



# 2021 ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE HANDBOOK

Second Edition



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contacts.....	1
Table of Contents.....	2
AVC Mission.....	3
Accreditation Committee’s Role.....	3
Accreditation Mission.....	3
Accreditation Process.....	3
ACCJC Reports.....	4
Timeline for Writing the 2023 Institutional Self-Evaluation Report.....	5
The Four Accreditation Standards.....	6-7
Accreditation Committee Structure.....	7
Roles and Responsibilities:	
Accreditation Liaison Officer.....	8
Faculty Accreditation Co-ordinator.....	8-9
Dean of Institutional Effectiveness, Research, and Planning.....	9
Standard Leaders.....	9
Standard Team Members.....	9
Process for Selection of Leaders and Team Members.....	10
The Process: Writing the Report.....	11
Tips for Writing the Report.....	12
Basic Template for Writing to the Standard.....	13-16
Resources.....	17

**Antelope Valley College Mission:**

*Antelope Valley College, a public institution of higher education, provides a quality, comprehensive education to a diverse population of learners. We are committed to student success offering value and opportunity, in service to our community.*

**The Accreditation Committee’s Role:**

According to the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior College (ACCJC), “The designated committee is responsible for organizing and coordinating the self-evaluation process and for ensuring that appropriate progress is made. In addition, it is an important role of the committee to ensure that evidence is shared within the institution and that relevant internal stakeholders, who have knowledge of data and who can contribute to the analysis of data and evidence, are involved in the process as appropriate” (p. 10, sec 2.2, [Guide to Institutional Self-Evaluation, Improvement, and Peer Review](#)).

**Accreditation Committee Mission:**

The Accreditation Committee has college-wide representation and oversees the self-evaluation process. Its membership includes faculty, staff, as well as students, some of whom have specialized knowledge relevant to the areas of the Institutional Self-Study Report (ISER) and can serve as Standard Team Leaders e.g. CEO, VPAA, VPSS, ALO, and FAC. The committee and Standard Teams collaborate with campus constituents as needed to address the Standards and gather related evidence demonstrating how ongoing self-assessment, planning, and continuous improvement are reflected and sustained in institutional practices.

**Accreditation Process and Antelope Valley College (AVC):**

As a member of ACCJC, AVC is required to undergo a comprehensive review for reaffirmation of its accreditation every seven years in order to determine whether the college is continuing to meet the established Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, including the federal requirements, and Commission policies, and engaging in sustainable efforts to improve educational quality and institutional effectiveness. As can be seen in the figure below, this review process involves an internal self-evaluation presented in the ISER, an external evaluation by a peer review team, a review and accreditation action by the Commission, and an institutional response to recommendations for improvement (p. 4-5, sec 1.2, [Guide to Institutional Self-Evaluation, Improvement, and Peer Review](#)).



## ACCJC Reports

The ISER, which is submitted to ACCJC every seven years, is a reflection on how well the college is meeting its mission and goals, as well as its strengths and weaknesses as they relate to accreditation requirements. This report serves to

- assure the public that the education provided by colleges meets acceptable levels of quality.
- provide the Peer Review Team and ACCJC with information and evidence of meeting the Accreditation Standards.
- demonstrate that the college assures and continuously improves its quality and effectiveness.
- promote continuous improvement beyond meeting the Accreditation Standards.
- maintain higher education quality in the region and the U.S.

In addition to providing evidence of how the college is addressing the [Accreditation Standards](#), the self-evaluation process helps to identify areas at the college that need improvement and include them in the ISER under the actionable improvement plans & the Quality Focus Essay (QFE). In the QFE, The College is asked to discuss two or three projects it has identified for improving student learning and/or student achievement.

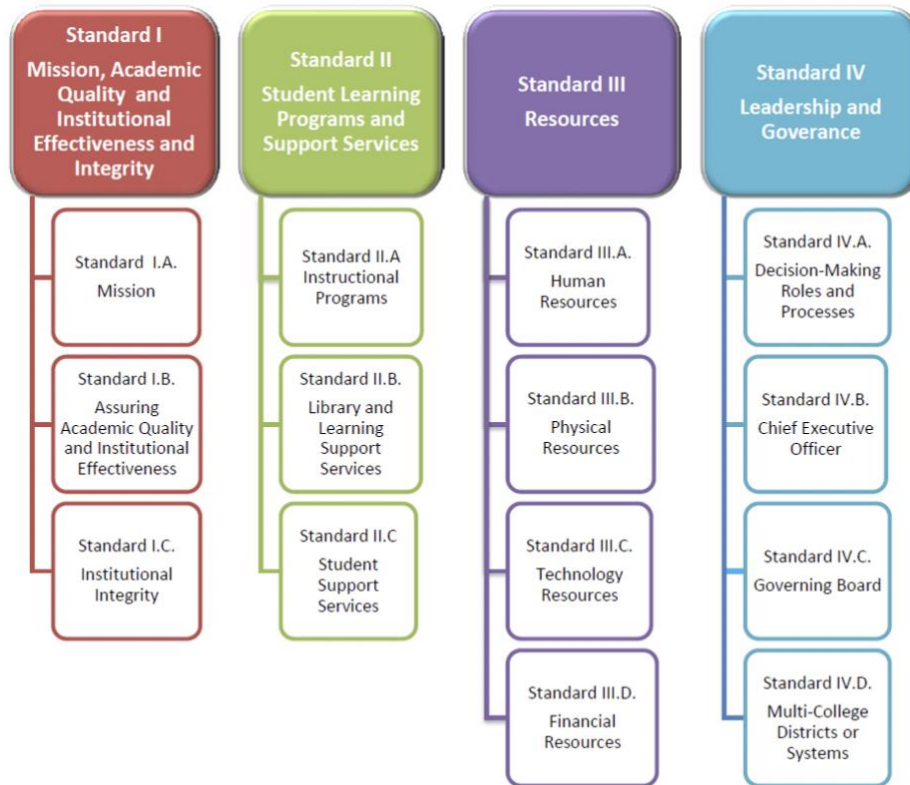
After this self-evaluation, the Peer Review Team typically provides recommendations for improvement for the college to consider and address. In addition, halfway through the accreditation cycle, the college submits a Mid-term report that updates the ACCJC on progress with these recommendations for improvement, on any actionable improvement plans, and with the QFE projects.

## Timeline for Writing Reports

- **Self-evaluation begins two years prior to due date**
  - Begin work January 2021
  - Finalize ISER draft December 2022
  - Informational Item to Board of Trustees November 2022
  - Two-week window for open comments from campus
  - Approval from Board of Trustees December 2022
  - Submit to ACCJC January 2023 for Formative Feedback
  - Peer Review Team provides Formative Feedback in the form of Core Inquiries
  - Focused Site Visit in October 2023 (Summative Feedback)
  - Peer Review Team Report
  - Commission Action
  
- **As needed, the Follow-Up Report begins immediately upon receipt of recommendation letter from ACCJC (usually in January or February of year following submission of ISER)**
  - Assemble team and begin work winter / spring 2024
  - Finalize draft spring 2025
  - Informational Item to Board of Trustees June 2025
  - Approval from Board of Trustees July 2025
  - Send to ACCJC August 2025
  
- **Mid-Term Report begins one year prior to due date**
  - Begin work fall 2026
  - Finalize draft April 2027
  - Informational Item to Board of Trustees June 2027
  - Approval from Board of Trustees July 2027
  - Send to ACCJC August 2027
  
- **Other reports as required, such as**
  - Any additional Follow-Up reports
  - Any Substantive Change reports

## The Four Accreditation Standards

The ACCJC Standards should be read by the Accreditation Committee and others involved with the accreditation process. They are available on the ACCJC's website: [Accreditation Standards](#), Adopted June 2014. The four Standards are as follows:



### **Standard I: Mission, Academic Quality and Institutional Effectiveness, and Integrity**

Emphasis on student learning and achievement documented through the use of qualitative and quantitative data. Systematic planning, implementation, and evaluation are done to improve the quality of educational services in an ethical environment.

### **Standard II: Student Learning Programs and Support Services**

Instructional programs and learning support programs comply with higher education standards. Degree programs provide depth and breadth of knowledge. Program quality is regularly assessed and improved.

### **Standard III: Resources**

Human, technological, financial, and physical resources support academic quality and institutional effectiveness.

### **Standard IV: Leadership and Governance**

Leadership and governance serve to promote student success and fiscal stability, to include the CEO and board of trustees.

There are four Standards that work together to define and promote student success, academic quality, institutional integrity, and excellence. The mission provides a framework for all institutional goals and activities. The institution provides the means for students to learn and achieve their goals, assesses how well learning is occurring, and strives to improve learning and achievement through ongoing, systematic, and integrated evaluation and planning (Standard I). Student learning programs and support services make possible the academic quality that supports student success (Standard II). Human, physical, technology, and financial resources enable these programs and services to function and improve (Standard III). Ethical and effective leadership throughout the organization guides the accomplishment of the mission and supports institutional effectiveness and improvement (Standard IV). Integrating the elements of the Standards gives institutions the means to develop a comprehensive assessment of academic quality, institutional integrity and effectiveness, and a path to continuous improvement.

### **AVC's Accreditation Committee Structure**

(AP 3200)

Two Principles for Committee Structure:

1. To make the report writing and evidence collection process for the 2023 Self-Study an efficient process that involves and utilizes the expertise and knowledge of the internal college community in direct alignment with the specific Standards.
2. To reflect the revisions in structure and content of the ACCJC Standards (adopted June 2014).

Each Standard has a team. These teams are led by 2-3 people and team members that include administrators, faculty, staff, and students serve to help write to the Standards. These team members help gather evidence, write, etc., as needed by the team.



### **Roles and Responsibilities**

The Accreditation Liaison Officer assists the CEO in addressing accreditation issues and serves as Co-Chair of the Accreditation Committee (see section 2.2, page 9 of the [Guide to Institutional Self-Evaluation, Improvement, and Peer Review](#)):

#### **The ALO is responsible for:**

- Staying knowledgeable about accreditation, including the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies;
- Promoting an understanding of accreditation requirements, quality assurance, and institutional effectiveness among constituencies at the college;
- Communicate information about accreditation and institution quality that is available from the ACCJC, including letters sent to the institution and materials posted to the ACCJC website;
- Serve as the key resource person in planning the institutional self-evaluation process;
- Manage procedures to assure the institution maintains the comprehensive collection of institutional files containing Commission information including institutional reports, previous external evaluation reports, and Commission action letters;
- Prepare the institution for an external evaluation team site visit in collaboration with the Team Chair and the team assistant;
- Maintain regular communication with the CEO and the college on accreditation matters;
- Facilitate timely reports to the Commission, including Annual Reports and Substantive Change Proposals;
- Attend ALO training; and
- In multi-college districts or systems, communicate with appropriate district// system staff and ALOs at other campuses to engage in system-wide quality improvement to coordinate reports to the Commission and evaluation team site visits.

#### **Faculty Accreditation Co-ordinator:**

The FAC serves as Co-Chair of the Accreditation Committee and Co-ordinator of the ISER, and is responsible for:

- Attend ACCJC Accreditation Training;
- Attend the statewide Academic Senate Accreditation Institute;
- Establish and coordinate subcommittees that contribute to the self-study;
- Provide campus training on the purpose, Standards, and documentation requirements;
- Assist in the collection of evidence;
- Recruit members from campus community, as well as local community to participate in the self-study;
- Provide support to the Standard teams;
- Oversee the writing of the final draft of the self-study;
- With the ALO, write the introduction to the self-study and the conclusions to each section, as needed;
- Present updates either via memo, newsletter, and forums on the progress of the self-study and any follow-up reports;
- Update the Academic Senate at least twice per semester regarding progress with accreditation;

- With the ALO, review the final self-study report before it goes to the Board of Trustees;
- Obtain sufficient required reassign time, according to local governance and contractual agreements;
- Collaborate and coordinate with chairs of other senate committees on matters pertaining to the accreditation reports;
- Collaborate with stakeholders on self-study improvement plans;
- Coordinate and oversee the writing and documentation of follow-up and mid-term reports;
- Present updates and information on accreditation issues relevant to the campus at Opening Day, at Flex events, or other forums.

**Dean of Institutional Effectiveness, Research, and Planning:**

The IERP Dean and staff are critical resources for accreditation reports and will:

- Provide data support, as needed by Standard teams to use as evidence in reports;
- Advise on reports and accreditation matters.

**Standard Team Leaders:**

There are four (4-8) Team Leaders for the main Standards (I, II, III, and IV). Specifically, the Team Leader will:

- Keep the Standard team organized, set up meetings, and maintain deadlines;
- Review the report drafts they receive;
- Send drafts to the team for review and input;
- Request more evidence as needed;
- May collaborate to write and revise sections as needed;
- Forward drafts to the FAC and ALO and effectively communicate with them regarding deadlines, revisions, and evidence;
- Overall, work with entire team to ensure sufficient progress is made towards completion of the report.

**Standard Team Members:**

Each lettered Standard or sub-section (i.e., Standard 1A, 1B, and 1C) will have 1-2 Team Members in charge of writing the section.

- Write a first draft using the available evidence;
- Ask meaningful questions to promote reflection and discussion regarding whether the college is meeting the Standard;
- Send drafts to the Team Leader for reviews, revisions, and feedback, and work on revisions as needed;
- When the Team Member finds that a Standard is outside their immediate area of knowledge and expertise, the Team Member or the Team Leader will contact the appropriate person on campus who has the knowledge;
- Adhere to deadlines for drafts;
- Overall, work with entire team to ensure sufficient progress is made towards completion of report.

### **Procedure for the Selection of Team Leaders & Team Members**

- Accreditation is a college-wide activity. Participation from representatives of the entire campus is the goal. Faculty from various divisions, administrators from different departments, classified staff, and students are encouraged to participate.
- This work also includes the participation of the presidents of the Academic Senate and the Associated Student Body, the presidents of the faculty and classified unions, a board member, and a community member..
- The ALO and FAC, as well as Team Leaders will put out college-wide calls for participants as needed. All members of the campus community are invited to participate.
- The FAC will maintain a list of interested individuals and review the list with the ALO.
- Participants will be placed on teams based upon their areas of interest and expertise, while maintaining a broad array of interests and expertise in each Standard.
- The FAC will notify the Academic Senate of faculty appointments.
- Conditions for removal may include non-participation.

### **The Process: Investigating and Writing the Reports**

Accreditation reports are the work of many people working together. Good communication skills are the key to a successful experience for all parties. When everyone involved maintains a positive attitude with the goal of helping each other, adhering to deadlines, and communicating frequently, accreditation not only gets done effectively but can be a rewarding accomplishment for all involved.

Generally, teams should follow these steps:

- Meet with your team initially and set up timelines for drafts.
- Assess what is known, what is not known, and what you might know about how the area is addressing each Standard.
- Draft an outline.
- The initial writing comes from the team member who has the expertise and knowledge to describe the work that adheres to the Standard. They also have access to the documents that will serve as evidence.
- If the Standard addresses issues outside of your area of expertise, contact people who have the knowledge. They may not even be on the Standard Team, but they have the expertise in your Standard area to provide content. Notify them that you will need an initial draft by a certain date. Be realistic about deadlines.
- Once a draft starts to take form, the Team Members should review it and make comments and give feedback. It is important for Team Members to ask questions and add information if they have them. This could be in terms of form, order of points, moving paragraphs, adding information, asking questions about things that don't make sense, asking for evidence for a claim, etc. Work continuously towards accuracy, clarification, and evidence.
- Evidence should be collected during the drafting process. Ask yourselves "If I make a claim, what documents will support that?" This is crucial.
- The Team Leader will organize the draft of their Standard and send it to the FAC and ALO.

Accreditation reports are written in a technical style that emphasizes a concise and direct voice. Review past reports to give yourself a sense of the content of your Standard as well as the style of writing. The reports must be truthful, positive, and transparent. Never should anything be written that is untrue or that is not supported by documented evidence.

The focus of the ISER is to show the ACCJC the many wonderful things that AVC employees do to make the college a great place for students to learn and be successful. It is also to demonstrate that when there is an area in need of improvement, we recognize it, put it through the appropriate college groups for discussion, decision-making, and implementation. Then, we continue to evaluate to assess progress. The importance of following this continuous improvement cycle cannot be overstated.

Ultimately, the FAC and ALO will unify the voice of all the drafts into one report. Standard Teams should expect to hear from the FAC and ALO asking for further information, clarifications, and evidence. This is a normal part of the process. We are all in this together to produce a report that reflects all that the college is accomplishing in meeting its mission, as well as identify and plan for any areas needing improvement.

### Tips for Writing Reports

- Do not use people's names or personal pronouns. Use their titles only.
- Put numbers in a table, not a paragraph. This is easier to read and understand. Often "less is more."
- Do not overwrite. It is not necessary to dig deep into the past and relay the historical details of conversations. A brief summary of decision-making that matches up with minutes is best. A logical reasoning for a decision is important, but it should be concise and to the point.
- Avoid excessive self-congratulations. Be detailed, objective, concise, and to the point. Let the ACCJC tell us how great we are. The evidence should speak for itself. It is OK to say something like, "The college has worked diligently to improve its budget approval process." We don't need to say, "The college is proud to say that it now has an outstanding budget approval process."
- Be careful with jargon. We are all in the field of education. But we are not all in the field of finance, or facilities, or information technology. Assume a level of knowledge that is common to the audience of community college professionals, but not necessarily specifics of a narrower field.
- Use acronyms. When you refer to something the first time, write the whole name and then follow with the acronym and use it forever more in the document. Example: Student learning outcomes (SLOs) are assessed every semester.
- Do not lodge complaints in the accreditation reports. The ACCJC understands that there have been budget cuts, that full time faculty hires are behind, etc. The reports are not the appropriate forum to complain about these types of issues. Nor is it appropriate to complain about the college itself, a particular department, etc.
- Note when a problem has been detected and what has been done or is being done to fix it. This is a crucial aspect of accreditation: continuous quality improvement. The ACCJC does not expect us to operate with perfection at all times. They *do* expect us to reflect on our processes, address problems as they are identified, and assess if the interventions are successful. This is critical to our success in accreditation. Do we recognize problems or do we ignore them? Do we have an effective process for discussing them? Do we make decisions to address them? Do we implement those decisions? Once the decision is implemented, do we have a process for evaluating its effectiveness? Are all of these aspects documented?
- Whenever possible, connect what's written to student learning and achievement and how the college mission is being addressed.

## **Basic Template for Writing to the Standards**

Generally, each response to Standard sections should follow this pattern. For more information on writing to the Standards, please see the ACCJC's [Guide to Institutional Self-Evaluation, Improvement, and Peer Review](#), August 2021 edition, section 3.1-3.6, pages 12-20 and pages 29-86.

**1. General overview statement** / short paragraph giving general information and setting up for the details.

**2. Findings with Evidence of Meeting the Standard**

- This is where we “tell our story.” Be factual and descriptive.
- Give descriptions with examples that convey that we are meeting the Standard.
- Everything stated must be backed up with documented evidence. For example, we cannot just say “the department feels it has improved how it delivers its services” but instead say “Based on annual surveys of students who use this service, satisfaction has improved by 5% over a period of three years” [survey results as evidence].
- Inserting tables and graphs in the document is useful for the visiting team as the presented evidence can be seen at a glance.
- Findings may include an issue that was discussed, the solution determined and implemented, and the evaluation of the implementation.

**3. Analysis and Evaluation - Conclusions**

- Based on the facts and evidence provided: Is the college meeting the Standard and to what degree? What conclusions are drawn from the evidence for this Standard? What actionable decisions are being made or were made? Have we improved, are we improving, or are we lagging in this Standard? What is being done if we are not meeting the Standard?

**4. Self-Identified Improvement Plans / Quality Focus Essay**

- Improvement Plans (specific areas for improvement to either increase effectiveness or better align with the Standards), as well as Quality Focus Essays (two or three innovative projects the college will implement over multiple years to improve student learning and/or achievement) are required for the self-study.
- When Standard Teams identify an area for improvement, an intervention that will not be done in time for the final report or

something that needs continual follow-up, it will be incorporated into either the Improvement Plans or QFE.

- It is very important – though this may seem obvious – that Improvement Plans actually get done. Their completion and results will be reported three years later in the Mid-term Report. Improvement Plans should be written, reviewed, and approved by those who are responsible for implementing them. A team of people should be assigned to assuring the Improvement Plan is carried out and fully accounted for in the Mid-term Report when that information is requested.

**General Expectations (e.g. Length, Formatting, Style):**

The length of the ISER will depend somewhat on the institution, but generally the final document should be limited to 250 pages, excluding evidence. Suggested lengths for the institutional analysis of the Standards are provided below:

<b>Standard I: Mission, Academic Quality and Institutional Effectiveness, and Integrity</b>	
A. Mission (4 Standards)	6
B. Assuring Academic Quality and Institutional Effectiveness (9 Standards)	17
C. Institutional Integrity (14 Standards)	10
<b>Standard II: Student Learning Programs and Support Services</b>	
A. Instructional Programs (16 Standards)	17
B. Library and Learning Support Services (4 Standards)	6
C. Student Support Services (8 Standards)	10
<b>Standard III: Resources</b>	
A. Human Resources (15 Standards)	10
B. Physical Resources (4 Standards)	6
C. Technology Resources (5 Standards)	7
D. Financial Resources (16 Standards)	16
<b>Standard IV: Leadership and Governance</b>	
A. Decision-Making Roles and Processes (7 Standards)	10
B. Chief Executive Officer (6 Standards)	5
C. Governing Board (13 Standards)	10
D. Multi-College Districts or Systems (7 Standards)	10
<b>Total pages for Analysis of Standards</b>	<b>140</b>

**Suggested Formatting and Style Sheet** (From the Guide, pages 91-92):

In Document	Formatting and Style
<b>Titles</b>	Times New Roman, 14 pt., bold
<b>Subheadings</b>	Times New Roman, 12 pt., bold
Body text	Times New Roman, 12 pt., Left Justified
Page numbers	Place in footer, either in bottom right or center
Margins	1" left; 1" right; 1" top; 1" bottom
• Bullets	Circle bullet, Times New Roman, 12 pt.
<u>Underline</u>	Use single line only. Do not use excessively.
<i>Italics</i>	Use italic font to emphasize, not bold font.
Acronyms	Spell out the names of groups on the first reference, followed by the acronym, e.g., the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC). The acronym for U.S. Department of Education is ED (not E.D.)The acronym may be used alone on second reference.
Numbers	Spell out numbers one through and including ten; use numbers for larger numbers. A number that begins a sentence should be spelled out. Credit hours should be expressed as numerals.
Abbreviations	Spell out state names in text; abbreviate them only in addresses, lists, etc. Spell out "and" instead of the symbol "&" unless it is part of an official company name.
Commas	When a conjunction joins the last two elements in a series, use a comma before the conjunction (e.g., board, administrators, faculty, staff, and students). Commas always go inside quotation marks. Do not use excessively.
Colons	Colons go outside quotation marks unless they are part of the quotation itself.
Percentages	Spell out "percent." Use the symbol (%) only in scientific, technical, or statistical copy.
Latin terms	Do not underline or italicize.
a.m./p.m.	Express as "a.m." and "p.m." with periods and lowercase.



In Document	Formatting and Style
Hyphens	<p>No spacing before or after hyphens.</p> <p>Hyphenate two-word adjectives used with a compound modifier (e.g., high-unit program).</p> <p>Do not hyphenate words beginning with “non,” except those containing a proper noun (e.g., nonresident; non-German; non-degree-seeking) or when the second element consists of more than one word (e.g., a full-time student; attending school full time).</p> <p>Do not hyphenate words with the suffix “wide” (e.g., District wide; College wide).</p>
Capitalization	<p>Capitalize the following words or phrases when referencing the Commission and/or the ACCJC Accreditation Standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Commission”</li> <li>• “Accreditation Standards”</li> <li>• “Standards” (e.g., “In order to meet Accreditation Standards...”)</li> </ul> <p>Capitalize “College” and “District” when referencing a specific college or district (i.e., capitalize when you can replace “College” with a college name and when you can replace “District” with a district name).</p> <p>Capitalize the first word following a colon when the word begins a complete sentence.</p> <p>Capitalize titles preceding names (e.g., Bay College President Chris Smith).</p> <p><i>Do not</i> capitalize the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “federal” or “state,” unless it is capitalized in an official name.</li> <li>• “fall” or “spring” (e.g., fall semester enrollment).</li> <li>• Titles following names or standing alone (e.g., Chris Smith, president of Bay College; Marcia S. Jones became president in 2001).</li> </ul>

### Writing Style:

- Be accurate. Nothing else matters if facts are not correct.
- Be concise. Avoid jargon. Keep it as to-the-point as possible.
- Be specific, definite, clear, and concrete. Explicit writing holds the attention of readers.
- Do not write in the first person (*We* or *us*); use third person (*the College*).
- Use the active voice. The active voice is more direct and vigorous than the passive voice. Passive example: *Commencement was attended by hundreds of people.* Active example: *Hundreds of people attended commencement.*
- Passive voice is acceptable when the agent of the action is unknown or unimportant. Passive example: *Construction was completed three months early.*

## Resources

<b>Document Name</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Location</b>
Guide to Institutional Self-Evaluation, Improvement, and Peer Review	To assist colleges through the institutional self-evaluation process.	Available in the <a href="#">Accreditation SharePoint*</a> and at the <a href="#">ACCJC website</a>
ISER Template	To assist colleges through the institutional self-evaluation process.	Available in the <a href="#">Accreditation SharePoint*</a> and at the <a href="#">ACCJC website</a>
ACCJC Standards and Policies, July 2014 Edition	To describe in depth how Standards I-IV work together to define and promote student success, academic quality, institutional integrity, and excellence.	Available in the <a href="#">Accreditation SharePoint</a> and at the <a href="#">ACCJC website</a>
AVC's Accreditation Timeline	To plan for and track our progress with the ISER.	Available in the <a href="#">Accreditation SharePoint</a>
Standards Worksheets	Worksheets that list every Standard/Sub-Standard and a list of documents that can serve as evidence, and who is working on what.	Will be available from Standard Team Leaders
AVC's 2016 ISER, Reaffirmation of Accreditation 2017, & Mid-term Report	Review of what the college presented previously.	Available in the <a href="#">Accreditation SharePoint</a>
Accreditation Presentations	Specifics on what to do, how to do it, and timelines	Available in the <a href="#">Accreditation SharePoint</a>
Accreditation Committee Meeting Agendas and Minutes	To work on the ISER and track our progress.	Available in the <a href="#">Accreditation SharePoint</a>

\*To access the Accreditation SharePoint, please use the link provided above or go to myAVC, then AVCID, then click on Microsoft Office, then click on the "S" for SharePoint, and then click on Accreditation Group before going to "Documents". You can then bookmark the [link](#) to this page for future access. You will now see a "General" folder that has some training from IT on navigating SharePoint, if you are new to it and an "Accreditation Documents" folder with the above resources and more.