

# Recognition Chronology

Compiled from various sources by  
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*Author's Note: I began compiling this chronology in the mid-1980s, about 15 years ago. For my personal use, I began to pull together - into one easy to find place - arbitrarily selected key dates in accreditation, with an emphasis on recognition. This origin explains the acknowledged bias toward specialized accreditation. Over the years, I added historical items to the list as I found events and dates. I also began tracking icurrent eventsî which have since become history. Occasionally I shared the list with friends, but it was more widely distributed for the first time at the March 1998 meeting of the Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors (ASPA) and will now be made available at the August 2000 Accreditation Retreat in New Orleans.*

*If you know of events and dates that would make the list more comprehensive or balanced, I hope you will share them with me. Because the chronology continues to develop, I have included a few ipendingî items at the end with the intent of adding the exact dates when we know them. Finally, I like to include a iprinted onî date on the last page to help set a context for the chronology.*

*August 21, 2000: Cynthia A. Davenport*

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## Background - Identifying the Players

**Recognition of Accrediting Bodies:** Accrediting bodies, while established and supported by their membership and/or communities of interest, are intended to serve the broader interest of society as well. To help meet their public service goals, many accrediting bodies undergo irecognitionî reviews by governmental and/or non-governmental entities. These periodic reviews assess accrediting agencies against publicly stated criteria and make the results of the reviews available to prospective students and other members of the public. The results of these reviews are also used by other organizations in ways that are outside the control of the accrediting bodies. One example of this kind of use is the requirement of some states that individuals be graduates of accredited educational programs in order to be eligible to sit for the licensure or certification examinations to practice some professions.

The non-governmental recognition process has been conducted by a number of different entities during the past several decades. The governmental process of recognition is conducted by the US Department of Education.

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## Overview of Non-Governmental Recognition

**COPA:** The Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA) began operating on January 1, 1975 and was dissolved at the end of 1993. COPA had been created by a merger between the National Commission on Accrediting (NCA) and the Federation of Regional Accrediting Commissions of Higher Education (FRACHE). COPA assumed the recognition authority previously provided by the National Commission on Accrediting (NCA), thus giving COPA governance authority over specialized accrediting bodies in the United States. COPA was the first non-governmental entity to review or recognize regional accrediting bodies.

**CORPA:** The Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation (CORPA) was formed during 1993 and began operating on January 1, 1994 for the purpose of maintaining a non-governmental recognition process for accrediting agencies after COPA was dissolved. CORPA did not assume the other professional development and advocacy functions of COPA. COPA had functioned in ways intended to help foster and facilitate the role of accrediting agencies in promoting and ensuring the quality and diversity of American postsecondary education. With COPA's demise, some of the broader policy and professional development services were assumed by other organizations.

**ASPA:** The Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors (ASPA) was formed in mid-1993, when it was clear that COPA would be disbanded, to provide some of the broader policy and professional development services and to function as a strong voice for specialized accrediting agencies. (Note: ASPA's history and development is reported in a separate chronology.)

**NPB, PWG and CHEA:** Shortly after ASPA was incorporated, also in 1993, the regional accrediting agencies and a number of the groups representing the presidents and CEOs of colleges and universities formed a group called the National Policy Board on Higher Education Institutional Accreditation (NPB). The NPB evolved into the Presidents Work Group on Accreditation (PWG), a group of about 25 presidents, which described itself as "working without portfolio." During 1995-96, the PWG developed a proposal for a new group, the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). The proposed CHEA was endorsed by more than 90% of the 54% of voting eligible presidents and convened in its first official meeting in fall 1996. Also in 1996, when it was clear that CHEA would be constituted, CORPA determined that it would transfer its recognition authority to CHEA at year end. CORPA's Committee on Recognition (COR) held its last meeting in February 1997.

CHEA held its first official Board of Directors meeting in September 1996. During 1997, CHEA drafted recognition requirements and circulated them for comment during 1998. *Recognition of Accrediting Organizations: Policy and Procedures* was adopted by the CHEA Board in September 1998. The CHEA recognition process includes two steps. Step one is an eligibility review. The first wave of eligibility reviews was conducted by the Committee on Recognition (COR) in November 1999 and acted on by the CHEA Board of Directors in January 2000. All of CHEA's current participating organizations are scheduled to complete their eligibility reviews by Spring 2002. Step two is the recognition review. Eligible candidates develop and submit their applications for

recognition. The first recognition reviews will be conducted by COR in November 2000 and acted on by the CHEA Board in January 2001. CHEA expects that the Board will have acted on the first recognition review for all currently participating organizations by May 2003.

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## Overview of Governmental Recognition

**US Department of Education:** The Secretary of Education, through the United States Department of Education (USDE), periodically publishes a list of *Nationally Recognized Accrediting Agencies and Associations*. Agencies and associations included on the list maintained by the Secretary must be eligible to be listed and found to be reliable authorities in evaluating the quality of education offered by educational institutions or programs. In order for institutions (or programs) to become eligible for federal funds, the accrediting agency for that institution (or program) must be recognized and listed by the US Secretary of Education. Prior to 1994, any accrediting agency could seek USDE recognition. Since that time, the agency must demonstrate an existing legal nexus to be eligible for recognition. An accreditor is only eligible for recognition if it serves as a "gatekeeper" for Title IV or other federal funds, i.e., if its accreditation is required by law for access to some kind of federal funds. However, in most cases, federal funds will only be dispensed when a recipient institution or program is accredited by a recognized accreditor. This element of circularity in the federal review process has a potentially negative impact on the non-eligible accrediting agencies. These agencies may not be eligible to participate in new federal (or non-federal) programs if the program mandates that participants must be recognized agencies listed by the Secretary.

The Department's list of *Nationally Recognized Accrediting Agencies and Associations* includes the regional, national-institutional, and many of the specialized or professional accrediting agencies or associations responsible for accrediting postsecondary institutions and specialized education programs. Many but not all of the USDE-recognized accreditors were previously recognized by COPA and/or CORPA and will continue to seek recognition from CHEA.

The Secretary of Education requires the recognized accreditors to submit to USDE the standards, policies and procedures used in their evaluation programs. Periodic reviews are conducted to determine continued eligibility for recognition.

**Higher Education Act:** The first federal requirements or "Criteria," published in 1952 when the recognition of accrediting agencies was first implemented, fit onto one page. By the time the *Criteria and Procedures for Recognition of Nationally Recognized Accrediting Agencies and Associations* was re-published in 1974, they had expanded to about 37 pages. The next revision of the Criteria occurred in 1988, following amendments to the Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965. The authority for and responsibility of recognition by the Secretary of the US Department of Education flow from the Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965, as amended. This important legislation undergoes periodic comprehensive reauthorization, usually at five-year intervals. Following each major reauthorization, the Department promulgates new *Procedures and Criteria for Recognition of Accrediting Agencies*.

Extensive amendments occurred when the HEA was reauthorized in 1992. The 1992 amendments, for the first time, mandated use of a negotiated rule-making process to develop the implementing regulations. These amendments, also for the first time, outlined the process to be used for recognizing accrediting agencies. The Department's Criteria to implement the 1992 amendments went into effect on July 1, 1994.

Following the 1992 reauthorization of the HEA, some accreditors previously recognized by USDE were no longer eligible to be listed by the Secretary because they did not serve a "gatekeeping" role for either Title IV funds or for funds administered by other federal programs. The Department worked with accreditors to ensure that removal of an accreditor from the list due to the change in the eligibility requirements did not reflect negatively on the accreditor.

The most recent amendments to the HEA were signed into law in October 1998. For most accreditors, the 1998 amendments expanded the recognized scope of activity to include distance education. Some of the more burdensome and/or unfunded aspects of the 1992 legislation were removed in 1998. Again a process of negotiated rule-making was used to develop draft regulations which were circulated for comment. Final regulations were published in the *Federal Register* on October 10, 1999. The new *Procedures and Criteria for Recognition of Accrediting Agencies* went into effect on July 1, 2000.

Some organizations are already beginning to plan for the next amendment to the Higher Education Act. The reauthorization process is likely to begin in 2003.

### Recognition Chronology

<b>1642</b>	Harvard initiated external review of its programs.
<b>1840</b>	The first dental school was established and the first state statute requiring a license to practice dentistry was passed.
<b>1847</b>	The American Medical Association was founded to advance the profession through state licensing and improving educational quality.
<b>1859</b>	The American Dental Association was founded.
<b>1867</b>	United States Office of Education was established to collect statistics, including data on the numbers of schools and colleges.

**Regional Accreditation Develops:** As the following chart shows, the current regional associations did not establish accrediting standards until long after their formation.

<b>Region:</b>	<b>*Date Assn. Formed:</b>	<b>Order &amp; *Date Accreditation Standards Set:</b>
New England	1885	6th = 1954 (69 years after assn was formed)
Middle States	1887	3rd/4th = 1921 (34 years)
North Central	1895	1st = 1910 (15 years)

Southern	1895	2nd = 1919 (24 years)
Northwest	1917	3rd/4th = 1921 ( 4 years)
Western	1924	5th = 1949 (25 years)

\*Dates from Orlans, 1975, p.9; slightly different dates are given in various other sources.

**Specialized Accreditation Develops:** The American Medical Association, formed in 1847, was re-organized in 1905 and 1907, at which time it began to classify medical schools and, thus became the first specialized, program accreditor. The AMA began to inspect medical schools and classified 160 schools into three groups; Class A (approved, 82) Class B (probation, 46), and Class C (unapproved, 32). A 1910 Carnegie study of medical education ranked 155 schools after visits to them. Five years later 60 schools had closed, and 12 of the remaining 95 were classified as unapproved.

From 1918 to 1937, eleven more special programmatic accrediting bodies were established:

Discipline:	Year:	Discipline:	Year:	Discipline:	Year:
podiatry	1918	business	1919	law	1923
library science	1924	music	1924	dietetics	1927
nurse anesthesia	1931	pharmacy	1932	engineering	1932
optometry	1934	dentistry	1937		

Within the next decade, nearly ten more associations began to conduct programmatic accreditation. Start-ups slowed down slightly during World War II, with many new groups beginning operation after the war. From then until now, many new specialized accreditors have formed in order to fill the demand for their services.

1933-36	In 1933 the American Medical Association published the first list of "Approved Schools" for medical technologists. In 1936, it published the first list of "Accredited Schools for Clinical Laboratory Technicians." (JAMA 107: 680, August 29, 1946)
1938	The first initiative to create an oversight organization for specialized accreditation began when a Joint Committee on Accrediting was established by the Association of Land Grant Colleges and Universities and the National Association of State Universities, later joined by the Association of American Universities.
1947	National Commission of Regional Accrediting Agencies (NCRAA) was formed by ACE.

1949	National Commission on Accrediting (NCA) began operating, taking over the responsibilities and files of the Joint Committee on Accrediting which had been established in 1938 to control the proliferation of accrediting entities. NCA became the first national organization to develop criteria and a process to recognize accrediting bodies.
1952	Public Law 82-250 tries to correct abuses in the G.I. Bill by requiring the U.S. Commissioner of Education to publish a list of "nationally recognized accrediting agencies." The first Criteria and List were published in the Federal Register (vol 17, pp.8929-30, Oct.4, 1952).
1964	Federation of Regional Accrediting Commissions of Higher Education (FRACHE) replaces the National Commission of Regional Accrediting Agencies (NCRAA) which was formed in 1947.
1973	The Council of Specialized Accrediting Agencies (CSAA) was established to represent the interests of the specialized accrediting community, largely to counter the NCA's avowed intent to control the proliferation of specialized and professional program accreditation. Specialized accreditors were reviewed by NCA but were not represented in NCA's governance structure.
1974	Revised Criteria and Procedures for Recognition of Nationally Recognized Accrediting Agencies and Associations were published. The new Criteria required recognized accrediting agencies to include representatives of the public in policy and decision-making bodies or in an advisory or consultative capacity that assures attention by the policy and decision-making bodies.
1973-75	<p>Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA) formed; NCA and FRACHE dissolved.</p> <p>After several years of effort, the National Commission on Accrediting (NCA) and the Federation of Regional Accrediting Commissions of Higher Education (FRACHE) merged to become the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA). COPA began operating on January 1, 1975. COPA recognized postsecondary accrediting bodies (regional, national and specialized) which accredit non-degree and/or degree-granting institutions or programs. For the first time, regional accrediting bodies were reviewed by an outside body. Also for the first time, specialized accrediting bodies had a voice within COPA in policy and decision-making processes via the COPA Assembly of Specialized Accrediting Bodies (ASAB). COPA, whose structure evolved somewhat over time, had other assemblies for regional and national-institutional accreditors and for the organizations that represented institutional presidents.</p>
1979	The U.S. Office of Education became the U.S. Department of Education and its first Secretary was sworn in on December 6, 1979.
	The Council of Specialized Accrediting Agencies (CSAA), whose membership more or less overlapped with that of COPA's ASAB and whose meetings typically were held in conjunction with COPA meetings, decided to disband. During the

1984	roughly ten years of its existence, CSAA's major role was planning and presenting professional development programs. Upon its dissolution, CSAA transferred its remaining assets to COPA with the stipulation that the funds be used for professional development. It was at this point that COPA assumed responsibility for professional development and established a new standing professional development committee.
1988	The Department of Education issued new Criteria for Recognition of Accrediting Agencies (Federal Register; vol.53, no.127, 25096-99; July 1, 1988). The maximum period for recognition of an accrediting body changed from four to five years. During the early 1980s there was an estimated overlap of 60% between the COPA Provisions and the USDE Criteria for recognition. With the adoption of these new Criteria, the overlap dropped to 40% (or less) causing both COPA and USDE to conclude that preparation of one set of materials for both reviews was no longer feasible.
1992-94	The Higher Education Act of 1965 was reauthorized and signed into law in July 1992. This was the first reauthorization to stipulate a process by which accrediting agencies were to be recognized. The statutory amendments also mandated use of a negotiated rulemaking process to develop regulations. The resulting Criteria were adopted on July 1, 1994 for use in the Department of Education's recognition reviews. Because they did not serve as gatekeepers for access to federal funds through Title IV or other federal programs, a number of accreditors were no longer eligible for recognition; these groups were removed from the Secretary's list in 1994.
1993	In April 1993, the COPA Board voted to dissolve the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation, effective the end of 1993. Partially in response to the anticipated dissolution of COPA, the Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors (ASPA) was incorporated in August 1993 to improve accreditation and to represent the interests of its members to the higher education, accreditation and governmental communities. In June 1993, nine (later eight) regional and seven national higher education associations formed the National Policy Board on Higher Education Institutional Accreditation (NPB).
1993-94	During its last year of operation, COPA revised its recognition Provisions; the Provisions were adopted by CORPA when it was formed and went into effect in January 1994.
1994	The Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation (CORPA) was formed and took over the recognition function from COPA, effective January 1, 1994. CORPA was not authorized to continue COPA's functions that related to professional development of accreditors or representation of the accreditation community to the public.
1994	The National Policy Board on Higher Education Institutional Accreditation (NPB), formed in June 1993, met to develop a proposal for an organization to succeed CORPA. The proposal to create the Higher Education Accreditation Board, a new national organization to oversee and coordinate accreditation, was circulated in

	October. The proposal failed to generate consensus.
1995	<p>In March, the NPB circulated a revised draft proposal to create an Accreditation Coordinating Council. This proposal also failed to generate consensus.</p> <p>In July, a group of 24 college presidents and one trustee formed the President's Work Group on Accreditation (PWG). This group, which described itself as "working without portfolio," developed a proposal to form the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) but left most of the philosophical and operational principles to be developed by CHEA itself.</p>
1996	Ballots for the creation of CHEA and the election of a board of directors were sent to presidents of colleges and universities. A majority of the 54% of the presidents who responded voted for the establishment of CHEA. A formative meeting for CHEA was held in July 1996, with the first official Board of Directors meeting held in September 1996.
1996	CORPA determined that it would transfer its recognition responsibilities to the newly formed Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), effective the end of the year.
1997	CHEA continued the recognition of all accreditors previously recognized by CORPA while a CHEA task force developed draft recognition requirements for the new recognition process.
1997-98	A special Commission studied the cost of education, releasing its report in early 1998.
1997-98	The Higher Education Act of 1965 was reauthorized; amendments were signed into law in October 1998.
1998	In March 1998, CHEA circulated draft recognition requirements (policy) for comment. The CHEA Board reviewed draft policy and procedures documents in July and circulated both for comment prior to adopting them at the September 1998 Board meeting. The CHEA requirements were developed to reflect a new, streamlined recognition process intended to focus on the value-added by the accreditation provided by the recognized accrediting body.
1998-99	In early 1999, the Department of Education convened four panels and began negotiated rule-making to draft regulations to implement the 1998 amendments to the Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965. One panel and an accreditation sub-committee addressed topics related to the recognition of accrediting agencies.
1999-00	The new Procedures and Criteria for Recognition of Accrediting Agencies were published in The Federal Register on October 10, 1999 with a July 1, 2000 implementation date. Except in unusual circumstances, accrediting agencies are required to come into full compliance with the regulations within 12 months.
	CHEA initiated its recognition process for accrediting bodies by forming a



1999	Committee on Recognition (COR) which developed policies and procedures for recognition. The first wave of accrediting organizations submitted their Step One eligibility applications. The applications were reviewed by COR in November 1999 and acted on by the CHEA Board in January 2000.
2000	The first wave of accrediting organizations eligible to proceed to Step Two - the recognition portion - of the CHEA review process submitted their recognition materials for review by COR in November 2000 and action by the CHEA Board in January 2001.
2000	At its May meeting, the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI) asked for clarification on its role, wanting to know when the committee may apply outcomes as a measure of the validity and reliability of an accrediting agency's standards.
August 2000	The Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors (ASPA) and the Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (C-RAC) co-host a special Accreditation Retreat in New Orleans from August 27-30. This meeting, attended by more than 100 accreditors, was special in part because it was the first time specialized and regional accreditors had met together since COPA was disbanded in 1993. The Retreat Agendas included joint and separate sessions.

Pending:

2000	USDE-recognized accreditors will monitor the December meeting of NACIQI, watching to see how the role of the committee is defined. New terms or replacements should be identified during the summer for the five members of NACIQI whose terms expire on September 2000.
2001	Accreditors will continue to monitor the CHEA recognition process as applicants progress from Step One Eligibility to Step Two Recognition reviews and feedback on both reviews becomes available.
2003	Next reauthorization of the Higher Education Act of 1965.
2003	CHEA anticipates that the Board will have acted on the first recognition review of all currently participating organizations by May 2003.

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