the program designs its learning opportunities and candidate assessments. The six accreditation standards are outlined below.

- **Standard A: Program Identity, Candidates, Organization and Resources**

⁴ (e.g. a program seeking accreditation for programs at multiple degree levels that do not share Key Assessments.)

- **Standard B: Faculty Characteristics and Quality, Professional Responsibilities and Professional Development**
- **Standard C: Program Design and Evaluation**
- **Standard D: Developing Candidate Proficiency in the *Professional Standards and Competencies***
- **Standard E: Assuring Candidate Proficiency in the *Professional Standards and Competencies***
- **Standard F: Field Experience Quality**

Part Two: The Evidence Exhibits

In this section, the program will provide the following required sources of evidence that help support the narrative information provided in Part One.

- **Evidence Exhibit One: Faculty Qualifications Chart** - The program will describe the roles and background of program faculty.
- **Evidence Exhibit Two: Program of Study** - The program will provide the Program of Study as found in the course catalogue, along with short descriptions of each course.
- **Evidence Exhibit Three: Learning Opportunities** - The program will describe the learning opportunities it offers to develop candidates' knowledge, understanding and application of the *Professional Standards and Competencies*.
- **Evidence Exhibit Four: Program Outcome Data** - The program will provide data on three program outcomes related to candidate/graduate success in the program.
- **Evidence Exhibit Five: Key Assessments of Candidate Proficiency in the Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators** - The program will submit information related to its six key assessments aligned to each of the competencies in the six *Professional Standards and Competencies*. Exhibit Five includes the following parts:
 - Overview Chart of Key Assessments – The program will complete this chart showing how the key assessments are aligned to the *Professional Standards and Competencies*.
 - Multi-Program Assessment Chart – An institution submitting multiple programs within the same Self-Study Report will identify the key assessments associated with each program.
 - Key Assessment Descriptions, Instructions, and Rubrics – In this part, the program will indicate the course in which each assessment is required describe the assessment briefly and submit the instructions as given to candidates as well as the rubric for each assessment.
- **Evidence Exhibit Six: Collecting, Analyzing, and Using Candidate Performance Data to Improve Teaching and Learning Related to the Professional Standards and Competencies** - The program will submit the relevant candidate performance data from the key assessments on each of the *Professional Standards and Competencies*, reflect on candidate performance in relation to the standards, and describe how it uses the data to improve teaching and learning as related to the standards.
- **Evidence Exhibit Seven: Field Experiences** –The program will complete a Field Experiences Chart that describes the various opportunities for candidates to observe and practice with a variety of age groups in a variety of early learning settings. The program may also submit a form to document how the program keeps track of individual candidates' experiences in different age groups and settings.

In the Self-Study Report, the program reflects on strengths, challenges, and plans for improvement in relation to each accreditation standard. The Self-Study Report provides insight to peer reviewers and the Commission as to the choices the program makes in integrating the *Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators* into its curriculum and Key assessments. Peer reviewers and the Commission also look to the Self-Study Report to understand the program's capacity to address identified gaps in its program's ability to support candidate proficiency in the *Professional Standards and Competencies*.

The NAEYC Higher Education Accreditation Standards

The accreditation of a program is based on a determination by the Commission that a program meets NAEYC's Higher Education Accreditation Standards. The standards describe expectations for high-quality early childhood education degree programs. These standards are not meant to be a constricting, one-size-fits-all framework. They are meant to provide a shared vision for early childhood professional preparation that is developed and implemented in programs that are responsive to particular candidates, faculty, and communities.

Successful accreditation depends upon providing evidence in the Self-Study Report and during the site visit that the program meets these accreditation standards. This evidence is closely examined in the process of making the accreditation decision.

Programs are strongly encouraged to read the full [NAEYC Higher Education Accreditation Standards](#) on the NAEYC website as they will be expected to demonstrate how they meet the full standards. (See Appendix D for a summary of the higher education accreditation standards. See Appendix E for a summary of the *Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators*.)

Key Assessments

As part of the Self-Study Report, programs submit six key assessments that collectively demonstrate alignment to Standards 1-6 in the [Professional Standards and Competencies](#). Key assessments are major assessments programs give to candidates to evaluate their understanding and application of the standards. Key assessments include a set of written instructions that are given to candidates, as well as a rubric used to evaluate candidates' performance related to the standards.

Candidate performance data gathered from key assessments provides important information to programs about candidates' proficiency in the *Professional Standards and Competencies*. The data should be used to help inform potential improvements to teaching and learning in relation to the standards. *As such, key assessments must be placed in required, not elective courses.* In addition, it is important that programs have policies, practices and systems in place to ensure that to the most extent possible all candidates take all key assessments. If a program has transfer students who do not take some of the courses in which key assessments are administered, or if the program awards credit for prior learning, the CDA credential, military modules, Head Start, through high school career and technical programs, etc., and credit is given for courses that house a key assessment, the program must ensure that those candidates take the key assessments prior to completing the program. If these candidates took the exact same key assessment at the institution/school from which they transferred, they do not need to take the key assessment again at the institution to which they transferred; however, the accredited program should have a system for gathering candidate performance data from the already-completed assessment. As such, programs are

strongly encouraged to put key assessments in courses that are not included in transfer agreements, credit for prior learning or CDA. The Commission recognizes that there may be institutional or college system-wide policies that make it challenging for programs to ensure that all candidates take all key assessments. In these cases, programs must describe these policies and provide evidence that they have enacted all policies, practices, and systems possible to ensure that as many candidates as possible take the key assessments. *The description should include which key assessments are impacted and the approximate percentage of candidates that are not taking a key assessment(s)* In addition, programs must describe how candidates demonstrate competency in the standards that are addressed in the key assessments they do not take.

The Commission recognizes the value of portfolios (or other large comprehensive assignments) and group projects as important assessments in programs of study, but, in some cases, these may not meet the requirements of a key assessment. Regarding group projects, key assessments must evaluate individual candidate performance on Standards 1-6 of the *Professional Standards and Competencies*. As such, programs should not submit assessments in which candidates are being evaluated on the standards through group work without including some form of individual assessment. Regarding portfolios, they often include previously graded work and, as such, tend to provide evidence only for Key Competency 6e when candidates are asked to reflect on their work. They may not be suited to evaluate candidate performance on the standards in a robust way. If a program chooses to submit a key assessment that is a portfolio (or other large, comprehensive assignment), the program should review NAEYC's guidance (found in the online resource library) on using portfolios as key assessments.

NAEYC recognizes that programs are engaged in continuous improvement and, as such, programs may regularly revise/replace or add new key assessments. The intention of the previous paragraph is not to require candidates that have already completed existing key assessments to take the revised/replaced/new key assessments prior to completing the program.

Policy on Programs Demonstrating Candidate Proficiency in the *Professional Standards and Competencies*

As part of meeting Standard E.3.a of the Accreditation Standards, the program must provide evidence of 80% of candidates achieving proficiency in relation to Standards 1-6 of the *Professional Standards and Competencies* as demonstrated through candidate performance data on the key assessments. The 80% threshold can be achieved either across the two most recent applications of data or by considering just the most recent application. When reviewing candidate performance data in relation to this policy, the Commission is reviewing the standard as a whole rather than with an expectation that each key competency reflects that at least 80% of candidates are meeting proficiency.

Program Responsibility

The program is responsible for submitting all evidence that it meets the NAEYC Higher Education Accreditation Standards. The program is responsible for preparing reports and documents following the required report templates and with a degree of thoroughness and clarity that will satisfy a detailed review by staff, the Peer Review Team, and the Commission. Questions about accessing the accreditation online resource library, conducting the self-study work, and submitting the Self-Study Report should be directed to NAEYC.

The submission of the Self-Study Report and self-study review fee (for a program seeking initial accreditation) serves as the program's request for a site visit. A program seeking renewal accreditation must be current in its Annual Fee at the time of submitting a renewal Self-Study Report. NAEYC will review each Self-Study Report and may request additional information if the documents appear to be incomplete in response to one or more standards. Current deadlines for submission of completed Self-Study Reports are described earlier in this handbook.

Definition of a Complete Self-Study Report

A Self-Study Report is accepted when all components are included to the satisfaction of NAEYC staff and/or the Commission, including but not limited to the following:

-
- The program uses the most current edition of NAEYC's higher education accreditation standards, *Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators*, and Self-Study Report template (if the most current template edition was shared less than six months prior to the submission of this report, the program may use one version prior).
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- The document has been proofread by at least one person external to the program, including for consistency around where the program intends key assessments to align.
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- The Table of Contents and page numbers are updated to correspond with the sections of the Self-Study Report template. The report uses page numbers to help readers find report sections.
-
- Each narrative response is written in 10 to 12 point font in Arial, Times New Roman, Calibri, or other easily readable serif/sans-serif font. Narrative sections are single-spaced with an extra space between paragraphs (font size, style, and spacing may differ for attached Key Assessments or other Evidence Exhibits).
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- Unless otherwise indicated, narrative responses should be succinct as possible, preferably no more than 500 words per prompt. Each narrative is written in complete sentences rather than a bulleted list unless otherwise specified.
-
- The final Self-Study Report is ready to be submitted as a single, read-only PDF file. Other file formats will not be accepted. Please note that only a single PDF file should be e-mailed, not a collection of multiple files. Supporting documents that are not part of the report template and required evidence exhibits should be set aside for review during your site visit, not submitted with reports.
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- Each requested piece of information in the Program Information section has been filled out.
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- The program has affirmed (or reaffirmed) that it meets all Accreditation Eligibility Requirements.
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- Each indicator of Standards A-F in the report has been addressed and, for each, the sources of evidence required in the report are included (please note, this does not include sources listed under "additional sources of evidence to provide during the site visit").
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- The Faculty Qualifications Chart in Evidence Exhibit One has been completed.
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- The Program of Study and course descriptions have been inserted into Evidence Exhibit Two.
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- The Learning Opportunities chart in Evidence Exhibit Three is filled out, with information provided for each key competency.
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- The program has included data for Outcome Measures #1, #2 and #3 in Evidence Exhibit Four, and the data on the outcome measures are published on the program's website, or there is a web link on the program's website landing page that leads to the data published elsewhere on the institution's website.
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- The chart of key assessments is submitted in Evidence Exhibit Five, with alignment indicated for each key competency associated with *Professional Standards and Competencies* 1-6.
-
- For Self-Study Reports addressing more than one degree program, the multi-program alignment chart in Evidence Exhibit Five is completed.
-
- Six key assessments are submitted in Evidence Exhibit Five that address alignment with each key competency associated with *Professional Standards and Competencies* 1-6. The key competencies are labeled within the relevant sections of instructions and rubric of each Key Assessment.
-
- For every key assessment in the Chart of Key Assessments in Evidence Exhibit Five, a complete (and single) description chart, set of instructions, and rubric are submitted.
-
- For every key assessment in Evidence Exhibit Five, the program affirms that the key assessments submitted ensure that candidates are individually evaluated on *Professional Standards and Competencies* 1-6, not evaluated as a group.
-
- If a key assessment in Evidence Exhibit Five is a portfolio or other large comprehensive assignment, the program affirms that it has reviewed NAEYC's guidance on portfolios (found in the online resource library) to ensure it meets the requirements for a key assessment.
-
- For every key assessment in Evidence Exhibit Five, key competencies are not clustered within a rubric row or within an associated task in the instructions.
-
- Candidate performance data from at least one application (for a program seeking first-time accreditation) or two applications (for a program seeking renewal accreditation) of each applicable key assessment is submitted in Evidence Exhibit Six for each of the *Professional Standards and Competencies*. Data may reflect the key assessments included in the Self-Study Report or assessments that were used prior to the current versions if data are not yet available from the current versions due to the recency of assessment revisions. Data are disaggregated by key competency, by key assessment, by application, and by program (if a Self-Study Report includes more than one degree program). The program has provided responses to the required narratives describing candidate performance on each of the *Professional Standards and Competencies*, as well as the program's use of data to improve teaching and learning related to that standard.
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- The Field Experience Chart and required accompanying prompts in Evidence Exhibit Seven are completed.
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This list is based on the 2022 Self-Study Report Templates for First-Time and Renewal Accreditation. The list will be updated to reflect subsequent changes to the Self-Study Report template or changes to accreditation policies; however, it is the responsibility of the program to ensure that it has fully completed a template that is eligible for consideration at the time of submission. The program must use the most current Self-Study Report template available in the online resource library at the time the report is submitted. If an updated template has been posted within 6 months of the program's submission date, it may choose to use the most recent previous template or the new template. The program may not alter the Self-Study Report template.

Submitting the Self-Study Report

By either September 30 or March 31, a first-time program will submit a complete Self-Study Report a semester before its desired site visit. Renewal programs will submit their Self-Study Report in Year 6 of their accreditation period. A program must submit its Renewal Self-Study Report either by November 30 or May 31, depending on its accreditation cycle. Staff will begin organizing site visit preparations with the renewal program and peer review team prior to the submission deadline on the assumption that the program will submit a complete Self-Study Report. There is a two-week grace period for programs submitting Self-Study Reports on the September 30, March 31, November 30 and May 31 deadlines. *(When reviewer capacity allows, staff may determine that first-time Self-Study Reports submitted by the renewal deadline—i.e., between October 1 and November 30 or between April 1 and May 31—may be considered under the current cycle.)*

Staff Review

NAEYC staff review the Self-Study Report for completeness to confirm that peer reviewers have the evidence needed to conduct a site visit and Commissioners have the evidence needed to make an accreditation decision. The program is advised to download current report templates, use external proofreaders, and use the peer reviewer worksheets in the online resource library as quality control tools before submitting the report to NAEYC. If a report is not deemed by the staff to indicate sufficiently the program's readiness for a site visit, the program will be asked to revise the report to address missing or incorrect components. If the issues can be addressed within three weeks of receiving feedback, staff will put the program seeking initial accreditation on the slate for candidacy for Commission approval (for first-time accreditation cases). If a program seeking first-time accreditation is unable to address the missing or incorrect components within three weeks, the program can resubmit its Self-Study Report at the next reporting deadline (September 30 or March 31). If a program seeking renewal accreditation is unable to address missing or incorrect components within three weeks, the program will enter Administrative Probation. If the program does not meet the Administrative Probation requirements by the end of the probation period the program's accreditation will expire. If the program does meet its probation requirements but there is less than one month until the scheduled site visit, staff may defer the visit to the following semester as peer reviewers typically receive Self-Study Reports at least one month prior to the site visit. The program would remain on Administrative Probation during this time.

If staff do not deem a Self-Study Report submission complete, and the program disagrees with this decision, or otherwise opts not to complete the revisions requested by staff, the program or staff can request that the Executive Committee of the Commission review the Self-Study Report for a determination on whether a site visit can proceed. Within the three-week time period for responding to staff feedback on completeness, the program must submit the request in writing describing its rationale for disagreeing with the completeness decision otherwise opting not to complete the requested revisions. If the Executive Committee determines the Self-Study Report is not sufficient to hold a meaningful site visit, a renewal program's period of Administrative Probation will begin at the point that the program is notified of the Executive Committee decision. Programs seeking first-time accreditation can resubmit their Self-Study Report at subsequent reporting deadlines (September 30 or March 31).

Step Three: Accreditation Candidacy Phase (applies to first-time accreditation only)

Candidacy status will be granted by the Commission when the program's first-time Self-Study Report is accepted, the Self-Study Review Fee is received, and the Commission has approved the program for a site visit. The granting of candidacy status indicates that the program is progressing toward a first-time accreditation decision and is eligible for a site visit. At the time the program is notified that the Self-Study Report has qualified the program for a site visit, the program is assessed a site visit fee that covers the direct and indirect costs associated with the visit of the Peer Review Team. (A current fee schedule is posted on the NAEYC website.)

Candidacy cannot last more than two years unless a program experiences unforeseen circumstances (see p.42 Extension Policy for Site Visits) or the Commission exercises its right to extend the candidacy period beyond the two years due to unanticipated caseloads. A program that remains in the candidacy phase beyond one year not due to circumstances caused by NAEYC will be asked to pay the annual fee in order to maintain candidacy status.

A program is not required to display its candidacy status on its website or in other materials. However, if a program chooses to do so, the name of the degree program and the name and address of the accrediting body must be included in the accreditation status statement. A program should use the following language in its entirety to display its accreditation status.

The [degree program] at [institution] has been approved as a candidate for accreditation from the Commission on the Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs of the [National Association for the Education of Young Children](#). The candidacy period is from [month/year] to [month/year]. Candidacy status indicates that the program is progressing toward a first-time accreditation decision.

A program in the candidacy stage may not display the NAEYC Accreditation logo. A program misusing the logo will not be eligible for accreditation until the issue is resolved.

The Site Visit

Once a program achieves candidacy status, NAEYC will work with the program to schedule a site visit by a team of peer reviewers. The site visit is an essential component in the accreditation of higher education programs. In any professional field, accreditation relies on the professional judgment of well-trained peers—in this case, those who understand the context of early childhood degree programs as well as the standards that NAEYC has developed to make accreditation decisions.

Peer review is an important element in evaluating whether an early childhood degree program meets NAEYC's Higher Education Accreditation Standards. Typically, a team of two to three peer reviewers will be assigned to each site visit. (Multiple programs with a total of more than six Key assessments may require a larger review team.) One person on the team is assigned the role of chair and is responsible for leading team meetings during the site visit, sending the final written report to NAEYC, and serving as the team's primary contact for communication with NAEYC and the host institution. The Peer Review Team's role is to prepare for and conduct the site visit and produce a Peer Review Report (this template is available in the online resource library) for the program and Commission. The Peer Review Team members confirm and supplement the information in the program's Self-Study Report through interviews with faculty, candidates, administrators and community stakeholders. They will review supporting documents as well as conduct tours of campus facilities and field sites. Using the Peer Review Reviewer Worksheet and Rubric (templates available in the online resource library), the team writes a report to the accreditation Commission, using its analysis of the program's Self-Study Report and its experiences during the site visit to document strengths and challenges in relation to the program's alignment to the standards. The report represents the consensus of the team.

Peer review has three steps:

Step 1 occurs before the visit. The peer reviewers individually read the Self-Study Report and make a preliminary assessment of the program's strengths and challenges based on the program's narrative and evidence provided. However, this is only a first assessment, and the views of the team members may change when they conduct the site visit.

Note: On rare occasions, a peer review team chair may raise questions, directed to NAEYC staff, about whether a particular report reflects a program's readiness to demonstrate meeting accreditation standards. In this case, staff will work with the program to determine whether postponing the visit, subject to the limitations of candidacy status, might increase the likelihood of a positive accreditation decision.

Step 2 is the actual site visit, when the Peer Review Team sees the program first-hand. The team has multiple opportunities to meet with program faculty, candidates, and other stakeholders. The team will review additional evidence provided by the program and may request new information. This phase provides opportunities for the team to gain knowledge from sources other than the Self-Study Report and allows the team to have a broader perspective on the program's strengths and possible challenges in each area.

Step 3 is for the team to synthesize its evaluation of the program in a summary report to the Commission. The team's preliminary key findings are orally summarized in a meeting at the end of the visit. The Peer Review Team is not a decision-making body and will only report its findings regarding the program's alignment to NAEYC's Higher Education Accreditation Standards. It will not make a recommendation regarding an accreditation decision to the Commission.

Scheduling the Visit

Site visits are typically conducted only during the spring and fall semesters. When the program's Self-Study Report is complete (see pp.18-19 a definition of a complete Self-Study Report), NAEYC will determine whether the report was completed in time to be considered for a site visit the following semester. Site visit dates and peer review teams are assigned during the fall or spring semester prior to the site visit.

NAEYC will contact the program and peer reviewers for available dates. A program should select possible dates with several factors in mind: classes must be in session, and administrators and field sites must be available; fewer possible dates mean fewer available reviewers.

NAEYC and the program will mutually agree upon the visit date. NAEYC then assigns the Peer Review Team, considering dates of availability, potential conflicts of interest, geography, and areas of expertise. The program identifies any potential conflicts of interest with peer reviewers immediately after receiving the names of the assigned team.

The Commission reserves the right to postpone the site visit due to unusually large numbers of reports from a particular state or in a particular cycle, or other conditions that may have negative impact on the integrity of the visit or of the accreditation system. If a site visit for a renewal program is postponed under these circumstances the program's current accreditation period is extended to accommodate this additional time.

Site Visits for Programs with Unique Features (multiple, online programs, night programs)

As stated previously (see the Self-Study Phase policies), an institution with multiple eligible programs is strongly encouraged to communicate with NAEYC early in the self-study process to determine whether multiple degree programs can be reviewed during one site visit. Similarly, an eligible program offered on more than one campus should communicate with NAEYC to determine how many campuses can effectively be addressed in one site visit.

An eligible program that offers both on-campus and online or other forms of distance learning courses should communicate with NAEYC to determine how to effectively present evidence related to the standards across both on-campus and distance course sections during the site visit.

Likewise, an eligible program that offers classes only at night or on weekends may require a modified site visit schedule and should communicate with NAEYC to determine an appropriate schedule.

A site visit fee may increase under one of the following conditions: when a program is located in a geographic area that requires significantly higher travel costs or if the site visit requires an additional peer reviewer and/or a fourth site visit day. It is highly likely that an institution with multiple programs seeking accreditation may need an additional peer reviewer and/or an additional site visit day if the programs do not share most of their key assessments and/or courses.

Any modifications will be made with mutual agreement of NAEYC, the Peer Review Team chair, and the program's primary contact.

Emergencies affecting a site visit

Emergencies occur when a Peer Reviewer can no longer commit to a site visit due to a personal emergency or the host institution needs to cancel the visit due to weather or other emergencies.

If an assigned Peer Review Team member must withdraw from the team and can give sufficient notice, NAEYC will attempt to find a replacement. The program will be notified of the change and given the opportunity to identify any potential conflict of interest.

If the assigned Peer Review Team member was not able to give sufficient notice or if a replacement cannot be found, decisions for proceeding will be made on a case-by-case basis. Options include, but are not limited to, proceeding with a smaller team (but no fewer than a two-person team), arranging for the non-

traveling team member to be available for consultation by telephone, extending the visit if team member arrivals are delayed, or rescheduling the visit. The team chair and the site primary contact, in consultation with NAEYC staff, have the right to postpone a visit based on their consultation and mutual agreement.

If the visit is unable to proceed as scheduled due to a reviewer cancellation or due to weather, governmental order, or other cause beyond the control of the institution, the visit will be rescheduled at a mutually acceptable future date at no additional cost to the institution. If the institution cancels the visit for any other reason than specified above, the institution will bear responsibility for any costs associated with rescheduling or forfeit the site visit fee in cases where the program does not reschedule the site visit.

Virtual Site Visits

NAEYC makes every effort to hold in-person site visits, but, if necessary, will hold a virtual site visit⁵. In these instances, the following policy applies. The site visit fee remains the same fee as an in-person visit. Site visit costs include administrative costs associated with NAEYC providing technology and staff support, as well as use of NAEYC's platforms for virtual interview sessions and document management. The institution shall provide and ensure it has internet capability and associated equipment/applications in connection with the virtual visit.

If, when reviewing the program for an accreditation decision, the Commission on the Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs, as sanctioned by NAEYC, determines that an on-site visit is needed to address a concern observed during the virtual visit, the Commission may issue this as a condition of the accreditation decision. The cost of any such in-person site visit would be covered by the site visit fee the program has already paid.

Confidentiality of Teacher Candidate Information

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a federal law that protects the privacy of candidate education records. Generally, a school must have written permission from a parent or eligible candidate in order to release any information from a candidate's education record. However, FERPA allows schools to disclose those records to accrediting organizations without consent. Although not a concern under FERPA, the types of information most relevant to the Accreditation system typically do not include individual candidate records. Of greater relevance are the program's assessments themselves and aggregated data from those assessments. In cases where it is helpful to see individual samples of candidates' work (for example, to highlight performance expectations at different levels on a rubric), programs are encouraged to remove candidates' identifying information, including names.

Restrictions on Gifts and Compensation for Peer Reviewers

Peer reviewers will not request or accept any compensation or any gifts of substance from the institution being reviewed or anyone affiliated with the institution. Gifts of substance would include briefcases, tickets to athletic or entertainment events, etc. If unsure as to whether something constitutes a "gift of substance," peer reviewers are advised to err on the side of declining gifts of any kind. Similarly, peer reviewers will not expect elaborate hospitality during site visits. It is appropriate for institutions to provide

⁵ For example, during the height of the COVID pandemic, the majority of site visits were virtual due to health and safety concerns.

snacks and non-alcoholic beverages for teams as they conduct their work on campus and at their hotel. Institutions must ensure that the team's workspace on campus is comfortable and conducive to their work, including basic office supplies as well as WiFi and printing capabilities. Host institutions generally provide transportation to field sites (and off-campus class sites, if applicable) during the visit and may assist with the pickup and delivery (though not the cost) of lunch, depending on the availability and location of dining options on or near campus. Programs are encouraged to review the *Self-Study and Site Visit Manual* in the Accreditation Resource Library and to contact NAEYC if any questions arise regarding an appropriate level of hospitality during the site visit.

Evidence considered during the Site Visit

The NAEYC Commission understands and appreciates that programs continuously improve their Learning Opportunities, Key assessments, data collection systems, etc. However, peer review teams will only consider the evidence submitted in the Self-Study Report and validate that evidence during the site visit

The Peer Review Report

During the site visit, the Peer Review Team begins drafting its report. The report provides feedback to the program and information to the Commission about how the program has addressed the NAEYC Higher Education Accreditation Standards. Areas of strength and recommendations for consideration are noted.

The Exit Report

The program and institution will decide who will attend the exit report session on the final day of the site visit. Usually, attendees include the program faculty and representatives of the senior administrative staff of the college. Typically, all Peer Review Team members participate, and the team chair takes the lead. At the meeting, the team will summarize the preliminary key findings, note commendations and findings that will appear in the report, and generally describe the overall thrust of the report, which the program will receive at a later date.

Additionally, the review team will remind those at the exit session about the next steps in the accreditation process and the possible accreditation decisions. Finally, the review team will emphasize that it does not make the accreditation decision, and it cannot speak for the Commission, which will use the Peer Review Report, the program's Self-Study Report, and the program's Written Response to the Peer Review Report to reach a conclusion about accreditation.

Feedback Loops for Continuous Improvement

NAEYC believes that a quality system needs continuous feedback. As part of this process, the program will be asked to complete a survey about its experiences with the planning and implementation of the site visit, including the Peer Review Team's preparation and conduct. Peer reviewers are also asked to provide feedback on each other.

Once the Peer Review Report Is Completed

The team chair typically submits a draft Peer Review Report to NAEYC within two weeks of the site visit. This report develops the basic findings of the team as shared orally in the exit session. The report summarizes the program's alignment to the NAEYC Higher Education Accreditation Standards based on evidence presented in the Self-Study Report and during the site visit.

The team does not make a recommendation on accreditation. It does use a rubric to assess the evidence submitted by the program for each standard as meeting expectations or as an area of significant concern.

The Written Response to the Peer Review Report

Once NAEYC has reviewed the Peer Review Report and completed technical edits in consultation with the Peer Review Team, the final report is sent to the program, typically by the end of the semester in which the visit took place. The program then has 30 days to submit a Written Response to the Peer Review Report unless an extension is granted because the college will be closed on the originally assigned due date or if there are extenuating circumstances such as an act of nature or other disaster, faculty strike, faculty illness or death, or the illness or death of the primary or secondary contact's immediate family member.

In the program's Written Response to the Peer Review Report, the program may not introduce new pieces of evidence. Programs may note any factual inaccuracies in the Peer Review Report and provide updated written information related to the NAEYC Higher Education Accreditation Standards in the Self-Study Report, as evidence of the program's capacity for continued growth.

The program's Self-Study Report, Peer Review Report, and Written Response to the Peer Review Report are sent to the Commission and serve as the documented evidence on which the Commission makes an accreditation decision.

Step Four: The Accreditation Decision

For programs submitting Self-Study Reports in 2022 using the 2010 NAEYC Professional Preparation Standards please see Appendix G for the relevant accreditation decision definitions.

Accreditation decisions are made by the Commission, which exercises a high degree of professional judgment as it applies the standards in its review of programs, including the Self-Study Reports, Peer Review Reports, Written Responses, Response to Conditions, and/or Focused Reports (described later in this publication). The accreditation decision is not based on a numerical score. Professional judgment must be used to evaluate the extent to which a program has met each accreditation standard.

The Commission will send a Decision Report for first-time/renewal accreditation cases, or a Feedback Letter for conditions cases, to the primary contacts for the programs and chief executive officers of the institutions housing the programs.

Possible Accreditation Decisions

The Commission may choose from the following accreditation decision outcomes for programs pursuing accreditation for the first time:

- Accredited
- Accredited with Conditions
- Not Accredited

The Commission may choose from the following accreditation decision outcomes for currently accreditation programs, including those pursuing renewal accreditation:

- Accredited
- Accredited with Conditions

- Accredited with Probation
- Accreditation Revoked

The Commission may choose from the following accreditation decision outcomes for programs that have reached the end of their conditions or probation period:

- Accredited
- Accreditation Expired

In rare cases, the Commission may defer making an accreditation decision; in those cases, the Commission will communicate with the program (via NAEYC staff) regarding next steps and timelines.

Accredited

This is a positive accreditation decision. Accredited indicates that the program has met each of the Accreditation Eligibility Criteria. Furthermore, the program has provided evidence for meeting each of the Accreditation Standards A-F, thus demonstrating the program's ability to deliver professional preparation that supports candidates developing proficiency in the *Professional Standards and Competencies*. Accredited programs typically hold accreditation for a period of seven years.

Accredited with Conditions

This is a positive accreditation decision. Accredited with Conditions indicates that the program has met each of the Accreditation Eligibility Criteria. Furthermore, while the program has demonstrated strengths related to the standards, there are one or more conditions identified that need to be addressed in order to meet Accreditation Standards A-F. Information in the Self-Study Report, the Peer Review Report and/or the program's Written Response, though, provides evidence of the program's capacity to address the concern. Thus, the program will be accredited with conditions for a two-year period.

A program that receives an "Accredited with Conditions" decision is an accredited program. A program receiving this decision must submit evidence that the identified condition(s) has been addressed through a first, and, if needed, second Response to Conditions. The program must respond to each condition in its first Response to Conditions. Responses to Conditions are submitted by September 30 or March 31 (depending on the dates of the program's accreditation period) using a template available in the Accreditation Online Resource Library. Due to the timing of report submission deadlines and Commission meetings, the conditions period may extend beyond two calendar years to encompass the Commission meeting that occurs immediately after the second Response to Conditions is submitted. The program is publicly listed as Accredited with Conditions during this period.

If staff identify a concern related to completeness of the program's Response to Conditions the program will have two weeks to submit the requested information. If the program does not provide a revised Response to Conditions in time for the Commission to conduct a timely review of it prior to a meeting, the Commission reserves the right to postpone the review of that program until its next scheduled meeting. In this case,

- For a program submitting its first Response to Conditions, this will not extend that program's time on conditions. Rather this will reduce the amount of time between when the program receives

Commission feedback on its response to conditions and when the program must submit its second response to conditions (if the Commission finds the program did not meet conditions in its first response).

- For a program submitting its second Response to Conditions, if the Commission's next meeting falls after the program's accreditation term ends, the program will be placed on Administrative Probation (with expiration date extended) until the Commission can meet to review whether the program met conditions.

The Commission will review the evidence in the Response to Conditions to determine if the program has sufficiently addressed conditions. If the Commission finds that the program has met the conditions, the program is accredited for the remainder of the seven-year accreditation term that began with the Accreditation with Conditions decision. If the Commission determines that conditions have not been sufficiently addressed by its second Response to Conditions, the accreditation expires, and the program receives notice that it is no longer accredited.

Once the Commission has cited conditions as part of the accreditation decision, in subsequent reviews of programs' responses to conditions, it cannot cite new conditions related to the materials submitted for the original accreditation decision. From time to time, though, in responding to conditions, programs create new concerns. In this instance, the Commission may cite these concerns as new conditions in reviewing the program's first response to conditions.⁶ The program will have two years to address these new conditions. The program must still address its original conditions within a two-year period. If it does not, the program's accreditation may expire prior to the program being able to address the new condition(s). A program can be on conditions for no more than a total of three years. The Commission cannot cite new concerns based on the program's second Response to Conditions.

Accredited with Probation

During a program's accreditation cycle or at the time of its accreditation renewal, the Commission may decide to place an accredited program on probation. While this is not an adverse decision, the program has the potential of receiving an adverse decision should it not meet the probation requirements.

A program can receive an "accredited with probation" decision at any point during its accreditation cycle if the program is found to not meet one or more Accreditation Eligibility Requirements and/or if the program is not meeting other accreditation expectations (excluding reasons for Administrative Probation). Evidence may come to the Commission's attention in an Interim Report, substantive change notifications, or from other documented sources, such as a filed complaint. (Consequences for not meeting Accreditation Eligibility Requirement 1 are discussed under the Accreditation Revoked policy.)

A program will also receive an "accreditation with probation" decision at the time of its accreditation renewal if the Commission finds the program has not met one or more of Accreditation Standards A-F, and the concerns identified are serious enough to compromise the program's ability to deliver

⁶ For example, if in a program's response to conditions it made revisions to part of a Key Assessment that was included in the original Self Study Report, the Commission can cite a new condition for the revised section of the Key Assessment; however, it cannot cite a condition if it notices concerns in the unrevised section of the Key Assessment (that the Commission may have missed in its original review of the program). In the case of the latter, the Commission can provide feedback to the program but cannot cite a new condition.

professional preparation that supports candidates' developing proficiency in the *Professional Standards and Competencies*. In addition, information in the program's Self-Study Report, the Peer Review Report and/or the program's Written Response identify challenges in the program's ability to address the concerns.

The term of probation (excluding Administrative Probation) may be no more than two years. A program may not appeal a probation decision. During the probation period, the program will be publicly listed as "Accredited with Probation." A program on probation due to an issue relating to meeting a standard may be required to complete a Focus Report(s) that addresses the specific issues in the program that led to probation, to host an additional site visit at the expense of the institution, and/or participate in a virtual meeting with the Commission to answer questions related to the Focus Report(s) and/or site visit. The Commission reserves the right to request quarterly, biannual or annual reports from the program based on the nature of concerns that led to probation. During the probation period, the program will submit evidence that it has addressed the concerns outlined by the Commission. If the Commission determines that the program has sufficiently addressed the concerns, the program will be granted full accreditation for the remainder of the seven-year accreditation term during which it was placed on probation. If the Commission determines that the program has not sufficiently addressed the concerns within two years, the accreditation expires, and the program receives notice that it is no longer accredited.

Not Accredited

This is an adverse decision. A program seeking first-time accreditation will receive a "Not Accredited" decision if the program is found to not meet one or more Accreditation Eligibility Requirements and/or if the program has been found to not meet one or more of Accreditation Standards A-F. With regard to the latter, the concerns identified are serious enough to compromise the program's ability to deliver professional preparation that supports candidates developing proficiency in the *Professional Standards and Competencies*. In addition, the Commission finds that information in the program's Self-Study Report, the Peer Review Report and/or the program's Written Response identify challenges in the program's ability to address the concerns.

The program has the right to appeal a Not Accredited decision (see the Appeals Policy). The program has the right to submit a written comment on its accreditation decision within 30 days of receiving the decision. NAEYC will publish this written comment when it publishes the accreditation decision on the NAEYC website. The program may also choose to return to self-study work and repeat the Self-Study Report and site visit process. If the program chooses to return to self-study immediately after receiving the Not Accredited decision, it will not be required to pay an additional application fee but will be required to pay an additional self-study review fee and site visit fee. The program will be expected to follow all policies related to the self-study phase and candidacy phase.

Accreditation Expired

This is an adverse decision. Accreditation is considered expired if the following occurs:

- If a degree program ceases operations as a functional entity such as through the merger of programs in an institutional system
- If an Accredited with Conditions program fails to meet conditions within the required time period

- If an Accredited with Probation program fails to meet its probation requirements within the required time period OR
- If a program on Administrative Probation fails to meet its administrative probation requirements⁷

The program has the right to appeal an Accreditation Expired decision (see the Appeals Policy). The program has the right to submit a written comment on its accreditation decision within 30 days of receiving the decision. NAEYC will publish this written comment when it publishes the accreditation decision on the NAEYC website. The program may also choose to return to self-study work and repeat the Self-Study Report and site visit process. If the program chooses to return to self-study immediately after receiving the Accreditation Expired decision, it will not be required to pay an additional application fee but will be required to pay an additional self-study review fee and site visit fee. The program will be expected to follow all policies related to the self-study phase and candidacy phase.

Accreditation Revoked

This is an adverse decision. Accreditation will be revoked if the following occurs:

- If the institution in which the program is located is no longer in compliance with Accreditation Eligibility Requirement 1 OR
- In rare circumstances, the resolution of a complaint (see the Complaints Policy) could result in a program's accreditation being revoked.

The program has the right to appeal an Accreditation Revoked decision (see the Appeals Policy). The program has the right to submit a written comment on its accreditation decision within 30 days of receiving the decision. NAEYC will publish this written comment when it publishes the accreditation decision on the NAEYC website. The program may also choose to return to self-study work and repeat the Self-Study Report and site visit process. If the program chooses to return to self-study immediately after receiving the Accreditation Revoked decision, it will not be required to pay an additional application fee but will be required to pay an additional self-study review fee and site visit fee. The program will be expected to follow all policies related to the self-study phase and candidacy phase.

Deferring a Decision

The Commission may choose to defer an accreditation decision to a subsequent meeting based on

- a) scheduling,
- b) a program seeking first-time accreditation falls out of compliance with an Accreditation Eligibility Criteria but anticipates being able to meet the Criteria prior to the candidacy period ending,
or
- c) the need for the Commission to correct the feedback that it previously provided to a program on conditions.

In the rare case in which the Commission determines it needs to correct feedback to a program that has submitted a second response to conditions, it will extend the program's current accreditation term by no more than a year to allow the program to use the corrected feedback to respond to the conditions.

⁷ The Commission does not need to approve the "accreditation expired" decision in this circumstance.

Notification of Accreditation Status, Effective Date of Decisions and NAEYC Public Announcement of Decisions

Notification of Accreditation Decisions

Within 45 days of the accreditation decisions made at a Commission meeting, NAEYC staff will notify the primary contact and chief executive officer of the institution of the relevant program.

Decision Effective Dates

The effective date of the Accredited, Accredited with Conditions, and Accredited with Probation decisions are the date the Commission makes its final decision. Interim Report and renewal Self-Study Report due dates as well as site visits are set according to the effective date of the most recent Accreditation Decision.

The effective date of Not Accredited, Accreditation Expired, and Accreditation Revoked decisions is 30 days after the program receives notification of the accreditation decision unless the program notifies NAEYC during that period of its intention to appeal the decision. (See the Appeals Policy.)

After a final adverse decision, a previously accredited program has an additional 60 days to notify necessary parties and to update its website and other materials to reflect that the program is no longer accredited.

NAEYC Public Announcement of Accreditation Decisions

NAEYC will publicize on its website and through its communications channels (e.g., newsletter, relevant listservs, etc.) decisions of the NAEYC Commission on the Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs. All non-appealable decisions will be published shortly after the Commission makes the decisions. NAEYC will not publish an appealable decision (“not accredited/accreditation expired/accreditation revoked”) until after the 30-day window passes in which a program must notify NAEYC of its intent to appeal the decision. If the program chooses to appeal a decision, the final decision will not be published until after the appeals process is complete.

When NAEYC publishes an accreditation decision, it will include the decision status – Candidate for Accreditation, Accredited, Accredited with Conditions, Not Accredited, Accredited with Probation, Accreditation Expired, or Accreditation Revoked. In cases when a program receives an “Accredited with Conditions” decision, the Commission will state the reason for the condition. In cases where an adverse decision (Not Accredited, Accreditation Expired or Accreditation Revoked) was made, the Commission will state the reason for the decision, including which standards have not been met and/or in what way the program is out of compliance with the accreditation system’s policies. It will also publish comments, if any, that the program may wish to make regarding an adverse accreditation decision.

NAEYC also will maintain on its website a directory of currently accredited programs that includes the aforementioned details.

Step Five: Maintaining Accreditation

Once a program has achieved accredited status, there are several policies (outlined below) a program must follow in order to maintain its accreditation status.

Use of Accreditation Logo by Programs

The NAEYC higher education accreditation logo is the exclusive property of NAEYC. However, NAEYC allows an accredited program and its sponsoring institution to use the logo in publications and displays – electronic or print – to highlight its current accreditation status. The use of the logo is governed by the following guidelines:

- A program may not use NAEYC’s name or logo or other intellectual property in any way without prior written consent from NAEYC.
- The logo may NOT be used by a program that has applied for but not yet been notified by the Commission that it is accredited.
- Use of the logo shall be subject at all times to revocation and withdrawal by NAEYC when, in its sole judgment, NAEYC determines that continued use of the logo would not serve the best interests of NAEYC or the public.
- A program will receive further guidance on logo usage in relation to size, color, and other technical specifications, as well as the process for seeking approval of logo usage after it receives its Accreditation Decision.

Program Display of Accreditation Status

Wherever a program’s accreditation status is provided to the public (website, course catalog, etc.) the accreditation status statement must be accurate and complete. Programs that are accredited (including accredited with probation) are required to display their NAEYC accreditation status on their degree program’s web page(s) and other places on the institution’s website where accreditations are listed, in addition to displaying it in other widely used materials, such as course catalogs and recruitment materials. The name of the degree program and the name and address of the accrediting body must be included in the accreditation status statement. Providing inaccurate or misleading information about a program’s accreditation status could lead to an Administrative Probation decision.

An accredited program must use the following language (unless waived through prior written approval by NAEYC) in its entirety to display its accreditation status.

The *[degree program]* at *[institution]* is accredited by the Commission on the Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs of the [National Association for the Education of Young Children](#). The current accreditation term runs from *[beginning date (month/year)]* through *[end date (month/year)]*.

An accredited program on probation must use the following language (unless waived through prior written approval by NAEYC) in its entirety to display its accreditation status:

On *[date]* the *[degree program]* at *[institution]* was placed on probation by the Commission on the Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs of the [National Association for the Education of Young Children](#). A program on probation is accredited but is not in full compliance with the accreditation standards and/or other requirements for maintaining its accreditation status. A program has up to two yearly reporting cycles to demonstrate full compliance with the standards and/or other requirements for maintaining its accreditation status. The current accreditation term runs from *[beginning date (month/year)]* through *[end date (month/year)]*.

Annual Fee

Programs will submit an Annual Fee as part of the requirements to maintain its accreditation status. An Annual Fee is considered late at the close of business two weeks after the due date (or on the next business day that the NAEYC office is open). A program with a late Annual Fee will be assessed a late fee. The program will be notified that it is placed on Administrative Probation and will have 30 days from the notification to submit the fee, including the late fee. If a program does not comply within 30 days or request and receive an extension, its accreditation status will be considered expired.

Interim Reports

Interim Reports are an important requirement for maintaining accreditation. The program will submit two Interim Reports (in Year 2 and Year 4 of the accreditation period) and will submit a Renewal Self-Study Report in Year 6 during its accreditation period.

The Year 2 Interim Report allows the program to document substantive changes, affirm continued compliance with eligibility requirements and report program outcome data.

The Year 4 Interim Report collects the same information as in the Year 2 Interim Report and also provides an opportunity for a program to submit key assessments (up to three), chart of learning opportunities, candidate performance data, and analysis of the data for one standard of the Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators. The Commission or a standing committee will review this information and provide feedback to the program to support its preparations for renewal accreditation. As such, the Commission encourages the program to submit key assessments and learning opportunities that would benefit from feedback (potentially focusing on a standard the program finds challenging to address), rather than sending its strongest work.

The program must use the most current Interim Report templates available in the online resource library at the time the report is submitted. If an updated template has been posted within three months of the program's submission date, it may choose to use the most recent previous template or the new template. The program may not alter the Interim Report template.

If the Interim Report is complete, accreditation continues. If the report indicates a substantive change, staff or the Commission may request additional information.

An Interim Report is considered late at the close of business two weeks after the due date (or on the next business day that the NAEYC office is open). A program with a late Interim Report will be assessed a late fee. A program will be notified that it is placed on administrative probation and will have 30 days from the notification to submit the report, including the late fee. If a program does not comply within 30 days or request and receive an extension, its accreditation status will be considered expired.

NAEYC staff will review the Interim Report for completeness. If a program is notified that its Interim Report is incomplete, it will have two weeks to submit the requested information, unless the program requests and receives an extension. If the program does not submit the requested information within that timeline, it will be notified that it is placed on Administrative Probation and will have 30 days from the notification to submit the information. If a program does not comply within 30 days or request and receive an extension, its accreditation status will be considered expired.

It is the responsibility of the program to ensure that it has fully completed an Interim Report template that is eligible for consideration at the time of submission as found in the Online Resource Library.

Maintaining Current Program Objectives and Program Effectiveness Data on Institutional Website

NAEYC is committed to strengthening pathways into the early childhood profession and facilitating transparency of early childhood higher education degree programs' effectiveness and quality. As part of this commitment, NAEYC requires (via Accreditation Standard C.6) its accredited higher education degree programs to make easily available on their program websites clear information about the effectiveness and quality of their accredited early childhood degree programs, as evidenced through degree candidate achievement measures. In addition, as an accrediting body recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), the NAEYC Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs system is required to ensure that its accredited programs' candidate achievement data are transparent, consistent, and accessible to the public on programs' websites. NAEYC strongly encourages programs to work with their institutional research offices to gather these data.

Programs will report on their objectives and outcomes in their Interim Reports and Self-Study Reports and are expected to maintain current content related to these on their websites throughout the entire accreditation period.

Step Six: Renewing Accreditation

A program seeking to renew its accreditation will submit a Self-Study Report in Year Six of its accreditation term. Once the Self-Study Report is deemed complete and the program is current with regard to the annual fee and site visit fee, the program will host a site visit, and the Commission will then determine the program's accreditation status.

A Renewal Self-Study Report is considered late at the close of business two weeks after the due date (or on the next business day that the NAEYC office is open). A program with a late Renewal Self-Study Report will be assessed a late fee, will be notified that it is placed on Administrative Probation, and will have 30 days from the notification to submit the report, including the late fee. If a program does not comply within 30 days or request and receive an extension, its accreditation status will be considered expired. See the Administrative Probation policy for more information.

Administrative Probation

An accredited program will be placed on Administrative Probation in the following circumstances:

- If the program does not submit a complete Interim Report or renewal Self-Study Report by the appropriate deadline and has not requested and been granted an extension
- If the program does not submit its annual fee by the appropriate deadline and has not requested and been granted an extension
- If the program fails to comply with accreditation policies not related to standards or Accreditation Eligibility Requirements

- If the program does not submit a revised Second Response to Conditions in time for Commissioners to review it at a scheduled meeting prior to the program’s accreditation term ending.

In any of these circumstances, NAEYC will notify the program in writing as soon as possible after the concern is identified. At the conclusion of the two-week grace period, the program will be considered to be on Administrative Probation. At that point, the program has 30 days to provide the necessary information and/or fee payment, or to request an extension from the Commission. The Commission will consider extension requests due to extenuating circumstances such as acts of nature or other disasters, faculty strikes, faculty illness or death, the illness or death of a primary or secondary contact’s immediate family member, or due to a primary or secondary contact’s sudden/unanticipated departure from the program.

Reporting Substantive Changes

NAEYC understands and appreciates that programmatic changes are a routine and healthy part of the continuous improvement process. Most of these changes will not impact the accreditation of the program (as described and captured in the Self-Study Report and site visit). However, accredited programs and programs in candidacy must report substantive changes to NAEYC staff within 30 days of the change or in the program’s Interim Report, whichever occurs first. The Commission will review the changes to determine whether they impact the accreditation status of the program. Substantive changes include, but are not limited to:

- Changes in the management, oversight, and/or administrative home of the program
- Changes in the primary or secondary contact for the program
- Changes in geographic setting, including moving the program to a new location, or establishing a branch campus or a new off-campus cohort program
- Adding, eliminating or modifying courses that represent a significant departure in terms of either the content or the method of delivery from those offered at the most recent site visit, such as new online courses (here a substantive change is operationally defined as 25% or more of the credit hours of the accredited curriculum)
- Changes in the institution’s accreditation status—e.g., loss of accreditation or a change to probationary status.
- Other changes that affect compliance with Accreditation Eligibility Requirements

Programs are encouraged to contact NAEYC staff with any questions about whether a recent or anticipated change is considered a “substantive change.”

Appeals Procedures

This section outlines the procedures for appealing a Not Accredited or Accreditation Expired/Revoked decision.

NAEYC is committed to providing a mechanism whereby appeals can be raised and dealt with promptly, impartially, and confidentially.

Only a program that received a Not Accredited, Accreditation Expired or Accreditation Revoked decision may appeal the decision. The program must submit its intention to appeal within 30 days of receipt of the Commission's accreditation decision. During the appeal process, there is no change in the program's public accreditation status. The Appellant's original accreditation decision remains unannounced during this period.

Filing an Appeal

The appeal process is initiated by submitting to the Commission a Letter of Intent to Appeal. The Letter of Intent to Appeal must:

- Be submitted in writing (electronic or hard copy) within 30 days of receipt of the Accreditation Decision Report or letter notifying the program of the adverse decision. If the program does not submit a Letter of Intent to Appeal within this time period, the adverse accreditation decision will become final
- Be addressed to the senior leader of the NAEYC Early Childhood Higher Education Accreditation System
- Be signed by a senior administrative official (at the vice president/provost level or above) of the host institution (the Appellant)
- State whether the appeal is based on a procedural violation (e.g., the Commission failed to follow proper procedure in reviewing the Appellant's program) or substantive error (i.e., the Commission misapplied the program's evidence for meeting the standards and/or Accreditation Eligibility Requirements) by the Commission
- NAEYC will acknowledge receipt of the Letter of Intent to Appeal. The program has 45 business days after receipt of the Commission's accreditation decision to submit the formal appeal, which must:
 - Be addressed to the senior leader of the NAEYC Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs System
 - Be signed by a senior administrative official (at the vice president/provost level or above) of the host institution (the Appellant)
 - State whether the appeal is based on a procedural violation (i.e., the Commission failed to follow proper procedure in reviewing the Appellant's program) or substantive error (i.e., the Commission misapplied the program's evidence for meeting the accreditation standards and/or Accreditation Eligibility Requirements) by the Commission
 - Specify the grounds on which the appeal is made, including the specific facts and circumstances supporting the appeal
 - And include complete and accurate supporting documents. (Note: The Appeals Panel will consider as evidence only the record that was before the Commission at the time of its decision, which might be documented in the Self-Study Report, the Peer Review Report, the Appellant's Written Response to the Peer Review Report and/or the Response to Conditions, or other documents pertaining to Accreditation Eligibility Requirements. The Appeals Panel will not consider new revisions to the reports, additions to the reports, or subsequent changes made by the Appellant program.)
- Once the formal appeal is received, NAEYC will acknowledge receipt of the documents. NAEYC will verify the documents for completeness and may ask for additional documentary support, if necessary.

The Appeals Panel

When the documents are complete, the Commission chair will initiate the appeal process by appointing an Appeals Panel within 30 days of receipt of the completed appeals materials but shall not take part in the deliberation. Should the Commission chair have a conflict of interest with the Appellant the chair will appoint the chair-elect or past chair to oversee the appeals process.

Members of the Appeals Panel may include former Commissioners, current and former peer reviewers, and other early childhood professionals who are knowledgeable about the accreditation standards and process. Members of the Appeals Panel cannot include current members of the Commission, members of the Appellant's Peer Review Team, members of NAEYC's Governing Board, or current NAEYC staff. Members of the Appeals Panel will follow NAEYC's conflict of interest and confidentiality policies.

The Scope and Conduct of the Appeal Review

The Appeals Panel will conduct its review as follows:

The members of the Appeals Panel shall judge in all fairness. The burden of persuading the appeals body rests with the Appellant program. The members are bound by the rules in this procedure and the terms of NAEYC's confidentiality policy.

The issues addressed by the Appeals Panel are limited to those identified in the program's formal appeal.

The role of the Appeals Panel is to determine whether or not there is evidence that procedures were violated or errors were made by the Commission that would affect the decision outcome and to either affirm the decision being appealed or direct the Commission to reconsider the original decision. The Appeals Panel reviews the Commission's application of its professional judgment to the evidence in compliance with the procedures for determining the accreditation decision, not the underlying merits of the Appellant program.

- As the first step, the Appeals Panel will review the appeal to ensure that it addresses a procedural or substantive error by the Commission. The Appeals Panel has the right to disallow the appeal if it does not fall into either of these categories. In this case, staff will advise the program on other avenues it can use to pursue its concern(s).
- The Appeals Panel will consider as evidence only the record that was before the Commission at the time of its decision, which might be documented in the Self-Study Report, the Peer Review Report, the Appellant's Written Response to the Peer Review Report and/or the Response to Conditions, or other documents pertaining to Accreditation Eligibility Requirements. The Appeals Panel will not consider new revisions to the reports, additions to the reports, or subsequent changes made by the Appellant program. In addition, the Appeals Panel will be provided the program's Accreditation Decision Report and letter as applicable and have access to the minutes from the relevant Commission meetings.

When assessing the evidence substantiating the appeal, the Appeals Panel may request additional information and hear from the Appellant, the Peer Review Team that conducted the Appellant's site visit, and the Commission. The decision to hear from the Appellant, whether in person or by telephone conference, or only in writing, shall be at sole discretion of the Appeals Panel. No formal rules of evidence, judicial procedure, or other trial-type proceedings shall apply.

The Appeals Panel will report its evaluation and final decision to the Commission no later than 90 days after the Appeals Panel has been appointed. The Appeals Panel may vote to grant an extension of time for any deadline under these policies, but such extension of time shall be no longer than 60 days. NAEYC shall inform the Appellant accordingly.

The Appeals Panel's decision is final.

The Appeals Panel Decision and Report

No later than 90 days after the Appeals Panel has been appointed, it will submit a decision report addressed to the senior leader of the NAEYC's Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs System. Copies will be forwarded to the Appellant program, the chief executive officer of NAEYC, and the Commission Chair.

If the Appeals Panel upholds the Commission decision, the original decision stands. If the decision of the Commission is not upheld, the case will be remanded to the Commission for reconsideration at its next scheduled meeting with specific instructions to review the case in a manner consistent with the findings of the Appeals Panel. The Commission can determine if additional information from the program is needed in order to reconsider the accreditation decision. This might come in the form of a request for a Focus Report or Focus Visit. The Commission's subsequent decision is final and not appealable.

Costs of the Appeal

The program must submit an appeals filing fee when it submits its formal appeal. During the appeals process, each party is responsible for its own expenses that are incurred, including expenses for its representatives and any legal fees. Costs associated with Appeals Panel (such as travel for the Appeals Panel members) will be shared equally between both parties. If, at the conclusion of the appeals process, the accreditation decision is reversed, the Appellant will be reimbursed the cost of the appeals filing fee, but no other costs incurred due to the appeal process.

Withdrawing an Appeal

A program may withdraw its appeal of an accreditation decision in writing at any time until the decision of the Appeals Panel is rendered. The signature of a senior administrative official (at the vice president/provost level or above) is required on the withdrawal notification letter. The appellant institution or program foregoes the right to reassert the appeal at a later date. The Commission decision becomes final upon receipt of the written request to withdraw the appeal.

Complaints Policy⁸

This Complaints Policy covers complaints against accredited programs or programs in candidacy for accreditation, complaints against staff, complaints against peer reviewers, and complaints against Commission members. Filing a complaint will not influence a program's accreditation decision (if one is

⁸ A program seeking to overturn an adverse accreditation decision should use the accreditation system's appeals process rather than the complaints process. A program that disagrees with the preliminary findings of its Peer Review Report from a recent site visit should address those concerns in its Written Response to the Peer Review Report rather than using the complaints process. If a program is unsure whether to address concerns through its Written Response to the Peer Review Report, the complaints process, the appeals process, or the feedback survey submitted after a site visit, please contact staff.

pending) or its accreditation/candidacy status. The complaint policy should be used primarily to address concerns about the professional conduct of commissioners, staff, and peer reviewers and implementation of Accreditation Eligibility Requirements, standards, policies and procedures. Complaints must fall within the purview of the NAEYC Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs System – including its standards, policies and procedures, Accreditation Eligibility Requirements, and representatives (staff, Commission, peer reviewers).

Complaints about the Operations of an Accredited Program or Program in Candidacy

Any member of the public can file a complaint about the operations of an accredited program or program in candidacy. To be considered by the Commission, the complaint must:

- Be written and signed
- Identify the individual, group, or legal entity represented by the complainant
- Present substantial evidence that the program is not in compliance with one or more of the standards, Accreditation Eligibility Requirements or accreditation policies in use at the time referred to by the complainant
- Demonstrate, when reasonably possible, that serious effort has been made to pursue the complaint procedures within the institution in which the program is located
- Grant permission to send the complaint, in its entirety, to the institution

Complaints must be submitted to the NAEYC senior leader of Higher Education. Within 15 business days, the Executive Committee of the Commission will determine whether the complaint meets the above criteria and notify the complainant of the determination. If the complaint meets the criteria, the complaint will be sent to the program for comment. The program will have 30 calendar days to respond to the complaint in writing. Staff will then forward the complaint and the program's comment to the Executive Committee of the Commission. Within 60 calendar days of receiving the complaint and the program's comment, the Executive Committee will notify the complainant and the program of the action it will take regarding the complaint. These actions may include the following:

- Dismissing the complaint
- Recommending changes to the program to be implemented within a certain time frame
- Pursuing the matter further, requesting more information
- Making a recommendation to the full Commission for the program to be placed on probation or to have its accreditation revoked

If the Executive Committee decides to dismiss the complaint or recommend changes to the program, the disposition of the complaint will be considered final at that point. If the Executive Committee decides to pursue the complaint further or to make a recommendation to the full Commission regarding a change in the accreditation status of the program, the disposition of the complaint must be finalized within 90 calendar days after the Executive Committee notifies the complainant and the program of its decision.

Complaints Against a Peer Reviewer

For complaints related to a peer reviewer, the complainant should notify the NAEYC senior leader of Higher Education of the intent to file a complaint within 30 days of completion of the site visit, if the critical incident(s) in question occurred during a site visit.

To be considered by the Commission, the complaint must:

- Be written and signed
- Provide a clear description of the critical incident(s) in question, including identifying the individual, peer reviewer(s) represented by the complainant
- If possible, be sent before the host institution has received the Peer Review Report and within 30 days after the completion of the site visit
- Grant permission to send the complaint, in its entirety, to the peer reviewer(s) cited in the complaint and the other members of the Peer Review Team

NAEYC will acknowledge receipt of a complaint and forward the complaint to the Executive Committee of the Commission. Should the chair of the Commission (who is a member of the Executive Committee) have a conflict of interest with either or both of the parties involved with the complaint, the chair will follow the Conflict of Interest Policy and may recuse him/herself, and another member of the Executive Committee will manage the complaint process. If any Executive Committee member has a conflict of interest and must recuse him/herself, the chair may appoint another member of the Commission to be included in the consideration of the complaint. If the complaint is related to a site visit, the complaint will first be sent to the relevant members of the Peer Review Team with request for comment within 30 days. Typically, during this same period, the Peer Review Report will be sent to the program so that it can prepare its Written Response.

Executive Committee members are asked to 1) review the complaint and peer reviewer comments; and 2) review the Peer Review Report and the program's Written Response to the Peer Review Report.

Upon the Executive Committee's receipt of the complaint, the committee will reach one of the following decisions by a majority vote:

- Dismiss the complaint
- Sustain the complaint and make a recommendation to the full Commission on subsequent actions needed to address the complaint. The Commission will consider these recommendations at its next meeting and convey its final response to the complainant within 15 days of the Commission meeting.
- Vote to pursue the matter further, either through correspondence or through a special fact-finding group, to secure the additional information necessary to reach a decision

If the committee votes to sustain the complaint, it must then determine whether the critical incident(s) influenced the content of the Peer Review Report. If the incident is determined to have influenced the Peer Review Report, the committee voids the site visit. Another site visit will be conducted at the expense of the NAEYC Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs system. If it is determined that the incident did not influence the Peer Review Report, the Commission proceeds with its decision on program compliance with accreditation standards. The Commission may not move to an accreditation decision until it has reached a disposition on the complaint. The disposition of the complaint is communicated in writing to the primary contact of the host institution and to all members of the Peer Review Team that conducted the site visit.

Complaints Against a Commissioner(s)

Complaints concerning the conduct of a Commissioner may be made and transmitted in any manner by any person to the NAEYC Governing Board President or the NAEYC Chief Executive Officer and the General Counsel. The Governing Board President and Chief Executive Officer, in conjunction with the General

Counsel, will address all reported concerns or complaints regarding illegal and inappropriate conduct pertaining to policy violations. The Senior Leader of Human Resources will immediately notify the CEO of any such complaint, and the CEO will work with the General Counsel until the matter is resolved. The General Counsel will notify the Audit Committee of the Governing Board of any such matters.

Under the Governing Board Policies, for each complaint involving an alleged violation of the NAEYC Code of Ethics that the Audit Committee determines is potentially actionable, such determination will be brought to the Governing Board to determine whether the Commission member should be removed from his or her position.

The Complainant will be notified when a resolution of the complaint has been determined.

Complaints Against Staff

Complaints against staff should be sent to the NAEYC Senior Leader of Human Resources. This person will notify the complainant within 30 days of the intention to:

- Dismiss the complaint
- Sustain the complaint. In this case complaints against NAEYC employees that are found to have merit will be handled in accordance with the relevant policies contained in the NAEYC Employee Handbook.
- Pursue the matter further, either through correspondence or through a special fact-finding group, to secure the additional information necessary to reach a decision

The Complainant will be notified when a resolution of the complaint has been determined.

Extension Policies

Following are extension policies for various components of the accreditation process. Extensions requested due to acts of nature or other disasters, faculty strikes, faculty illness or death, or the illness or death of a primary or secondary contact's immediate family member will be automatically granted by staff. All other reasons for extension requests will be reviewed by the Commission's Executive Committee (except as noted below). In cases where a program has been granted the maximum number of extensions, the Commission may consider an additional extension request due to an extenuating circumstance as described earlier in this paragraph.

If the Commission denies an extension request for a report or site visit, the program must submit the required Self-Study Report/Interim Report or hold the site visit within the currently scheduled timeframe. If the program is unable to submit the report or host the visit as required, a 30-day administrative probation period would begin at the end of the grace period for submitting reports (i.e., two weeks after the published due date) or at the end of the site visit schedule (i.e., April 30 for spring visits or November 30 for fall visits). See the Administrative Probation policy for pathways to remove administrative probation or next steps if administrative probation cannot be removed.

Extensions may be requested no more than six months prior to the scheduled report/fee deadline and no less than three months prior to the deadline (unless extenuating circumstances are involved). Programs must submit extension requests in writing using the Extension Request Form. The Executive Committee will review and vote on the extension request generally within two weeks of receiving the completed form.

For a Site Visit

When a program has submitted its Self-Study Report and accompanying fee, it will receive confirmation from NAEYC staff that the report is accepted and NAEYC is ready to schedule a site visit. At that time, if the program requires a delay in hosting the visit due to extenuating circumstances, the program can submit a written request to NAEYC staff (via an Extension Request Form) to delay its site visit to the semester after the date proposed by NAEYC; the request should clearly state the reason for the extension and explain how the extension will enable the program to address the underlying circumstance. Extenuating circumstances may include acts of nature or other disasters, faculty strikes, faculty illness or death, the illness or death of a primary or secondary contact's immediate family member, or due to a primary or secondary contact's sudden/unanticipated departure from the program. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis—by staff, in the case of a program preparing for its first accreditation site visit, or by the Executive Committee of the Commission, in the case of renewal site visits that do not fall under the staff-approved categories noted above. In either case, a program may be required to submit an updated Self-Study Report closer to the time of the visit depending on the time elapsed between submission of the Self-Study Report and the site visit. If an accredited program receives an extension on hosting a renewal site visit, its current accreditation period is extended to accommodate this additional time. Programs can only request one extension for their renewal site visit; extensions for first-time visits are subject to the limitations of candidacy.

For an Interim Report

An accredited program submits Interim Reports in Year 2 and Year 4 of its accreditation term as part of the requirements for maintaining accreditation. Should a program require an extension for submitting an Interim Report, it must submit a written request to NAEYC staff, via an Extension Request Form (at least three months prior to the report due date, unless there are extenuating circumstances), and clearly state the reason for the extension and explain how the extension will enable the program to address the underlying circumstance. The Executive Committee of the Commission (or staff, for the categories noted above) will review the request and decide whether to grant the extension. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis with primary consideration for extenuating circumstances. Only six-month extension terms (maximum of two) will be granted for each Interim Report. Should a program not meet the extended deadline, it will be placed on Administrative Probation.

For an Annual Fee

An accredited program submits an annual fee each year of its accreditation term as part of the requirements for maintaining accreditation. Should a program require an extension in submitting an annual fee, it must submit a written request to NAEYC staff, via an Extension Request Form (at least three months prior to the report due date, unless there are extenuating circumstances), and clearly state the reason for the extension and explain how the extension will enable the program to address the underlying circumstance. The Executive Committee of the Commission (or staff, for categories noted above) will

review the request and decide whether to grant the extension. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis with primary consideration for extenuating circumstances. Only six-month extension terms will be granted. Should a program not meet the extended deadline, it will be placed on Administrative Probation. A program may receive an extension for paying its annual fee only twice during its accreditation period.

For a Focused Report

A program that is Accredited with Probation submits a Focused Report at various points during its probation period. Should a program require an extension for submitting a Focused Report, it must submit a written request to NAEYC staff, via an Extension Request Form (at least three months prior to the report due date, unless there are extenuating circumstances), and clearly state the reason for the extension and explain how the extension will enable the program to address the underlying circumstance. The Executive Committee of the Commission (or staff, for the categories noted above) will review the request and decide whether to grant the extension. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis with primary consideration for extenuating circumstances. Not more than two six-month extension terms will be granted. Should a program not meet the extended deadline, it may also be placed on Administrative Probation. A program may receive an extension for submitting its Focused Report only twice during its probation period. The extension may not extend beyond the two-year probation period.

If a program receives a new deadline (either through a program-requested extension or a Commission change in deadline) for submitting a Focused Report, its current accreditation-with-conditions period may be extended to accommodate this additional time. This does not change the seven-year cycle and the timeline for the renewal Self-Study Report and site visit.

For a Renewal Self-Study Report

Should a program require an extension for its renewal Self-Study Report, it must submit a written request to NAEYC staff, via an Extension Request Form (at least three months prior to the report due date, unless there are extenuating circumstances), and clearly state the reason for the extension and explain how the extension will enable the program to address the underlying circumstance. The Executive Committee of the Commission (or staff, for the categories noted above) will review the request and decide whether to grant the extension. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis with primary consideration for extenuating circumstances. Extensions may only be granted for six-month terms.

If a program should need additional time, it must submit another extension request. The program shall submit its Annual Fee on time even if an extension on the Renewal Self-Study Report is granted. A maximum of two extension requests will be considered before a program is placed on probation. If a program receives an extension for submitting a Renewal Self-Study Report, its current accreditation period will be extended to accommodate this additional time.

In rare circumstances, NAEYC may initiate changes to a renewal Self-Study Report deadline due to unanticipated caseloads for site visits in a given semester or similar balancing needs within the accreditation system. In these circumstances, NAEYC has the flexibility to grant a full-year delay.

For a Program in Self-Study

Should a program require an extension for remaining in Self-Study (for first-time accreditation), it must submit a written request to NAEYC staff, via an Extension Request Form (at least three months prior to the end of the program's five-year self-study period, unless there are extenuating circumstances), and clearly state the reason for the extension and explain how the extension will enable the program to

address the underlying circumstance. Staff will review the request and, unless there are concerns requiring consideration by the Executive Committee of the Commission, will grant the extension. Typically, only one one-year extension may be granted. However, if a program indicates that it is actively in self-study, an additional one-year extension may be granted.

For a Response-to-Conditions Report

A program that is Accredited with Conditions submits a Response-to-Conditions Report at various points during its conditions period. Should a program require an extension for submitting a Response-to-Conditions Report, it must submit a written request to NAEYC staff, via an Extension Request Form (at least three months prior to the report due date, unless there are extenuating circumstances), and clearly state the reason for the extension and explain how the extension will enable the program to address the underlying circumstance. The Executive Committee of the Commission (or staff, for the categories noted above) will review the request and decide whether to grant the extension. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis with primary consideration for extenuating circumstances.

A maximum of two six-month extension terms will be granted before a program is placed on probation. These two extensions may be used for any combination of first, second, or third Response-to-Conditions Reports. In some cases, depending on the number of extensions and the Commission review schedule, the Commission may recognize that a program would not reasonably have time to respond to Commission feedback on a first or second Response-to-Conditions Report before the subsequent Response-to-Conditions Report would be due. In these cases, the Commission will clarify a new deadline for the next submission; this is considered separately from the extension(s) requested by the program.

If a program receives a new deadline (either through a program-requested extension or a Commission change in deadline) for submitting a second or third Response-to-Conditions Report, its current accreditation-with-conditions period may be extended to accommodate this additional time. This does not change the seven-year cycle and the timeline for the renewal Self-Study Report and site visit.

Adding a Program During the Accreditation Period

An institution with one or more accredited programs may choose to seek accreditation for additional programs during the accreditation period and prior to the next scheduled renewal Self-Study Report submission. The additional programs must meet the following requirements:

- Each additional program submitted for review meets the Accreditation Eligibility Requirements
- Each additional program submitted for review is at the same degree level as the currently accredited program(s) at the institution
- Each additional program shares the same set of Key assessments as the already accredited program(s)
- Each additional program's field experiences meet the requirements of Standard F

The application for adding an additional program can be found in the online resource library. Requests to add a program must come within the first three years of the accredited program's current accreditation cycle. Only programs that are accredited without conditions or probation are eligible to add a new program via this pathway. In the application if the program has indicated that it has revised or created new key assessments since achieving accreditation, those key assessments must be submitted with the

application. Candidate performance data on all of the *Professional Standards and Competencies* must be submitted for each program included in the application. The Commission will consider requests to add a program at its meetings. In some cases, the Commission may request a virtual site visit with the program to better understand the context of the program. Should the new program be granted accreditation, it will follow the already accredited program's accreditation cycle. If the Commission approves the accreditation of the additional program, the institution will pay the annual fee at the multiple programs rate, if it was not already doing so.

An institution seeking to add a program after the first three years of its accreditation period, or a new program at a different degree level and/or with different key assessments as compared with the already accredited program, should submit the additional program in its renewal Self-Study Report. Programs should contact staff if they wish to submit a renewal Self-Study Report one or more semesters prior to the deadline in order to pursue accreditation for an additional program.

Withdrawal Policies

Withdrawing from the First-Time Accreditation Process

A program seeking accreditation may voluntarily withdraw from the accreditation process at any time by submitting a notice of withdrawal to NAEYC. The program may reapply for accreditation at a later time without prejudice by submitting a new Application for Accreditation Eligibility and an application fee.

Accredited Programs Withdrawing from Accreditation or Candidacy

An accredited program may voluntarily withdraw from accreditation or candidacy at any time when it requests withdrawal in a letter to NAEYC signed by a senior-level administrator (dean or above) of the program. An accredited program that voluntarily withdraws will be removed from the public list of accredited programs.

Programs that withdraw from accreditation or candidacy may remain with the system and retain their access to resources, etc., by returning to self-study. Programs, regardless of their previous accreditation status, may remain in self-study for up to five (consecutive) years. Those programs are eligible to submit a Self-Study Report and pursue candidacy without submitting a new Application for Accreditation Eligibility or an application fee.

A program should notify NAEYC as part of its withdrawal letter whether it intends to withdraw completely from the accreditation system or return to Self-Study. Programs that wish to return to Self-Study must return the Notice of Intent Form provided by NAEYC in response to the program's withdrawal letter. If a program does not return the Notice of Intent Form or letter signed by senior administration indicating a desire to completely withdraw from the system within the requested deadline, the program will be placed on Administrative Probation two weeks after the next report deadline or fee deadline is missed (whichever comes sooner). Per Administrative Probation policy, the program's accreditation or candidacy status will expire if the terms of Administrative Probation are not met.

Accredited programs that withdraw during their sixth year in its accreditation period can choose to submit an Interim Report rather than a Renewal Self-Study Report and pay the Annual Fee in order to maintain

accreditation through the end of its 7-year accreditation period. Programs in this situation should use the Year 2 Interim Report template.

Programs that opt to withdraw completely from the system, as well as programs that are no longer eligible to remain in self-study due to the amount of time elapsed, may reapply for accreditation at a later time without prejudice by submitting a new Application for Accreditation Eligibility and an application fee.

Programs that withdraw (whether completely or with a return to Self-Study) must remove the NAEYC accreditation logo and any other information identifying the program as accredited from its website and materials within 60 days of receiving written confirmation of withdrawal from NAEYC.

Consultant Policy

The NAEYC Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs system does not offer direct consulting services to a program seeking or maintaining accreditation. There are multiple training opportunities for a program, though, offered through the system (see Professional Development Resources for Programs on p.47 that provide guidance on the policies, processes, and expectations regarding program alignment with the NAEYC Higher Education Accreditation Standards.

A program seeking direct consulting services to achieve or maintain accreditation or an individual serving as a consultant should abide by the following:

- Individuals serving on the Commission on the Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs or the NAEYC Governing Board may not serve as a consultant to programs during their term of office.
- Any individual serving as a consultant to a program may not serve on the Peer Review Team for that program or serve in any accreditation decision-making role for that program.
- Individuals may not serve as a consultant to a program for which they have served on the Peer Review Team until that program has received the accreditation decision associated with that site visit.
- Consultants draw upon their professional knowledge and experiences to provide guidance to programs they consult for; their guidance does not represent NAEYC Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs' official policies.
- Consultants should obtain all relevant accreditation documents (such as Self-Study Reports, Interim Reports, Response to Conditions, etc.) from the program with which they are consulting. NAEYC will not provide these documents to consultants.
- Consultants and programs may access publicly available content on the NAEYC website, materials available in the accreditation online resource library (if the consultant and the program have log-in privileges) and materials used in NAEYC trainings that the program attended. In situations where mentors are supporting programs as part of a larger accreditation facilitation project, mentors may be given access to the online resource library.
- Use of a consultant does not guarantee achievement of accreditation.
- Any arrangements regarding consultant fees and travel are between the consultant and the program.

Communicating with NAEYC Higher Education Staff and the Commission

Programs and the public can contact the accreditation system and the Commission on the Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs by emailing highered@naeyc.org or mailing correspondence to:

Commission on the Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs
National Association for the Education of Young Children
1401 H St. NW, Suite 600
Washington, D.C. 20005

Professional Development Resources for Programs

Programs are encouraged to take advantage of the many resources available to support them in the accreditation process.

Staff Contacts

Contact NAEYC Staff with questions via email at highered@naeyc.org

NAEYC Website

Visit <http://www.naeyc.org/higheredaccred> to access resources on higher education accreditation. This site is updated periodically as resources are revised and new resources made available.

NAEYC Webinars

Periodically, NAEYC offers free webinars to support programs in self-study, preparing Interim Reports, and responding to conditions.

Online Resource Library for Programs

This online community contains additional resources for programs that have been deemed eligible to begin self-study or are maintaining accreditation. The instructions for accessing this community are sent via email to the primary and secondary contacts designated by the program.

NAEYC Conference Workshops

Pre-conference workshops and concurrent sessions on the accreditation process are typically offered twice a year at NAEYC's Annual Conference (generally held in November) and the NAEYC Professional Learning Institute (generally held in June). Registration information will be available on the NAEYC website.

Individualized Trainings

NAEYC offers half-day and day-long trainings for a fee to programs seeking or renewing accreditation. These trainings are usually presented to state cohorts of programs. Shorter customized trainings may be available via technology. Contact NAEYC at highered@naeyc.org to inquire about hosting a training.

Appendix A: Glossary

Accreditation terms used throughout the NAEYC Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs system

AACC	American Association of Community Colleges, founded in 1920 and representing the approximately 1200 community colleges in the United States. http://www.aacc.nche.edu/
ACCESS	Associate Degree Early Childhood Teacher Educators, founded in the early 1980s and representing the faculty in early childhood associate degree programs in the United States. http://www.accesscece.org/
Accreditation	A voluntary, non-governmental system of evaluation used to protect the public interest and to verify the quality of service provided by academic programs and institutions.
Accreditation Action	Any decision made by an accreditation agency affecting the accreditation (or determination of accreditation) of a program. In this accreditation system possible actions include: 1) approving eligibility after program application, 2) granting candidacy after submission of Self-Study Report, and 3) making an accreditation decision
Accreditation Decision	Accreditation decisions are made by the Commission related to the accreditation status of a program. The Commission typically makes these decisions following the submission of materials related to a program's site visit; the submission of the Response to Conditions; or the submission of evidence that an accredited program no longer meets Accreditation Eligibility Requirements, NAEYC Higher Education Accreditation Standards, or NAEYC accreditation policies.
Accreditation Decision – "Accredited"	This is a positive accreditation decision. Accredited indicates that the program has met each of the Accreditation Eligibility Criteria. Furthermore, the program has provided evidence for meeting each of the Accreditation Standards A-F, thus demonstrating the program's ability to deliver professional preparation that supports candidates developing proficiency in the <i>Professional Standards and Competencies</i> . Accredited programs typically hold accreditation for a period of seven years.

<p>Accreditation Decision – “Accredited with Conditions”</p>	<p>This is a positive accreditation decision. Accredited with Conditions indicates that the program has met each of the Accreditation Eligibility Criteria. Furthermore, while the program has demonstrated strengths related to the standards, there are one or more conditions identified that need to be addressed in order to meet Accreditation Standards A-F. Information in the Self-Study Report, the Peer Review Report and/or the program’s Written Response, though, provides evidence of the program’s capacity to address the concern. Thus, the program will be accredited with conditions for a two-year period. A program that receives an “Accredited with Conditions” decision is an accredited program.</p>
<p>Accreditation Decision – “Accredited with Probation”</p>	<p>A program can receive an “accredited with probation” decision at any point during its accreditation cycle if the program is found to not meet one or more Accreditation Eligibility Requirements and/or if the program is not meeting other accreditation expectations (excluding reasons for Administrative Probation). Evidence may come to the Commission’s attention in an Interim Report, substantive change notifications, or from other documented sources, such as a filed complaint. (Consequences for not meeting Accreditation Eligibility Requirement 1 are discussed under the Accreditation Revoked policy.)</p> <p>A program will also receive an “accreditation with probation” decision at the time of its accreditation renewal if the Commission finds the program has not met one or more of Accreditation Standards A-F, and the concerns identified are serious enough to compromise the program’s ability to deliver professional preparation that supports candidates’ developing proficiency in the <i>Professional Standards and Competencies</i>. In addition, information in the program’s Self-Study Report, the Peer Review Report and/or the program’s Written Response identify challenges in the program’s ability to address the concerns.</p>
<p>Accreditation Decision – “Not Accredited”</p>	<p>This is an adverse decision. A program seeking first-time accreditation will receive a “Not Accredited” decision if the program is found to not meet one or more Accreditation Eligibility Requirements and/or if the program has been found to not meet one or more of Accreditation Standards A-F. With regard to the latter, the concerns identified are serious enough to compromise the program’s ability to deliver professional preparation that supports candidates developing proficiency in the <i>Professional Standards and Competencies</i>. In addition, the Commission finds that information in the program’s Self-Study</p>

	Report, the Peer Review Report and/or the program’s Written Response identify challenges in the program’s ability to address the concerns.
Accreditation Decision – “Accreditation Expired”	<p>This is an adverse decision. Accreditation is considered expired if the following occurs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If a degree program ceases operations as a functional entity such as through the merger of programs in an institutional system ● If an Accredited with Conditions program fails to meet conditions within the required time period ● If an Accredited with Probation program fails to meet its probation requirements within the required time period OR ● If a program on Administrative Probation fails to meet its administrative probation requirements⁹
Accreditation Decision – “Accreditation Revoked”	<p>This is an adverse decision. Accreditation will be revoked if the following occurs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If the institution in which the program is located is no longer in compliance with Accreditation Eligibility Requirement 1 OR ● In rare circumstances, the resolution of a complaint (see the Complaints Policy) could result in a program’s accreditation being revoked.
Accreditation Decision Report	The official document sent to the program’s primary contact and its chief officer as identified in writing by the institution, conveying the accreditation agency’s accreditation decision following a comprehensive or focused review of a program seeking first-time or renewal accreditation. This report from the Commission describes the accreditation decision, based on a review of the program Self-Study Report, Peer Review Report, and Written Response to the Peer Review Report and followed by deliberation. It may include conditions (improvements required to maintain accreditation) and recommendations (suggestions that confirm or add to the program’s ongoing improvement plans).

⁹ The Commission does not need to approve the “accreditation expired” decision in this circumstance.

Adverse Decision	The three adverse accreditation decisions include Not Accredited, Accreditation Expired and Accreditation Revoked.
Accreditation Eligibility Requirements	Accreditation Eligibility Requirements are objective, baseline criteria that programs must meet in order to pursue accreditation. These requirements affirm that the institution in which the program is housed is in good standing, that the program meets a threshold regarding early childhood content, and that faculty have early childhood academic credentials.
Appeal	The right and process for reconsideration available to a program after an adverse accreditation decision.
Application of Candidate Performance Data	Because some assessments may be given annually while others are given each semester or on a different time schedule, the accreditation system refers to an "application" of data from a key assessment to mean data from a single time that the assessment was given. First-time programs submitting a single application of data may find that data for some key elements requires looking back farther in time, depending how frequently each key assessment was administered. For accredited programs providing two applications of data in an Interim Report or renewal Self-Study Report, the data should reflect two different time periods for which the key element was measured. (Data from two key assessments measuring the same key element during the same semester would not meet the requirement for two applications of data.)
Articulation	Efforts to design degree programs at different levels so that they fit together, or articulate, to facilitate candidate transfer with minimal loss of credits.
Assessment	In the NAEYC Higher Education Accreditation Standards the term "assessment" refers primarily to the methods through which early childhood professionals gain understanding of children's development and learning. Systematic observations and other informal and formal assessments enable candidates to appreciate children's unique qualities, to develop appropriate goals, and to plan, implement, and evaluate effective curriculum (See Standard 3). Secondly, assessment here refers to the formal and informal assessments of adult candidates required for degree completion. In NAEYC's higher education accreditation system, certain assessments are identified as Key assessments and provide evidence that the degree program and its graduates meet the NAEYC Higher Education Accreditation Standards.

Associate Degree	<p>A widely recognized college diploma. It consists of a coherent and sequenced set of courses, defined outcomes, and evaluations of candidate performance on assignments related to the degree outcomes. It includes foundational general education courses in the arts, humanities, mathematics, sciences, and social sciences. If designed for specialized career/workforce entry, it will also include courses in a specialized discipline. The degree typically comprises 60 credit hours and can be completed in two years (if the student attends full-time).</p> <p><i>Guidance in the American Association of Community College’s Board Statement on the Associate Degree</i> suggests that an associate of arts (A.A.) be three-fourths general education; an associate of science (A.S.) be one-half general education; and an associate of applied science (A.A.S.) include one-third general education coursework. Although the A.A.S. is designed to lead directly to employment in a specific career, it should be “designed to recognize the dual possibility” of career entry and continued higher education. In many states, these titles are used differently, and new titles are being developed.</p> <p>In this accreditation system, the phrase “associate degree program” refers to a specific associate degree plan, program, or course of study with a specific title, course list, and other graduation requirements.</p>
ASPA	<p>Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors, a national, nonprofit organization providing a collaborative forum and a collective voice for U.S. accreditation agencies that assess the quality of specialized and professional higher education programs and schools. ASPA represents its members on issues of educational quality facing institutions of higher education, governments, candidates, and the public. ASPA also advances the knowledge, skills, good practices, and ethical commitments of accreditors, and communicates the value of accreditation as a means of enhancing educational quality. http://www.aspa-usa.org/</p>
Baccalaureate Degree	<p>A widely recognized college diploma. It consists of a coherent and sequenced set of courses, defined outcomes, and evaluations of candidate performance on assignments related to the degree outcomes. It includes foundational general education courses in the arts, humanities, mathematics, sciences, and social sciences. If designed for specialized career/workforce entry, it will also include courses in a specialized discipline. The degree typically comprises 120 credit hours and can be completed in four years (if the student attends full-time).</p>

	In this accreditation system, the phrase “baccalaureate degree program” refers to a specific baccalaureate degree plan, program, or course of study with a specific title, course list, and other graduation requirements.
Candidacy (Programs)	The status granted to a program that has been approved as eligible for accreditation and has submitted a first-time Self-Study Report. A program in candidacy may move forward to a site visit.
Candidates (Students)	Refers to college students who are candidates for completion in early childhood professional preparation programs. In some cases, these candidates are also candidates for professional licensure or certification.
CHEA	Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), a private, nonprofit national organization that coordinates accreditation activity and recognizes regional, institutional, and professional accrediting agencies in the United States. NAEYC is currently seeking CHEA recognition. http://www.chea.org/
Clinical Practice	See “Field Experiences”
Commission	Refers to the Commission on the Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs. This body sets the standards and policies for the accreditation system and makes decisions regarding the accreditation of early childhood degree programs.
Compliance	The extent to which a program or institution conforms and adheres to accreditation standards and policies.
Conflict of Interest	Any personal, financial, or professional interest that might create a conflict with an external evaluator, reviewer, or member of a decision-making body's ability to fairly and objectively carry out accreditation responsibilities.
Early Childhood	The period in human development that begins at birth and ends at approximately 8 years old.

ECADA	Early Childhood Associate Degree Accreditation (ECADA) is the original name of NAEYC's higher education accreditation system (now called NAEYC Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs).
Evidence	Documents submitted with program reports or available to peer review teams, notes from site visit interviews, examples that substantiate a claim. Both the program and the Peer Review Team should be able to substantiate narratives with evidence.
Extenuating Circumstance	Situations such as a primary/secondary contact's sudden illness or injury or sudden departure or hiring, acts of nature, or other events beyond the control of the program which would prevent it from asking for an extension on a report or fee at least three months prior to the due date or submitting a required report or fee by the required due date.
Faculty	Each reference to faculty includes full-time, part-time, and adjunct faculty.
Field Experiences	Includes informal and formal opportunities for candidates to observe and practice in early childhood settings through observations, practice student teaching (with individual children and groups of children), and other clinical practice experiences such as home visiting. A planned sequence of these experiences supports candidate development of understanding, competence, and dispositions in a specialized area of practice.
First-time Accreditation	Accreditation that has been granted to a program or institution being accredited for the first time (or for the first time following a lapse in accreditation).
Focus Report	A program Accredited with Probation may be asked to complete a Focus Report to address specific areas of concern as outlined in a decision document.
Higher Education Act (HEA)	This federal legislation outlines requirements for institutions of higher education and higher education accrediting agencies. http://www.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/index.html
Institutional Accreditation	The evaluation and accreditation of an institution as a whole (e.g., a school, college or university) by a regional or national accreditor.

Interim Report	A report submitted in Year 2 and Year 4 of an accredited program’s accreditation cycle for the purpose of demonstrating continued compliance with accreditation standards, Accreditation Eligibility Requirements, and accreditation policies. The program also shares major developments and illustrates ongoing program improvements.
Key Assessment	Key Assessments are comprehensive assessments that programs use to measure candidate proficiency In the Professional Standards and Competencies. Programs select six Key Assessments that, collectively, measure all parts of the Professional Standards and Competencies. Key Assessments must be offered in core courses that all candidates in the degree program are required to take. Each key assessment includes one set of instructions to candidates and one accompanying rubric, and is used consistently by all faculty across all course sections in which it is offered.
Learning Opportunities	The many ways in which the program helps candidates know, understand, and apply the <i>Professional Standards and Competencies</i> throughout the program of study. Learning opportunities are more than the key assessments that a program uses. They include classroom discussions, guest speakers, group projects, required and optional readings, reflections, etc. Learning opportunities focus primarily on the individual candidate experience and therefore may include opportunities for feedback and revision, as well as some variation in assignments across tracks or learning modalities. Some programs may find that if there is an assignment that is helpful to candidates but does not meet all of the expectations of a key assessment, the assignment may continue to work well in its current form if it is instead designated as a learning opportunity.
NAEYC Higher Education Accreditation Standards	These are the standards used in the accreditation system to evaluate early childhood education degree programs. The standards describe expectations (both infrastructure as well as candidate outcomes) for professional preparation programs. The standards are created through a consensus process that calls for input from educators, candidates, practitioners, regulators and the general public (also see “Standards”).
Peer Review	A process for external evaluation of the quality of a program or institution using one's equals from the same profession to ensure that it meets accreditation Standards. The team conducting the review is called the Peer Review Team.

Peer Review Team	Conducts site visits to programs undergoing first-time and renewal accreditation. The Peer Review Team is typically comprised of two to three individuals who have expertise in the preparation of early childhood educators.
Probation	Status granted by an accreditation agency to an accredited program or institution that is determined to be in non-compliance with one or more standards, Accreditation Eligibility Requirements or accreditation policies. Probation is not an adverse accreditation action; however, adverse accreditation action (expiration of accreditation status) will be taken if a program or institution fails to come into compliance within the period specified by the agency.
Program	<p>A degree that has a cohesive and distinct set of degree completion requirements, with the full degree name (e.g. Associate of Applied Science in Early Childhood Education, Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood Education, etc.) shown consistently on the transcripts of its graduates, and the institution’s electronic and print publications. A program may choose to have an option, track, concentration, or similar designation implying specialization within the program (e.g. Associate of Applied Science in Early Childhood Education – Infant Toddler option, etc.) reviewed as a separate program. [Institutions that do not list concentrations/tracks or similar designations on transcripts should contact NAEYC staff to ensure the concentration/track within the program is eligible for accreditation.]</p> <p>Determination of whether an early childhood education program is a single early childhood education program offered at different sites or multiple early childhood education programs depends on several factors. NAEYC retains the right, in its sole judgment, to determine whether an early childhood education program is a single early childhood education program or must be accredited as separate programs. Factors used by NAEYC to determine a program’s status as a single entity are described below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The early childhood education program is within a single governing institution that is accredited through a regional or national accrediting agency recognized by CHEA and/or the U.S. Department of Education.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● There is a single Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) code for the early childhood education program offered by the governing institution.● There is one early childhood education program of study for each early childhood education program option offered by the governing institution.● There is a single set of policies governing all early childhood education candidates enrolled in the early childhood education program across all program sites.● All sites of the program are administered by a single early childhood administrator (Administrator) with the responsibility and authority for all early childhood education programs.● The Administrator has continuous, active, and personal responsibility and authority at all sites for the early childhood education program. The Administrator continually has adequate time and resources on a regular basis at all sites to administer the early childhood education program. The Administrator oversees early childhood education program matters such as, but not limited to, personnel matters, student matters, curricular matters, and resource matters.● All early childhood education program personnel at all sites report to the early childhood education administrator.● There is one group of faculty members for the early childhood education program who continually function as a faculty of the whole on a regular basis within a set of established faculty policies through their institution and decision-making processes and continually have input into the curriculum development, delivery, and evaluation.● All required early childhood courses offered in each early childhood program are the same in terms of the name and number of the course as well as the content within the courses.● There is a consistent set of learning opportunities aligned to the Professional Standards and Competencies (included in the Learning Opportunities Chart of the Self-Study Report) across the core courses in the program, regardless of the sections of a course, the sites where the courses are taught and the program delivery mode (e.g. face-to-face, online, etc.). However, the sections of courses and different sites may offer learning opportunities in addition to these.● All sites of the program use the same six Key assessments that are being submitted as evidence for meeting Standards D and E of the
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	<p>higher education accreditation standards. Any alterations by the program to the Key assessments cannot be related to sections of the candidate instructions or rubrics that address alignment to the Standards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All sites of the program share the same field experience requirements in terms of the number of hours and types of field experiences offered across programs. Field experiences across all sites are tracked in a single system and follow the same policies regarding expectations for candidates during the field experiences, expectations and training for supervising mentors/teachers, and all other relevant orientation materials for candidates and the field settings. ● A single degree is awarded from the same governing institution to candidates who successfully complete the early childhood education program. ● There is one set of end-of program candidate learning outcomes and program outcomes utilized for the early childhood education program offered by the governing institution. ● There is a systematic plan of evaluation in place that addresses the end-of program candidate learning outcomes and program outcomes for the early childhood education program offered by the governing institution.
Public Member	A member of an accreditation agency who is appointed from the public at large to represent the public interest. This person is not employed in the early childhood education profession.
Recommendations	Suggested improvements included in the Accreditation Decision Report to be considered in the program’s ongoing improvement plans.
Response to Conditions	This is the evidence that an accredited with conditions program provides (via a NAEYC template) to demonstrate meeting its conditions.
Rubric	A rubric is an evaluation tool used to assess student learning. A rubric identifies distinct levels of candidate performance and describes specific qualities that can be observed at each of those performance levels. For purposes of NAEYC accreditation, the rubric is part of each Key Assessment that a program submits in its Self-Study Report.

Self-Study Report	A document prepared by a program as part of the comprehensive review process. This document describes the program; discusses how it meets the standards; analyzes its strengths, weaknesses, and challenges; and sets forth the program’s plans and goals for future development and continued compliance with the standards.
Specialized Accreditor	An agency that accredits post-secondary professional and occupational-education programs or schools, such as medical schools, engineering schools, educator preparation programs and health-profession programs.
Standards	Accreditation standards establish minimum levels of program quality on which evaluations and accreditation decisions must be based.
Students	See “candidates.”
Substantive Change	Significant modification, expansion or contraction in the nature or scope of an accredited program or institution, including mission, organization, curricular delivery, enrollment, leadership, etc.
Young Children	Refers to children in the developmental period known as early childhood. Although developmental periods do not rigidly correspond to chronological age, early childhood is generally defined as including all children from birth through age 8.

Appendix B: ASPA Code of Good Practice

The ASPA Code of Good Practice provides guiding principles for members in conducting the accreditation process. An accrediting organization holding membership in the Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors:

1. Promotes quality in education through accreditation processes that:

- a. Focus on student learning informed by programmatic and institutional missions and goals.
- b. Evaluate educational quality in an unbiased manner.
- c. Encourage programs and institutions to provide pertinent, clear and accessible public information about student achievement.
- d. Encourage diversity, equity, and inclusion.

2. Conducts accreditation processes with integrity and professionalism that:

- a. Maintain autonomy in governance and operations through appropriate relationships, practices and avoidance of conflict of interest.
- b. Implement policies and procedures to ensure fair and consistent application of standards and decision making that includes due process, confidentiality, and expedient response to appeals and complaints.
- c. Develop, review and revise standards and accreditation procedures on a regular basis with the participation of communities of interest.
- d. Maintain sufficient financial, personnel, and other resources for effective operations, while ensuring efficient accreditation processes for programs and institutions.
- e. Cooperate with other agencies whenever possible to avoid conflicting standards and to minimize duplication of effort by programs and institutions.
- f. Provide evaluations to assist programs and institutions in developing their own approaches and solutions, making a clear distinction between accreditation requirements and recommendations for improvement.
- g. Provide accurate, clear, accessible, and timely information to communities of interest about accreditation: standards, procedures and status of programs and institutions.
- h. Maintain an effective training and professional development program for all accreditation staff and volunteers.
- i. Ensure that decision-makers and evaluators have the appropriate expertise, experience, and training for each review.
- j. Include periodic evaluations of the accreditation process that incorporate input from accredited programs and institutions.
- k. Encourage diversity, equity, and inclusion.

3. Recognizes institutional independence and academic freedom through accrediting activities that:

- a. Encourage institutional freedom to make academic decisions while fulfilling the commitment to the accreditation requirements.
- b. Respect the rights of programs and institutions to determine and implement missions and goals.

- c. Encourage innovation, and thoughtful change that meets the needs of the profession, students and the communities served.
- d. Encourage programs and institutions to provide clear and accessible public information about their approaches to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Original March 1995, revised April 2013, April 2017, March 2020, March 2023

Appendix C: Conflict of Interest, Confidentiality, Code of Conduct and Intellectual Property

The integrity of the NAEYC Early Childhood Higher Education Accreditation system depends in part upon the conduct of the peer reviewers who conduct site visits and the Commissioners who make accreditation decisions. In signing this agreement, peer reviewers and Commissioners agree to avoid conflicts of interest and preserve confidentiality as part of our responsibility to the colleges and public that we serve. Peer reviewers and Commissioners are expected to read, understand, and agree to adhere to all the policies set forth in this document.

A. Conflicts of Interest

Peer reviewers and Commissioners agree to conduct themselves in a manner which seeks to avoid a conflict of interest or any appearance of a conflict of interest. Peer reviewer and Commissioner conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to: residing or working in the same state as the institution under review; being a current or pending employee, student or consultant to the institution under review; being a former employee, student or consultant to the institution under review (within the past 10 years); having family members at the institution under review; having a personal relationship with the faculty at the program under review; or having applied for a position at the program under review. Commissioner conflicts of interest may also include serving on the review team for the program under review.

If a Peer Reviewer or Commissioner is uncertain about whether a conflict of interest exists, the individual will describe in the situation in writing to staff. Staff, on behalf of the Commission, will review the written statement, and issue a ruling as to whether the matter in question creates a real or perceived conflict of interest.

B. Confidentiality

Peer reviewers and Commissioners agree to keep confidential any and all information from or about the program they are asked to review. They will not share information obtained through documents, interviews, or discussions related to the peer review site visit or accreditation decision. All the content of discussions, interpretations and analyses will be kept confidential. Peer reviewers and Commissioners will not discuss specific information about the program reviewed or the institution visited with anyone other than team members and staff. They will not keep or share documents obtained during the review process. Notes made about the program before, during or after the visit will only be kept for the purpose of clarifying the Peer Review Report or the Commission Decision Report. All hardcopy or electronic notes and correspondence must be destroyed/deleted after the report is complete.

C. Code of Conduct

NAEYC Commission on Early Childhood Higher Education Accreditation policy incorporates best practices as described by the U.S. Department of Education Recognition Criteria, the Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), and the Association of Specialized & Professional Accreditors (ASPA). Peer reviewers and Commissioners agree to abide by standards of personal conduct that help the team conduct a well informed and competent review. Peer Reviewers and Commissioners do this by participating in training, preparing for site visits or Commission meetings, reviewing all report materials, assessing information critically and fairly, and conducting themselves in a professional, objective, fair manner at all times.

Peer reviewers and Commissioners may not:

- solicit consultation arrangements with institutions preparing for accreditation visits;
- advertise their status as Commissioners or Peer Reviewers for the purpose of building a consulting clientele;
- accept a consulting arrangement at an institution for which the member served as a Peer Reviewer or on the Commission for at least two years following the accreditation decision;
- claim or imply representation of NAEYC or the Commission on Early Childhood Higher Education Accreditation in any private consulting or training business. All accreditation consultation and training is arranged through the national office. Any fees or honoraria are paid to NAEYC. Any accreditation consultants or trainers are trained and assigned by the national office.

Peer Reviewers and Commissioners agree to keep their focus within the scope of published NAEYC higher education accreditation standards.

Peer Reviewers and Commissioners will not allow any personal preferences or biases to impact the program review. Each program will be considered in its own context.

Peer Reviewers will not request or accept any compensation whatsoever or any gifts of substance from the institution being reviewed or anyone affiliated with the institution. (Gifts of substance would include briefcases, tickets to athletic or entertainment events. . .)

- If the giving of small tokens is important to an institution's culture, Peer Reviewers may accept these tokens from the institution. (Tokens might include, for example, coffee mugs, key chains, t-shirts, etc.)
- If unsure, the Peer Reviewer should err on the side of declining gifts of any kind.

Peer Reviewers will not expect elaborate hospitality during site visits. Institutions are not expected to arrange for dinner for teams, except for the Sunday night dinner with institutional representatives. It is appropriate for institutions to provide snacks and non-alcoholic beverages for teams as they conduct their work on campus and at their hotel. Where options for meals are limited, the peer reviewer team chair shall make arrangements in advance with the institution for team meals. Peer Reviewers shall abide by the guidelines set forth in the Travel Reimbursement Policy.

Peer Reviewers will not state any opinion or make any prediction concerning action by the Commission that may result from the site visit to the institution.

D. Violations of the Conflict of Interest, Confidentiality and Code of Conduct Agreement

Alleged violations of the Conflict of Interest, Confidentiality and Code of Conduct Agreement shall immediately be brought to the attention of the Commission, which shall investigate the alleged violation and accept a written or verbal statement from the peer reviewer or Commissioner involved. If the Commission determines that the individual has violated the Conflict of Interest, Confidentiality and Code of Conduct Agreement, it may sanction the offending individual through a verbal or written reprimand or prohibit that individual from being a member of any Peer Review Team or Commission in the future.

Appendix D: Summary of NAEYC’s Higher Education Accreditation Standards

These standards were published in 2021 through the leadership of the Commission as well as the Accreditation Standards Workgroup. Programs are strongly encouraged to read the full standards which includes indicators and sub-indicators for each standard, guidance to clarify expectations for responding to each standard and examples of evidence that programs can submit to demonstrate meeting each standard.

Standard A: Program Identity, Candidates, Organization, and Resources The program demonstrates a clear sense of identity and purpose that reflects the institution’s mission and is responsive to the needs of the ECE community(ies) for which it is preparing early childhood educators. The program is organized and resourced in a way to effectively prepare candidates in the *Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators* and to meet its program objectives.

Standard B: Faculty Characteristics and Quality, Professional Responsibilities, and Professional Development Faculty are qualified to teach in the program, have appropriate professional responsibilities, and have access to professional development so that the program can effectively prepare candidates in the *Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators* and achieve its program objectives.

Standard C: Program Design and Evaluation The program of study is designed to support candidates’ proficiency in the *Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators* and to achieve the program’s objectives. The program regularly evaluates—and makes public—its effectiveness and fulfillment of its mission and program objectives. The program makes changes based on feedback from faculty, candidates, and community stakeholders.

Standard D: Developing Candidate Proficiency in the Professional Standards and Competencies The curriculum provides a variety of opportunities to learn, practice, and become proficient in the *Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators*.

Standard E: Ensuring Candidate Proficiency in the Professional Standards and Competencies The program can demonstrate that by the time of completion, candidates are proficient in the *Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators*. The program also uses candidate performance data to inform improvements to teaching and learning in relation to the Professional Standards and Competencies.

Standard F: Field Experience Quality The program develops competent early childhood educators by including high-quality field experiences that support candidates’ proficiency in the *Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators* and that provide multiple opportunities for candidates to observe and practice with young children.

Appendix E: Summary of the Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators

STANDARD 1 Child Development and Learning in Context Early childhood educators (a) are grounded in an understanding of the developmental period of early childhood from birth through age 8 across developmental domains. They (b) understand each child as an individual with unique developmental variations. Early childhood educators (c) understand that children learn and develop within relationships and within multiple contexts, including families, cultures, languages, communities, and society. They (d) use this multidimensional knowledge to make evidence-based decisions about how to carry out their responsibilities.

STANDARD 2 Family–Teacher Partnerships and Community Connections Early childhood educators understand that successful early childhood education depends upon educators’ partnerships with the families of the young children they serve. They (a) know about, understand, and value the diversity in family characteristics. Early childhood educators (b) use this understanding to create respectful, responsive, reciprocal relationships with families and to engage with them as partners in their young children’s development and learning. They (c) use community resources to support young children’s learning and development and to support children’s families, and they build connections between early learning settings, schools, and community organizations and agencies.

STANDARD 3 Child Observation, Documentation, and Assessment Early childhood educators (a) understand that the primary purpose of assessments is to inform instruction and planning in early learning settings. They (b) know how to use observation, documentation, and other appropriate assessment approaches and tools. Early childhood educators (c) use screening and assessment tools in ways that are ethically grounded and developmentally, culturally, ability, and linguistically appropriate to document developmental progress and promote positive outcomes for each child. In partnership with families and professional colleagues, early childhood educators (d) use assessments to document individual children’s progress and, based on the findings, to plan learning experiences.

STANDARD 4 Developmentally, Culturally, and Linguistically Appropriate Teaching Practices Early childhood educators understand that teaching and learning with young children is a complex enterprise, and its details vary depending on children’s ages and characteristics and on the settings in which teaching and learning occur. They (a) understand and demonstrate positive, caring, supportive relationships and interactions as the foundation for their work with young children. They (b) understand and use teaching skills that are responsive to the learning trajectories of young children and to the needs of each child. Early childhood educators (c) use a broad repertoire of developmentally appropriate and culturally and linguistically relevant, anti-bias, and evidence-based teaching approaches that reflect the principles of universal design for learning.

STANDARD 5 Knowledge, Application, and Integration of Academic Content in the Early Childhood Curriculum Early childhood educators have knowledge of the content of the academic disciplines (e.g., language and literacy, the arts, mathematics, social studies, science, technology and engineering, physical education) and of the pedagogical methods for teaching each discipline. They (a) understand the central concepts, the methods and tools of inquiry, and the structures in each academic discipline. Educators (b) understand pedagogy, including how young children learn and process information in each discipline, the learning trajectories for each discipline, and how teachers use this knowledge to inform their practice

They (c) apply this knowledge using early learning standards and other resources to make decisions about spontaneous and planned learning experiences and about curriculum development, implementation, and evaluation to ensure that learning will be stimulating, challenging, and meaningful to each child.

STANDARD 6 Professionalism as an Early Childhood Educator Early childhood educators (a) identify and participate as members of the early childhood profession. They serve as informed advocates for young children, for the families of the children in their care, and for the early childhood profession. They (b) know and use ethical guidelines and other early childhood professional guidelines. They (c) have professional communication skills that effectively support their relationships and work young children, families, and colleagues. Early childhood educators (d) are continuous, collaborative learners who (e) develop and sustain the habit of reflective and intentional practice in their daily work with young children and as members of the early childhood profession.

Appendix F: Peer Reviewer Policies

Eligibility to Serve as a Peer Reviewer

Peer reviewers are faculty and administrators who currently serve - or have previously served- in early childhood programs in institutions of higher education. Professionals who serve in other areas of the early childhood profession and are engaged in higher education, such as through serving as a mentor teacher/supervisor to candidates, may be eligible to serve as peer reviewers. All peer reviewers must have at least a master's degree in early childhood education or a related field.

Application to Serve as a Peer Reviewer

Peer reviewers submit an application that documents their educational background and professional experience in early childhood educator preparation. A reference check is conducted as part of the application. A copy of the application can be found on the NAEYC website.

Peer Reviewer Training

Applicants who meet the qualifications (as set by the Commission) for serving as a peer reviewer participate in a three-part training. The first part of the training takes place virtually. It provides an overview to the site visit process and training modules simulate various aspects of the site visit from making travel preparations to reviewing Self-Study Reports and identifying alignment of programs' key assessments to the accreditation standards. Those who complete the virtual training are then assigned to be a virtual observer of a site visit when one becomes available. They will be assigned to a space in the online platform to observe how a site visit team prepares for a site visit and watch the team's deliberations during and after the site visit. After observing a site visit, the final part of the training will be conducting a first site visit as part of a peer review team. Through peer reviewers' self-evaluations, team members' evaluations and program coordinators' evaluations, staff will identify if there are areas of development that need to be addressed prior to the new peer reviewer serving on another team. This may require the peer reviewer to participate in virtual training activities. In cases where the peer reviewer does not address the areas for development, he/she is no longer eligible to be part of the peer reviewer pool.

All peer reviewers assigned to a site visit are expected to participate in NAEYC's virtual peer reviewer training activities that semester to ensure they are current on accreditation policies and Commission expectations.

Peer reviewers adhere to policies laid out in the confidentiality and conflict of interest forms they sign (see Appendix B for a copy of the forms). Peer reviewers are responsible for following accreditation policies and procedures when preparing for and conducting site visits.