This FAQ is designed to answer recent questions regarding NIC’s accreditation status in preparation for a required Ad-Hoc Report due to the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) by August 1, 2022. The answers provided are not representative nor endorsed by the NWCCU.

**QUESTION: What is the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities?**

**ANSWER:** NWCCU is incorporated as a legally established, private 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation and accredits institutions of higher education in Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and British Columbia, along with other domestic and international geographic areas. NWCCU accredits approximately 170 institutions and is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation. Institutions are evaluated based upon a set of standards that they must meet to receive and/or maintain accreditation.

**QUESTION: What is institutional accreditation and why is this Ad-Hoc Report so important for NIC?**

**ANSWER:** The goal of institutional accreditation is to ensure that education provided by institutions of higher education meets acceptable levels of quality. Institutional accrediting agencies develop evaluation criteria and conduct peer evaluations to assess whether the criteria are met. Institutions that meet an agency’s criteria are then accredited. The response to Ad-Hoc Report is important for NIC as accreditation is important for the college to remain in operation. Accreditation enables NIC to offer federal financial aid to students, to maintain programs with programmatic or national accreditation, to ensure credits earned at NIC transfer to other institutions, and thatNIC graduates are eligible to sit for licensure examinations.

**QUESTION: Why is NWCCU requiring NIC to submit an Ad Hoc Report by August 1, 2022?**

On March 12, 2021, NWCCU received a formal complaint regarding NIC and its Board of Trustees from the Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations, Spokane County Human Rights Task Force, Bonner County Human Rights Task Force, and Boundary County Human Rights Task Force, alleging violation of three Eligibility Requirements.

On April 26, 2021, NWCCU asked NIC to respond to the allegations under NWCCU’s Complaints Regarding Candidate and Member Institutions Policy and Receipt of Unsolicited Information Policy.

On June 10, 2021, NIC submitted two documents (response, unsolicited materials) to the NWCCU addressing the alleged violations by proving evidence that NIC meets the three eligibility requirements.

QUESTION: What is required by NIC in the Ad-Hoc Report due August 1, 2022?

Here is an excerpt taken directly from the letter issued from NWCCU:

North Idaho College must submit an Ad Hoc Report as an attachment to its 2022 Annual Report, no later than August 1, 2022 for evaluation and possible follow-up monitoring. The report must focus on Eligibility Requirement 9, Governing Board, and the commitment and actions to be taken by the college’s governance and administrative leadership as described in the evidence presented in the Board’s statement to agree to readdress its roles and responsibilities in relation to the college administration. Per Eligibility Requirement 9, the Commission requires that the Board has “…clearly defined authority, roles, and responsibilities for all entities in a written contract(s)” as well as providing the college “sufficient autonomy to fulfill its mission.”

QUESTION: Is North Idaho College still accredited during this time?

ANSWER: Yes

QUESTION: Has NIC’s accreditation status changed as a result of the recent change in the presidency at NIC?

Although NWCCU does not rank or rate colleges, NIC remains accredited with NWCCU. Besides the Ad-Hoc Report due August 1, the administration is not aware of any impending reports or action from NWCCU. However, this does not preclude NWCCU from taking any action before the report is due. The college is conducting business as usual, while the Board of Trustees and administration plan for the response to the upcoming Ad-Hoc Report.

QUESTION: What happens after NIC submits the ad-hoc report to NWCCU?

The Commission will evaluate the response and may consider to accept NIC’s Ad-Hoc Report with or without follow-up action, including requesting another Ad-Hoc Report and/or requiring a site visit by an evaluation team. Other forms of possible Commission actions, taken from the NWCCU Accreditation Handbook, include: defer action, issue a warning, impose probation, issue an “order to show cause,” or withdraw accreditation.

QUESTION: As a student, how does NIC’s Ad-Hoc Report requirement from NWCCU impact me?

ANSWER: Students should see no impact because of this action. Academic programs, athletics, housing, student life, and college functions will not be affected.

QUESTION: As a student, will this impact my financial aid?

ANSWER: No, students will be able to access all federal, state, and local financial aid programs as before and their major is not affected.

QUESTION: Will my graduation plans be altered?

ANSWER: No
QUESTION: Will the college credits I earn at NIC still transfer to other schools?

ANSWER: The recent action letter from NWCCU does not impact the transferability of NIC courses to other institutions. However, all colleges and universities define their own transfer and admission policies.

QUESTION: Will my degree from NIC still count towards eligibility to sit for certification exams?

ANSWER: Yes

QUESTION: Any idea if NIC will receive a sanction or retain its accreditation status after the Ad-Hoc Report is submitted?

ANSWER: College and Universities are encouraged not to predict the outcome of an NWCCU evaluation. NIC is committed to meeting the eligibility requirements and cooperating with the Commission to retain its accreditation status.

Question: What happens if NIC loses its institutional accreditation?

The chances of the Commission immediately withdrawing institutional accreditation are low, and the institution would be given the opportunity to address any outstanding or new concerns, including a final appeal process. Without institutional accreditation, NIC would most likely cease operations and eventually close as there would be too great a financial hardship to overcome with the loss of federal financial aid, which equates to $14,335,762 in the 2019-2020 academic year.

NIC would also lose programs with programmatic or national accreditation including Nursing (Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing), Radiography Technology (Joint Review Committee on Education in Radiological Technology), Medical Assistant (Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs), Pharmacy Technology (American Society of Health-System Pharmacists), Physical Therapist Assistant (Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education, and Dental Hygiene (Commission on Dental Accreditation).

Depending upon the financial severity of the impact of the loss of federal financial aid and tuition revenue, the college would assist students with the completion of their degrees or assist students with transfer to other institutions. As part of the close out procedure, the college would plan for official transcript availability with another institution located in the region.

Question: What happens now at NIC based upon this decision by NWCCU?

The college administration continues to work with the Board to address governance concerns and develop a plan to write and submit the report to NWCCU by the August 1, 2022 deadline. The basis of the evaluation of the Ad-Hoc report is the inclusion of evidence. Most of the evidence under consideration by the Commission will be progress made by the board correcting governance issues since submitting the June 10th, 2021 document.
Question: Can NIC regain institutional accreditation if it is lost? If so, how?

Per the NWCC Handbook, NIC would have to wait a minimum of two years following the date of that action before resubmitting a new Application for Consideration of Eligibility.