Each institution affiliated with the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges accepts the obligation to undergo periodic evaluation through self study and professional peer review. The heart of this obligation is the conducting of a rigorous self study during which an institution appraises itself in terms of the Commission Standards in accord with its stated purposes. A Comprehensive Self Study is required every six years following initial accreditation. The Commission’s expectation on periodic review, found in the Accreditation Reference Handbook, Revised Summer 2002, governs conditions under which an institution is periodically evaluated.

The Self Study Manual, intended for use with the Guide to Evaluating Institutions Using the ACCJC 2002 Standards, provides a reference for the conduct of the comprehensive self study. The Guide to Evaluating Institutions Using the ACCJC 2002 Standards is a document meant to provoke some thoughtful consideration about whether the institution meets the Accreditation Standards at a deeper level than mere compliance. The Guide contains the Standards followed by questions to use in institutional evaluation. These questions provide an interpretation of the standards and how they might be applied to an institution.

Self study is part of a three-part process of accrediting an institution. This process includes a self appraisal, an on-site visit by a team of peers, and a review and a decision on the accredited status of the college by the Commission. The self appraisal results in a Report that is an analysis of the on-going and systematic activities and achievements of an institution. The aim of self appraisal is to assess how well an institution meets accreditation standards and to stimulate improvement of educational quality and institutional performance. The ultimate goal of accreditation is to help an institution improve attainment of its own mission—improving student learning and student achievement.

Self appraisal requires a conscious and self-reflective analysis of strengths and weakness and an examination of every aspect of institutional function against Commission Standards. Continuous dialogue among members of the college community—a dialogue that is consistently central to institutional processes and which serves to provide the college community with the means for arriving at a comprehensive institutional perspective—can be especially valuable as the institution engages in self study preparatory to writing a report. Broad involvement in the both the institutional self appraisal and preparation of the Self Study Report enhances the credibility and usefulness of the self study report.