



ACCREDITATION

The National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP) is a national trade organization that represents landscape and lawn care industry professionals. It represents nearly 100,000 landscape industry professionals in the United States, with additional members in Canada and overseas. Member companies specialize in lawn care, landscape design and installation, landscape maintenance, tree care, irrigation and water management, and interior plantscaping. Members also include students, faculty, consultants, industry suppliers, state associations and affiliate members.

NALP considers education a vital facet of a strong and vibrant organization and it is committed to helping its members achieve success through education and training, increased professionalism through certification and accreditation and through stewardship of the industry.

Accreditation is the National Association of Landscape Professionals' endorsement of colleges and universities with outstanding landscape management or related programs. This recognition is extended to schools with programs that meet or exceed industry standards for a model curriculum. The National Association of Landscape Professionals Accreditation is the only nationally recognized endorsement offered to colleges and universities that confer Associate's or Bachelor's degrees in landscape management. It currently accredits 27 2- and 4-year landscape programs in the United States and Canada.

Benefits of Accreditation

- National recognition as a quality landscape contracting/horticulture program.
- Access to industry approved Student Learning Outcomes for student and program assessment.
- Use of accreditation for recruitment, program promotion and marketing.
- Access to NALP members for internship or full-time employment opportunities.
- Participation in the National Association of Landscape Professionals nationally recognized event — The National Collegiate Landscape Competition.
- Significant discounts on select Landscape Industry Certified exams for students and faculty.
- Access to the latest industry technology through publications and industry suppliers.
- Outstanding networking opportunities for faculty and students.

Graduates of accredited programs are highly sought after by every segment of the landscape profession. Companies know any student graduating from an accredited program has the training and skills to enter the workforce and make an immediate impact.

Accreditation Process

Accreditation is a voluntary, peer review process that is conducted by representatives of the higher education community and the landscape industry. Accreditation provides guidance to create and/or improve program curricula to professional industry standards. It assures quality and accountability of education curriculum and programs through periodic review and revision. And it provides both local and national recognition of the program and institution. Accreditation will assure students, parents, employers, and the general public that NALP-accredited programs provide education consistent with

professional standards, has resources to accomplish this, and will continue to maintain quality in landscape and environmental science education.

Accreditation is a process that involves the development of a self-evaluation review as well as a peer assessment with the purpose of improving academic quality and accountability to the public. The institution as well as the specific program is reviewed in the process. The administration, staff, faculty, students, advisory committee, and alumni are asked to provide input into the process. All aspects of a higher education landscape program are reviewed with the primary aim of ensuring students receive a quality education that will enable them to be successful in their careers. While the institution is evaluated as it relates to the landscape program, the overall quality and effectiveness of the institution is the responsibility of regional educational accrediting bodies and not part of this process.

An Accreditation of a landscape program typically involves the following activities:

1. An institution applies to NALP to have their landscape program accredited. It conducts a self-evaluation of the institution and the program. The self-evaluation is based on a set of standards developed and validated by the industry. The standards are provided in the document *Guidelines for the Self-Evaluation Report*.

Programs that are considering becoming accredited may request a **Preliminary Review** prior to making application. They will submit their college catalog and course descriptions to the NALP Director of Workforce Development which will distribute them to an Accreditation Review Team Leader for review. The materials will be reviewed with a recommendation on accreditation sent back to the requesting institution. There is no charge for a Preliminary Review.

The application for Accreditation and accompanying fee structure is available on the NALP website or from the NALP Director of Workforce Development.

2. A team consisting of academic peers and industry representatives review the self-evaluation and conduct an on-site visit. All associated groups are interviewed, facilities are visited, curriculum reviewed, and an assessment of the program is made.
3. The review team considers all the evidence gathered from the self-evaluation and the site visit and prepares a report. The report includes the degree in which the program has met the standards, the review teams' recommendations, and any requirements that need to be met prior to granting of accreditation.
4. The Accreditation Review Team has several options when making recommendations on requests for accreditation:

- 1) **Initial Accreditation** is granted to institutions applying for the first time and has deficiencies in the application or program. Requirements to satisfy the standards are listed and the institution has a probationary period three (3) years to correct the deficiencies. The institution will receive all the benefits of accreditation and be expected to comply with the Annual Requirements for Maintaining Accreditation. Failure to meet the standards will result in withdrawal of Accreditation and benefits.

- 2) **Full Accreditation** is granted when the institution meets all the standards. The accreditation is for a period seven (7) years inclusive of Initial Accreditation if granted. All benefits of Accreditation are granted as long as the institution complies with the Annual Requirements for Maintaining Accreditation.

3) **Provisional Accreditation** is granted to a previously accredited institution that has deficiencies in the standards during the re-accreditation review. Provisional Accreditation will be for a probationary period of three (3) years during which the deficiencies are corrected. The institution will receive all the benefits of accreditation and be expected to comply with the Annual Requirements for Maintaining Accreditation. Failure to meet the standards during the probationary period will result in withdrawal of Accreditation and benefits.

4) **Accreditation Denied** occurs when the program fails to meet the majority of the standards as determined and recommended by the Accreditation Review Team.

Annual Requirements for Maintaining Accreditation

Programs are required to submit an Annual Report each year by January 15th for the previous year. This report is on-line and accessed from the Accredited Degree Program webpage on the NALP website. In addition, each program will:

- Have at least one faculty member maintain an affiliate membership in NALP.
- The program will maintain a Student Chapter membership in NALP.
- A faculty member will attend at least one state, regional, or national NALP or NALP affiliate organization workshop, seminar, symposium, or annual meeting.
- The program will lead a student delegation to the National Collegiate Landscape Competition or the Landscapes Conference in 5 of the 7 years of accreditation.

Re-Accreditation

Accredited programs will be notified during the 5th year of the accreditation cycle that planning should begin for the next cycle. Programs will contact NALP during the sixth year of the cycle and select a date for the re-accreditation team visit that will occur during the 7th year. The program will submit the Student Learning Outcomes form, course syllabi and college catalog 60 days prior to the scheduled visit. The self-study and a proposed Accreditation Evaluation Visit schedule will be due 30 days before the visit. Failure to comply with the schedule may delay the re-accreditation process.

Request for On-site Accreditation Evaluation.

College programs who wish to have an on-site evaluation of their landscape program for initial accreditation should adhere to the following procedure:

1. The program will complete and submit the on-line application form.
2. Application for on-site visit for a new accreditation should be made before July 15 of the year prior to their desired evaluation date. (Example: Submit application July 1, 2020 to schedule an on-site evaluation in 2021.) The specific date will be set by NALP staff in consultation with the program representatives.
3. The program will receive the current information and additional required forms at least 6 months prior to the scheduled visit.

Program Diversity

Landscape programs and institutions are diverse and vary significantly from institution to institution. Programs are found at the 2-year college and the 4-year university. There is program diversity within each of those groups as well as regional differences. The accreditation standards and process are designed to accommodate this diversity and ensure the quality of student learning.

Rather than a standardized curriculum, accreditation focuses on a set of course-level student learning outcomes that have been developed and approved by industry. The student learning outcomes are distributed among seven (7) competency areas of learning – Landscape Management, Landscape Installation, Landscape Design, Horticulture Science, Business Management, Computer Technology, and Internship. Currently there are 159 course level outcomes of which an accredited program is required to have at least 70%. This provides programs with the flexibility to focus on meeting local and regional needs while still adhering to the national standards.

NALP accreditation requires that accredited institutions adhere to all local, state and national laws and regulations. It is not the responsibility of NALP to assure institutions comply with those laws and regulations. Local, state, and national law/regulations supersede any accreditation standards.