

## **New England Commission of Higher Education**

1. Accreditation in US higher education is a peer review system through which colleges and universities agree to hold themselves accountable to rigorous standards for education in a process that both ensures quality to the public and promotes institutional improvement.
2. The New England Commission of Higher Education (the Commission or NECHE) is a 501(c)(3) organization, tracing its roots to the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC).
3. The Commission is recognized by the US Department of Education, per the Higher Education Act, as a “reliable authority as to the quality of education.” Recognition makes it possible for eligible students to have access to federal financial aid, e.g., Pell grants and federal loans. NECHE-accredited colleges and universities award between \$6-\$7 billion per year in federal financial aid.
4. The Commission accredits approximately 230 colleges and universities, including those in the six New England states and eleven American-style institutions in other countries.
5. The Commission is composed of at least 21 members, of which at least one out of every seven is a public member (who, along with their immediate family have no employment or trustee connection with an accredited institution) and institutional representatives (including presidents, chief academic officers, faculty, trustees, and experts in finance, student support, and other dimensions key to the institution’s mission). Annually, nearly 300 individuals serve as volunteers for evaluation visits.
6. The Commission makes all of the decisions: accepting the *Standards for Accreditation* and related policies, and applying them to institutional accreditation. It has four two-day meetings per year, plus a two-day retreat. Commissioners’ preparation for each meeting is generally one to two days per meeting.
7. The Commission’s *Standards for Accreditation*, along with its policies and procedures and a summary of its recent institutional actions, can be found on its website at: [www.neche.org](http://www.neche.org)
8. The accreditation process includes a self-study, through which colleges and universities describe how they meet the *Standards*, evaluate their successes and areas for improvement, and announce their plans for further improvement.
9. A team of peer reviewers, selected to have no conflict of interest, are trained and deployed to validate the self-study, prepare a report to the institution and ultimately to the Commission.
10. The Commission, after meeting with the institution’s President and the team chair, considers the self-study, the team report, the team’s recommendation, and the institution’s response and makes a decision about the institution’s accreditation and further monitoring.
11. Accredited institutions are normally on a cycle that includes a self-study and team visit every ten years and an interim report at the fifth year. The Commission frequently requires progress reports, focused evaluations, and other reports relating to areas of concern. Institutions making significant changes are required to get the Commission’s approval before implementing the changes.
12. Further information can be found at <https://www.neche.org>. Questions can be directed to Barbara Brittingham, President of the Commission, at [bbrittingham@neche.org](mailto:bbrittingham@neche.org).