I.8 Precandidacy status

Precandidacy indicates the institution's and program's commitment to achieving ALA accreditation. This status provides a mechanism for the program to establish, measure, and meet goals and objectives in order to achieve Candidacy status and to comply with the *Standards*. Precandidacy also provides the program and the COA with a means to communicate formally about programmatic development.

An institution that has a master's program in library and information studies that is not accredited by the ALA's Committee on Accreditation must go through Precandidacy and Candidacy status before receiving Initial accreditation from the COA. As a prerequisite to the granting of Precandidacy or Candidacy status to a program, the ALA requires that the institution be accredited by its appropriate institutional accrediting agency. This requirement does not apply in Canada, which has no institutional accrediting system.

Resources for programs seeking Initial accreditation can be found on the Office for Accreditation website.

I.8.1 Eligible programs

As the first step in seeking accreditation from the ALA, the following programs are required to apply for Precandidacy status: 1) a new program at an institution that does not have an ALA-accredited program and/or 2) an existing program at an institution that does not have an ALA-accredited program.

I.8.2 Application requirements

An application for Precandidacy status must be submitted to the Chair of the COA in care of the Office for Accreditation not less than 45 days before the COA meeting at which the application will be considered. The Precandidacy application must include:

- A letter from the CEO of the institution requesting Precandidacy status for the program. In the case of a new program, this letter must also include documentation of institutional and state approval of, commitment to, and support for the new program. The letter must also contain a statement that the institution understands that Precandidacy status in no manner guarantees or implies that the program will move to Candidacy status or that it will be accredited at the end of the Candidacy period. A letter template is available on the Office for Accreditation website.
- A letter from the Program Head (dean of the program and/or school in which the program is located) requesting Precandidacy status for the program. The letter must also contain a statement that the program and/or school understands that Precandidacy status in no manner guarantees or implies that the program will move to Candidacy status or that it will be accredited at the end of the Candidacy period. A letter template is available on the Office for Accreditation website.
- A report of the program's status. This report must address how the program will comply with the *Standards for Accreditation of Master's Programs in Library and Information Studies*. The report must also include, but is not limited to: 1) descriptions of the program's mission, goals, and objectives; curriculum; faculty or faculty recruitment plans; and physical resources and facilities; 2) statements of

financial support for the program (including a copy of the program's current budget), and 3) a projected budget for the program during the Precandidacy and Candidacy periods. The names and positions of the persons responsible for developing and monitoring these reports must be included.

- A detailed plan for achieving candidacy status. Such plans must include clearly stated objectives, a calendar for reaching these objectives (for example, hiring a certain number of faculty each year, enrolling a certain number of students each year), methods of assessing whether the objectives have been met, and evaluation plans for the program. If the program does not have a Program Head, plans for selection and hiring to fill this position must be included.
- Format of the application:
  o Cover page with name of program, name of degree to appear on diploma, name of unit (college, school, department, etc.) in which program resides, name of institution, institutional accreditor (for U.S. institutions), and date of submission of application;
  o Table of contents;
  o Glossary of terminology and abbreviations;
  o List of appendices;
  o Numbered pages, organized by standard.

I.8.3 Review by the COA

The COA will review the Precandidacy application at the next regularly scheduled meeting. The Committee will take one of the following actions: 1) grant Precandidacy status, 2) grant Precandidacy status and immediately move the program into Candidacy status (this option would normally apply only to programs with established non-accredited programs), or 3) deny Precandidacy status. A decision to deny Precandidacy status to a program is not appealable.

I.8.4 Length of Precandidacy status

A program may remain in Precandidacy up to three years. At the end of three years, the COA may grant one extension of up to three years. After six years in Precandidacy status without progress to Candidacy, the program will no longer be considered a precandidate and must wait two more years before reapplying for Precandidacy.

During the Precandidacy period, the institution, school, and program are encouraged to seek advice from individuals within the profession who have experience with accreditation. The Director of the Office for Accreditation may suggest possible contacts. The OA Director is also available to advise on the ALA accreditation process and on the development of reports that are to be submitted to the COA.

Precandidate programs will receive all literature and mailings sent to accredited programs. Representatives of precandidate programs are welcome to attend all open meetings, training sessions, and workshops offered by the COA or the Office.

Precandidate programs are not listed in the directory of ALA-accredited programs. Use of the ALA Accredited logo is not permitted.

As a public protection, including for prospective students, program and school communications must indicate that the program has Precandidacy status and must include this statement:

> *The [degree name] program at [Name of school and institution] has been granted Precandidacy status by the Committee on Accreditation of the American Library Association. Precandidacy status is an indication that [name of school and program] has voluntarily committed to participate in the ALA accreditation process and is actively seeking accreditation. Precandidacy does not indicate that the program is accredited nor does it guarantee eventual accreditation of the program by ALA.*

I.8.5 Reporting to the COA

The precandidate program is required to submit a detailed progress report to the COA annually. This report should indicate what progress the program has made in reaching its objectives, obstacles it has encountered, and its plans to address these obstacles. This report is due in the Office for Accreditation on February 15 each year. The program is also required to submit the annual statistical information collected from all ALA-accredited programs. This report is due in the Office for Accreditation on December 1 each year.

The COA reviews these reports and sends a response to the Program Head and chief academic officer (CAO) of the institution. This response is not an indication or checklist of steps that must be taken to achieve Candidacy status; rather, it is the COA's response to the program's efforts to obtain Candidacy status.

Instructions regarding the format and content of annual progress reports can be found on the Office for Accreditation website.

I.8.6 Fees

Programs filing for Precandidacy status are required to submit a nonrefundable application fee (see section I.23.1 for the current fee schedule). Precandidate programs are also required to pay an annual fee while in Precandidacy. If the OA Director or other Office staff member is invited to visit the institution, the institution will be billed for travel-related expenses.