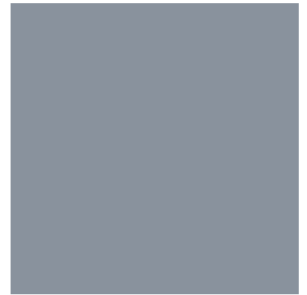


Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools  
**Accreditation Criteria**  
**Policies, Procedures, and Standards**

*Effective August 2010*



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# Accreditation Criteria Policies, Procedures, and Standards

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# INTRODUCTION

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The Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools (“ACICS” or “Council”) supports the concept that periodic evaluation entered into voluntarily by institutions and their peers enhances the quality of the educational process and demonstrates that self regulation of a profession is superior to outside regulation. This has been the philosophy of ACICS since 1912 when the first association of business schools was formed.

ACICS is incorporated as a non-profit education organization in the Commonwealth of Virginia and maintains offices in the District of Columbia. It has been recognized by the U.S. Department of Education since 1956 as a national institutional accrediting body. The federal government, for purposes of distributing institutional and student financial funds, lists ACICS as an accrediting body on which it relies in determining the quality of education and training offered at institutions that ACICS accredits.

To help institutions and peer evaluators meet their responsibilities in conducting the process, ACICS developed and periodically has revised a set of policies, procedures, and standards governing the activity. Collectively, they comprise the Accreditation Criteria which, when complied with by institutions, results in the awarding of accreditation. This document incorporates all changes agreed to by the institutions since the last published edition, as well as organizational modifications.

Embodied in these criteria is the belief by ACICS that accredited institutions should at all times demonstrate a high standard of professional conduct involving educational practices and business ethics. Accreditation is not a regulatory process in the legal sense. The Council encourages not just conformity to standards but a continuous striving for excellence. Only those institutions that believe in this tenet should seek accreditation.



# TITLE I            GENERAL POLICIES

## Chapter 1    An Overview of the Council

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### INTRODUCTION

Accreditation is an independent appraisal of an institution during which the institution's overall educational quality (including outcomes), professional status among similar institutions, financial stability, and operational ethics are self-evaluated and judged by peers. It is a voluntary activity separate and distinct from business licensing, authority to award educational credentials, and eligibility to administer student financial assistance.

### 1-1-100 – BYLAWS

The Bylaws of the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools ("ACICS" or "the Council") are an integral part of the *Accreditation Criteria* and are incorporated herein by reference. The Bylaws are contained in Appendix A.

### 1-1-200 – RECOGNITION

ACICS is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education ("the Department") as a national institutional accrediting agency that is a reliable authority regarding the quality of education and training provided by the institutions that it accredits. Any proposed change in the policies, procedures, or accreditation criteria that might alter ACICS's scope of recognition or ACICS's compliance with the requirements for recognition by the Department will be submitted to the Department and other appropriate agencies.

The Department's recognition provisions include certain operational requirements. Accordingly, the Council adopts the following statements regarding ACICS and the manner in which it carries out its accreditation function:

- (a) The Council grants accreditation for an established period of time, as described more fully in these criteria. Prior to the expiration of the grant of accreditation, each institution must seek a new grant of accreditation. The Council maintains complete and accurate records for each accredited institution that cover the current and the prior periods of accreditation.
- (b) The Council conducts ongoing and comprehensive reviews of its accreditation criteria and its policies and procedures to ascertain their appropriateness and effectiveness. Proposed changes to the criteria or the Council's policies and procedures may be initiated by the Council or submitted by member institutions or other interested parties, and substantive proposed changes approved by the Council will be circulated to member institutions, appropriate governmental agencies, and other interested parties for comment. The Council will consider all comments before it adopts any final changes.

### 1-1-300 – PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Visitors to Council policy meetings will be seated as space permits. They should notify the Executive Director or the Chair of the Council in advance if they wish to address specific agenda items. Individuals may request that items be placed on the agenda by writing to the Executive Director at least 45 days before each meeting.



# TITLE I                      GENERAL POLICIES

## Chapter 2      Eligibility Criteria

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### INTRODUCTION

The Council fulfills an evaluative and accrediting function for a particular sector of postsecondary education. This function has been deemed appropriate by the U.S. Department of Education through the recognition of ACICS.

The mission of the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools is to advance educational excellence at independent, nonpublic career schools, colleges, and organizations in the United States and abroad. This is achieved through a deliberate and thorough accreditation process of quality assurance and enhancement as well as ethical business and educational practices.

### 1-2-100 – MINIMUM ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To be eligible for consideration for accreditation, an institution or entity must satisfy the following minimum requirements.

- (a) It shall be either an institution of postsecondary education (as herein defined) primarily offering certificates or diplomas and postsecondary institutions offering associate's, bachelor's, or master's degrees in programs designed to educate students for professional, technical, or occupational careers; or a noninstitutional entity offering professional enhancement education.

An institution is presumed to be an institution of postsecondary education if it (1) enrolls a majority of its students in one or more programs, the content of which is on a postsecondary academic level and which leads to a postsecondary academic credential (such as a certificate, diploma, or degree) or an occupational objective; (2) enrolls students who possess a high school diploma or its equivalent, or who are beyond the age of compulsory school attendance and demonstrate through valid assessment an ability to benefit from the educational experience; and (3) offers at least one program which is a minimum of 300 clock hours in length.

A noninstitutional entity must enroll a majority of its students in one or more programs, the content of which is on the postsecondary level or at a level which prepares the student for immediate enrollment into a postsecondary program. A noninstitutional entity is ineligible to participate in federal student aid programs or to award degrees.

- (b) It shall be legally organized; licensed by (1) the appropriate state education agency for postsecondary institutions or (2) the appropriate state agency for authorizing the conduct of business in that state for noninstitutional entities; and have offered its educational services to the general public for at least two years immediately prior to consideration of the application by ACICS.
- (c) Its mission shall be to offer educational programs which help students develop skills and competencies to enhance their careers.
- (d) Its residential enrollment and enrollment in each program shall be sufficient both to support course work and learning experiences that, separately or in combination, constitute measurable and defined educational programs, and to enable ACICS to assess the educational effectiveness of those programs.

- (e) It shall have a sufficient number of graduates from a majority of its programs to enable ACICS to assess the educational effectiveness of those programs. Programs offered at any credential level from which there are no graduates will be reviewed in accordance with Section 2-2-502.
- (f) It shall be in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations.
- (g) It shall be organized as a corporation, as a limited partnership with a corporate general partner, or as a limited liability company.
- (h) Its evaluation for accreditation shall be authorized by the chief executive officer.
- (i) Its owners or managers shall not have been debarred by ACICS (See Section 2-3-1000).

# TITLE I                      GENERAL POLICIES

## Chapter 3            Classification of Campuses

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### INTRODUCTION

ACICS is an institutional accrediting body that accredits entire institutions. It does not separately accredit individual campuses or programs. Therefore, all campuses must meet the standards established by the Council and must be evaluated accordingly.

### 1-3-100 – CLASSIFICATION OF CAMPUSES

The Council classifies campus activities into three categories: main (including additional space—see Glossary definition), branch (including additional space), and learning site. Each classification has distinct characteristics, and the institution operating these facilities must comply with standards set forth by ACICS in Title III of this publication. A nonmain campus educational activity is one offered at any location away from a main campus. There is no separate accreditation for nonmain campus activities. The following nomenclature and characteristics are used by ACICS for classification and evaluation purposes.

**1-3-101. *Main.*** A main campus is the primary location of an institution to be accredited by ACICS. This campus is expected to meet fully all applicable standards set forth in the *Accreditation Criteria*.

**1-3-102. *Branch.*** A branch campus is any location of an institution other than the main, but under the same corporate structure as the main campus (i.e., part of the main campus corporation or a wholly owned subsidiary), that (1) is permanent in nature; (2) offers a full program leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized credential; and (3) is geographically separate from the main campus such that students may not easily avail themselves of educational, financial aid, and administrative services of the main campus.

Institutions wishing to open a branch campus with a name different from the main campus must obtain prior Council approval. In addition, the catalog and other promotional material must include a statement of ownership that clearly identifies all branch campuses and learning site locations under the same corporate structure of the main campus. The catalog of the main campus must clearly identify the programs offered only at the branch. The branch may publish its own catalog. There shall not be management agreements, option agreements, or other contractual agreements between the owner of the institution and other parties with respect to the branch bearing on the present or future management and control of the branch.

A branch may offer programs and/or credentials different from those offered at the main campus. A branch should have a significant amount of responsibility for administrative control, academic affairs, and student and financial services to respond to student needs on a day-to-day basis.

**1-3-103. *Learning Site.*** A learning site is a location where educational activities are conducted apart from a main or branch campus that does not, on its own, qualify as a branch campus.



## TITLE II      GENERAL PROCEDURES

### Chapter 1      Gaining and Maintaining Accreditation

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#### INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the steps that institutions must follow and the procedures utilized by ACICS leading to and following the award of accreditation status. Accreditation is a deliberate and thorough process and is entered into for purposes of quality assessment and institutional enhancement. When an institution applies for and receives a grant of accreditation, it is committing itself to operate in accordance with the standards and policies established by the Council throughout the term of the grant.

Inasmuch as accreditation is given for a specified period of time not to exceed eight years, ACICS uses the term “initial grant” to connote the first time an institution is accredited. The term “new grant” indicates a continuing status with ACICS after an institution has reapplied, has been reevaluated, and, in effect, has been reaccredited.

#### 2-1-100 – ACCREDITATION WORKSHOP REQUIREMENTS

The Council schedules accreditation workshops each year. Applicants for initial or new grants of accreditation are required to attend a workshop. During these workshops, Council representatives will consult with institutional representatives to help them understand and complete the process. Institutional representatives are required to attend an accreditation workshop within 18 months prior to the final submission of the self-study. For initial applicants, the chief on-site administrators of the main campus and all branch campuses are required to attend. For currently accredited institutions, the chief on-site administrators or the self-study coordinators of the main campus and all branch campuses are required to attend.

#### 2-1-200 – INITIAL ACCREDITATION

All communications concerning initiation of the accrediting process should be sent to the ACICS office. The accrediting process proceeds in distinct phases, each of which must be satisfactorily completed by the institution before the next can occur. Each phase must be authorized by the chief executive officer of the institution, who also can authorize voluntary withdrawal from the process at any time prior to final action by ACICS.

When considering whether to award an initial grant of accreditation to an institution, ACICS will take into consideration the actions of other recognized accrediting agencies that have denied accreditation to the institution, placed the institution on probationary status, or revoked the accreditation of the institution. If an institution's accreditation was withdrawn or denied previously by ACICS, its initial application will be considered only after at least two years have elapsed.

**2-1-201. *Preliminary Review.*** The institution must request in writing a preliminary review and receive a determination as to whether it is eligible to apply for accreditation. Such a preliminary review does not constitute an application.

To be eligible for accreditation, the institution must meet the eligibility criteria outlined in Title I, Chapter 2. In addition, it must have graduated at least one class at each credential level it offers. Programs offered at any credential level from which there are not graduates will be reviewed as required in Section 2-2-502.

**2-1-202. *Application.*** The institution, after receiving a favorable preliminary review, shall submit a formal application for accreditation on forms supplied by ACICS. By submitting an application for an initial grant of accreditation, the institution agrees to be bound by the standards contained herein, including the ACICS Bylaws contained in Appendix A.

The institution shall certify that the requirements covered in Title I, Chapter 2, “Eligibility Criteria” have been met. The application forms, eligibility certification, supporting documents required in the application form, and the nonrefundable application fee shall be submitted to ACICS.

Once an institution has been determined to be eligible for evaluation, filed a formal application, and remitted the application fee, the application is kept active for a period of one year.

**2-1-203. *Resource Visit.*** Following a determination by staff of the completeness of the application materials, a resource visit will be made to the institution, at the institution’s expense, to determine if it is ready to begin the self-evaluation. A report of the resource visit will be made available to the school and to ACICS and will be used for advisory purposes only.

Initial applicants must submit audited financial statements certified by an independent certified public accountant for the institution’s most recent fiscal year before a resource visit will be scheduled.

**2-1-204. *Self-Evaluation.*** Self-evaluation is the most important part of the accreditation process, requiring full involvement by administration, staff, and faculty. The Council publishes separate guidelines and materials to help institutions with the process.

**2-1-205. *Scheduling the Visit.*** Council staff will schedule dates for the visit. It is the responsibility of the institution to agree to dates for the visit when classes are in session, faculty is teaching, administrative staff is available, and other operations are functioning normally.

## **2-1-300 – NEW GRANT OF ACCREDITATION**

Before December 31 of the last year of the period for which accreditation has been granted, it is the responsibility of the institution to file an application for a new grant of accreditation. The institution is invited to reapply 18 months prior to the expiration of an existing grant. The accreditation previously granted to an institution expires automatically with the passage of time unless extended by an action taken by ACICS. An extension of the previous grant cannot exceed one year, and not more than one extension may be given except for extraordinary circumstances over which the institution has no control. The Council, at its discretion, may direct an unannounced visit to occur at an institution about which it has received adverse information or when general operations of the institution may be called into question. Procedures for unannounced visits are described in Appendix B.

**2-1-301. *Application.*** The process of application for a new grant is the same as for initial accreditation except that institutions are not required to undergo another resource visit. Institutions that operate branch campuses and that are applying for new grants of accreditation will be required to submit a separate self-study for each branch campus. The Council will not consider an application for a new grant of accreditation unless all reports are current and all fees are paid. (See Sections 2-1-801, 2-1-802, and 2-1-804.)

**2-1-302. *Withholding of Accreditation.*** A decision by ACICS, based upon the application and evaluation for a new grant, not to award accreditation for a new period is considered to be the withholding of accreditation, not the

withdrawal of the previous grant of accreditation. The previous grant expires automatically with the passage of time unless the Council affirmatively extends the previous grant while it is considering the new grant application. The Council always will give written reasons for withholding accreditation, and the matter, from that point, will be governed by procedures later described in Title II, Chapter 3, "Council Actions."

ACICS will not award a new grant of accreditation to an institution that is subject to an interim action by another recognized institutional accrediting agency or a state agency that could lead to the suspension, revocation, or termination of that institution's accreditation or authority to provide postsecondary education. Further, a new grant of accreditation will not be awarded to an institution that has been notified by its state licensing agency of a threatened suspension, revocation, or termination by the state of the institution's legal authority to provide postsecondary education, and the due process rights required by the action have not been exhausted.

## **2-1-400 – VISITING TEAMS, SELECTION AND COMPOSITION**

When an institution has submitted a satisfactory self-study and other required documentation, the office of the Executive Director will appoint a team to visit and evaluate the institution. The institution is notified of the composition of the visiting team and may request that team members be replaced for cause.

**2-1-401. *Selection of Team Members.*** Evaluators are selected from among educators, executives, and practitioners in business, administrative, and technical fields, and from state departments of education and other evaluation and approval bodies. The person designated as chair of the team always will be an experienced person who has responsibility for assuring that the visit is conducted fairly and thoroughly.

Appropriate state licensing and approval bodies are routinely notified of forthcoming visits and invited to participate in the visits as observers. They do not participate in team deliberations or in preparing the team report.

**2-1-402. *Composition of Teams.*** The size and qualifications of the team are determined at the discretion of the Council based on the size of the institution, the type and number of programs being offered, the mode of educational delivery, and other special circumstances. Teams conducting evaluations will consist of at least one person from another ACICS-accredited institution and at least one person who does not represent an ACICS-accredited institution, at a minimum. Additional team members will be named as needed and at the Council's discretion based on the student enrollment and the credentials offered by the institution, or to serve as subject specialists to evaluate specialized programs. The Council makes a conscious effort to send visitors who have had experience in an institution offering and awarding similar academic credentials.

The application forms and the completed self-study will be supplied to members of the visiting team for review prior to the visit and for use during the visit.

**2-1-403. *Evaluation of Separately Accredited Programs.*** If, in compliance with Section 3-1-515, an attestation and documentation have been provided to ACICS that a program at an institution has been separately accredited by a specialized accreditor recognized by the U.S. Department of Education or the Council on Higher Education Accreditation, ACICS at its sole discretion may accept those documents as evidence that the accredited program meets an acceptable level of quality.

**2-1-404. *Staff Member on Visit.*** A member of the ACICS staff accompanies teams on all visits. In the event that an ACICS staff member is unable to accompany a team on a visit, the use of a qualified contractor may be used as the ACICS staff representative on the visit. The ACICS staff representative is responsible for assuring that comparability

is achieved from visit to visit and from institution to institution. The same ACICS staff representative who accompanies a team also is available when ACICS deliberates and may be asked questions about what was observed and reported by the team during the visit.

**2-1-405. *Expenses.*** Visit expenses for all team members, including the ACICS staff member who accompanies the team, shall be paid by the institution. Expenses include an honorarium to the chair of the team, to all outside representatives, and to subject specialists. The institution is required to submit a deposit prior to the visit, which will be applied toward the expenses of the visiting team. The Council reserves the right to cancel a scheduled visit in the absence of the required visit deposit.

## **2-1-500 – TEAM FUNCTIONS AND PROCEDURES**

An institution is expected to be performing according to what it reported in its self-study and to be in compliance with the *Accreditation Criteria* at the time of the visit.

**2-1-501. *Scope of Visit.*** The scope of a visit will depend on the location, operation, size, and program offerings of the institution. All non-main campuses are subject to evaluation, either in conjunction with the main campus or separately.

**2-1-502. *Functions.*** The functions of the evaluation team are to verify information in the institution's self-study and to report all facts observed during the visit as to how the institution is accomplishing its stated mission, or failing to do so, in compliance with the criteria.

**2-1-503. *Procedures.*** Institutions are provided in advance with a checklist of materials and documents that should be current and readily available for review by the team. Prior to the visit, institutions are required to update the self-study where significant changes have occurred since its submission to ACICS.

During the visit, institutions are expected to make provisions for adequate consultation between team members and the faculty, administrative staff, and students. Some teams also may want to consult with the institution's board of directors or trustees and community leaders or employers.

The team prepares a written report that covers each area reviewed at the institution and includes other information pertinent to an accurate evaluation. The report subsequently is sent by the team chair to ACICS.

An exit conference is conducted at the conclusion of the visit and is attended by the chief executive or administrative officer of the institution and any others designated by the chief executive officer. During the session, the chair of the team will summarize the evaluation team's findings. Members of the team also may append to the report suggestions for institutional improvement, but such suggestions are not a part of the official team report later considered by ACICS. The visiting team does not make the accrediting decision.

## **2-1-600 – POST-VISIT PROCEDURES**

After the evaluation visit, the following post-visit procedures and reviews occur.

**2-1-601. *Opportunity to Respond.*** The ACICS office sends a copy of the evaluation report to the chief on-site administrative officer, who is invited to respond to it in writing within the specified time frame.

**2-1-602. *Intermediate Review.*** All materials pertinent to an institution's accreditation are reviewed by experienced persons before being reviewed by the appropriate commission of ACICS. These materials include, but are not limited to, the institution's self-evaluation report, the visiting team report, the institution's response to the team report, financial records of the institution (which are not examined by the evaluation team), the institution's current catalog, and any official reports from state or federal regulatory bodies.

This group will make a recommendation to ACICS if the evaluation file is complete. If the file is not complete, the reviewers will organize facts for ACICS but will not make a specific recommendation. The Council has the option of postponing examination of files that are incomplete at the time of the intermediate review, even if subsequent information has been received by the time ACICS meets.

**2-1-603. *Council Review.*** All materials collected during the evaluation process are reviewed by the ACICS Council. Only the Council can take a final accreditation action.

## **2-1-700 – COUNCIL ACTIONS**

Action by ACICS to accredit or renew accreditation or not to do so, or to limit or otherwise condition the grant of accreditation, is determined only following review of the self-evaluation report prepared by the applicant institution, the report of the visiting team, the response of the institution to that report, the institution's financial condition, and the recommendations (if any) of the interim reviewers. At each level of review, the number and seriousness of any deficiencies are taken into account, as well as the institution's indicated willingness and capability to overcome them. The Council may, at its discretion, direct an institution to submit a teach-out agreement, as described in Section 2-2-303 of the *Accreditation Criteria*. Specific Council actions are discussed in Title II, Chapter 3.

## **2-1-800 – MAINTAINING ACCREDITATION**

An institution, by successfully completing the process, inherently agrees to keep ACICS fully informed of activities at the institution. The Council requires an annual report from each main and branch campus, where appropriate. Institutional changes that must be reported to ACICS are described in Chapter 2.

**2-1-801. *Annual Institutional Report.*** The Annual Institutional Report must be submitted on Council forms and be certified by the chief executive officer of the institution. It is due on or before September 15 annually. Failure to submit the Annual Institutional Report in a timely manner will result in the revocation of accreditation.

**2-1-802. *Annual Financial Report.*** The Annual Financial Report must be submitted on Council forms and be certified by an officer or stockholder of the corporation. It is due no more than 180 days after the end of the institution's fiscal year. Failure to submit the Annual Financial Report in a timely manner will result in the revocation of accreditation.

**2-1-803. *Audited Financial Statements.*** Audited financial statements, certified by an independent certified public accountant, are essential instruments in the determination by ACICS of an institution's financial stability. All institutions are required to submit audited financial statements within 180 days of the end of their fiscal year.

**2-1-804. *Payment of Fees.*** Institutions are required to pay all annual sustaining fees, user fees, evaluation visit deposits and expenses, and other assessed costs by the established deadlines. Non-payment of any fees or expenses subjects a member to revocation of accreditation without a hearing. (See Article VI, Section 5 of the Bylaws [Appendix A]).

**2-1-805. *Unannounced Visits.*** The Council, at its discretion, may direct an unannounced visit to occur at an institution about which it has received adverse information or when general operations of the institution may be called into question. Procedures for unannounced visits are described in Appendix B.

**2-1-806. *Denoting Accreditation.*** Only after accreditation is granted by ACICS may an institution so denote its status in official publications or in advertising. The form of notice is prescribed by ACICS, and specific permissible language is set forth in Guidelines for Institutional Publications in Appendix C.

**2-1-807. *Program Length and Tuition and Fees.*** ACICS will determine average program lengths and tuition and fees annually based on information collected in the Annual Institutional Reports and will provide these data to all accredited institutions. Institutions with program lengths that are more than one standard deviation from the average will be required to submit an explanation for the deviation. If the Council does not accept the explanation, it may require a consultation between ACICS and the institution, direct an on-site evaluation, issue a show-cause directive, or withhold inclusion of the program from the institution's current grant of accreditation.

In assessing these relationships, the Council will consider institutional mission, program objectives and content, types and locations of instructional delivery, knowledge and skills necessary for students to reach competence, and additional requirements that may be placed upon a graduate for employability, including, if applicable, certification or licensure.

**2-1-808. *Interim Financial Review.*** The Council may require an institution to furnish Quarterly Financial Reports, a Financial Improvement Plan, or interim narrative reports, or it may issue a show-cause directive to an institution due to the financial operation of the institution. Institutions that are required to prepare interim reports are considered to be on Financial Review and are subject to additional restrictions regarding the initiation of nonmain campuses.

**2-1-809. *Retention and Placement.*** ACICS will determine average retention and placement rates annually for institutions based on information collected in the Annual Institutional Reports and will provide these data to all accredited institutions. An institution with retention or placement rates that are not in keeping with the expectations of ACICS may require a consultation between ACICS and the institution, the submission of a corrective action plan, undergo an on-site evaluation, or be issued a show-cause directive, a deferral or denial action related to the institution's application for a new or initial grant of accreditation, or directed another appropriate action.

**2-1-810. *Student Loan Cohort Default Rates.*** The Council will monitor an institution's student loan cohort default rates. An institution may be subject to additional reports or actions if:

- (a) its most recent cohort default rate is 20% or greater; or
- (b) its default rate improvement plan failed to minimize student loan defaults adequately for those cohort years for which the plan was in effect.

## TITLE II            GENERAL PROCEDURES

### Chapter 2        Institutional Changes

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#### INTRODUCTION

Approval by ACICS is required before substantive changes are implemented, and institutions should notify ACICS of other significant changes. The material in this chapter explains the evaluation procedures that ACICS will follow for approving substantive changes. The Council shall be notified immediately of substantive changes at an institution, including changes in its mission or objectives, management, ownership, control, educational programs, mode of delivery, name, geographic location, and state or local authority to operate.

#### 2-2-100 – NONMAIN CAMPUSES

**2-2-101. *Initiation of Nonmain Campus Activity.*** A nonmain campus activity includes any ongoing instructional activity offered at a site away from the main facility. Such activities are described in Section 1-3-100. Reporting requirements are as follows:

- (a) *Branch Campus.* It is the responsibility of the institution to notify ACICS of the intention to initiate a branch campus before the branch begins classes. Activity must be initiated at the branch campus within one year of the proposed start date. A branch campus must be approved by the Council before advertising, recruiting, and enrollment may take place. Failure to notify ACICS prior to the initiation of a branch campus may call into question the accreditation of the main campus.

The institution shall provide, on Council forms, the rationale for initiation of the branch and other information about the educational programs, credentials to be awarded, faculty, learning resources, physical and financial resources, strength in supporting fields, admission and graduation requirements, compliance with state law and authority to operate, number of students, and administrative arrangements. An acceptable catalog which identifies the branch campus also shall be included as part of the application.

The Council will monitor the number of branch applications submitted for each main campus and campuses under common ownership based on a demonstration of sound administrative and financial capabilities. The Council reserves the right to limit the number of branches based on its review of demonstrated administrative and financial capabilities.

- (b) *Learning Site.* It is the responsibility of the institution to notify ACICS of any new learning site activity prior to initiation. Activity must be initiated at the learning site within one year of the proposed start date. A learning site must be approved by the Council before advertising, recruiting, and enrollment may take place. The institution shall provide, on Council forms, the location of the activity, its educational purpose, the programs offered, the number of students involved, and any additional information ACICS may request.

Any institution which (1) is under review by the Financial Review Committee of ACICS, (2) shows either a net loss or a negative net worth on its most recent financial report, (3) is required to report placement and/or retention data to the Institutional Effectiveness Committee, or (4) is under a deferral action by the Council must request and receive prior permission from ACICS for the initiation of any nonmain campus activity. An institution under a show-cause directive, a negative action, or in a probation status will not receive approval for the initiation of any nonmain campus activity while the action is in effect.

**2-2-102. Evaluation of Nonmain Campus Activity.** All activity for which approval is sought will be evaluated by ACICS before approval is granted. Following is a description of those evaluations.

- (a) *Branch Campus.* Initial inclusion of a branch within the scope of the accreditation of the main campus may be granted by the Executive Director upon receipt of all required information. The Council must be notified prior to the initiation of a new branch. An institution proposing the initiation of a new branch must submit Part One of the Branch Campus Application and accompanying exhibits. A new branch must be approved and Part One of the Branch Campus Application processed by the Council before an institution advertises, recruits, or enrolls students at the proposed branch. The Council reserves the right to require a preliminary visit to any potential branch campus location prior to the granting of initial inclusion.

A branch campus that is granted initial inclusion by the Executive Director will be required to undergo a verification visit within six months after the initial class start date. Following this visit, the Council may require the institution to submit additional information to satisfy areas of concern identified during the evaluation.

A decision regarding the final inclusion of a branch campus will be made by the Council in full session following a visit by an evaluation team. Prior to the final inclusion visit, the chief on-site administrator of the branch will be required to attend an Accreditation Workshop and to submit Part Two of the Branch Campus Application. The evaluation will normally be scheduled for twelve to eighteen months after the initial class start date and will be conducted by a team of evaluators determined by the size of the institution, the type and number of programs being offered, and other special circumstances. Identification of significant deficiencies during the verification or final inclusion visits can result in an immediate show-cause directive to the main campus.

Only after a determination of acceptability, either at the initial or final inclusion level, and notification to the institution of the decision, may the institution consider a branch campus to be included within the scope of the institution's grant of accreditation. If approval is withheld, the withholding may be treated as a deferral or a denial, based on circumstances, and the institution may exercise its due process rights as outlined in Title II, Chapter 3.

- (b) *Learning Site.* The Executive Director is authorized to evaluate and approve learning site activities. Learning site activities of an accredited institution are eligible to be evaluated for inclusion within the scope of the accreditation of the parent institution provided that the learning site activity has been established to meet a specific educational need or condition and is authorized by the appropriate governmental education authority, if applicable.

An institution proposing the initiation of a learning site must submit a Learning Site Application. The institution must assure the Council that the learning site activities complement the overall objectives of the institution. Based on its review of the application materials, ACICS may (1) grant final inclusion of the learning site or (2) deny the application.

A learning site that is granted final inclusion by the Executive Director will be required to undergo a verification visit within six months after the initial class start date if 50% or more of a program will be offered at the site. Following this visit, the Council may require the institution to submit additional information to satisfy areas of concern identified during the evaluation.

All learning site locations of an institution are evaluated during an institution's regular evaluation for a new grant of accreditation.

**2-2-103. *Substantial Change to Nonmain Campus.*** Prior notification to ACICS is required when an institution decides to make substantial changes to the operation of a nonmain campus. Notice shall be made in writing to the Executive Director, who is authorized to act on behalf of ACICS in approving such changes.

Failure to notify and receive approval prior to substantial change of activity may call into question the accreditation of the institution, and further evaluation may be required.

## **2-2-200 – REDESIGNATION OF CAMPUSES**

**2-2-201. *Branch-to-Freestanding Applications.*** A branch campus is eligible for evaluation as a freestanding, separately accredited institution only if it has been operating as an approved branch campus for at least two years. Branch campuses seeking freestanding status must submit an Application for Accreditation, audited financial statements certified by an independent certified public accountant for the institution's most recent fiscal year, and undergo an on-site evaluation visit. The visit will not occur until audited financial statements are received.

**2-2-202. *Reassignment Classification of Campuses.*** Institutions seeking to reassign the classification of a campus must submit a written request that includes the rationale to the Council. If the grant expiration date of a reassigned branch campus and their new main campus are different, the campus' new expiration date will be the earlier of the grant lengths. However, the Council reserves the right to assign an on-site evaluation visit at either the main or branch campus at any time as it deems necessary.

## **2-2-300 – CLOSING OF A CAMPUS**

In all instances of termination of activity at either main or nonmain campuses, ACICS must be assured that provision is made for presently enrolled students to complete the program of instruction for which they have enrolled, either at that institution or at another acceptable institution. In addition, ACICS must be assured that student academic transcripts are safely stored and protected and that the transcripts will be accessible to students and alumni indefinitely. ACICS and the appropriate regulatory agency must be notified of the arrangements made in this regard.

**2-2-301. *Closing of a Main Campus.*** An institution is required to notify ACICS as far in advance as possible when it plans to cease operation. It must complete the appropriate forms describing its plans for teaching out its students and for storing and servicing its records and other information necessary for effecting the cessation of operations as smoothly as possible. The institution's grant of accreditation will be revoked as of the effective date of closing.

When ACICS receives information from any source that an institution has ceased to operate, it shall immediately take steps to verify the information. If the Council believes that the institution, in fact, has ceased operations, the grant of accreditation is summarily suspended. Such action is authorized without prior notice or hearing and with immediate public notice.

The institution shall be notified of the summary suspension in writing at its address of record. Within 10 days after receipt of the suspension notice, the institution may petition ACICS for an expedited determination of whether such suspension should be withdrawn. If no petition is filed within 10 days, the suspension automatically shall become a revocation effective as of the date of notice of suspension.

**2-2-302. *Closing of a Nonmain Campus.*** An institution is required to notify ACICS as far in advance as possible when it plans to close a nonmain campus. It must complete the appropriate forms describing its plans for teaching out its students and for storing and servicing its records and other information necessary for effecting the cessation of

operations as smoothly as possible. The nonmain campus will cease to be included in the institution's grant of accreditation as of the effective date of the closing.

**2-2-303. *Teach-out.*** The Council may direct a currently accredited institutions to provide a school closure plan or a formal teach-out agreement in response to adverse information, high cohort default rate(s), low retention and/or placement rate(s), financial instability, or other concerns that may call into question the institution's ability to continue to serve the educational needs and objectives of its students or to continue as an on-going concern. If an institution closes or announces its intent to close, the Council will work to the extent feasible with the U.S. Department of Education and the appropriate state regulatory agencies to ensure that students are given reasonable opportunities to complete their education without additional charge. An institution that closes without completing its contractual training obligations to students must refund all unearned revenue.

Should an institution enter into a teach-out agreement with another accredited institution, the signed agreement must be submitted to and approved by the Council prior to implementation. In addition to general information on the institutions entering into the teach-out agreement, the agreement must demonstrate that:

- (a) students will be provided, without additional charge, all of the instruction promised but not yet provided by the closing institution; and
- (b) the teach-out institution is geographically proximate to the closing institution or otherwise can provide students with reasonable access to its programs and services, and that it has the necessary experience, resources, and support services to provide an educational program that is of acceptable quality and is reasonably similar in content, structure, and scheduling to that provided by the closing institution.

## **2-2-400 – OWNERSHIP OR CONTROL**

The Council at all times must know who is in control of an accredited institution. The transfer of ownership or a change in the control of an institution is a substantial change that must be reported to the Council. In addition, any institution or owning corporation that is contemplating a transaction that may result in a change of ownership or control must notify the Council at least 15 days prior to consummating the proposed change. Failure to provide this notification in a timely manner may result in a delay processing the application. Transactions that constitute a change of ownership or control vary depending on the structure of the entity that owns or controls the institution.

Accredited institutions are owned or controlled by one of several types of corporations, by a limited partnership with a corporate general partner, or by a limited liability company, each of which is defined in the following subsections. In cases where the entity that directly owns or controls the institution is a subsidiary of another entity, the Council requires information on and monitors the ownership of the controlling entity, the parent entity, and any entities in the chain between those two.

- (a) *Privately held corporation.* A privately held corporation is one that operates for profit in which one or more stockholders own the voting stock of the corporation. The stock is marketable, but a majority of the voting stock is not traded on public markets overseen by governmental agencies such as the Securities and Exchange Commission in the United States. The control of a privately held corporation is vested in those in control of a majority of the voting stock of the corporation.
- (b) *Publicly traded corporation.* A publicly traded corporation is one that operates for profit in which a majority of the voting stock is traded on public markets overseen by governmental agencies such as the Securities and Exchange Commission in the United States. The control of a publicly traded corporation is vested in the voting members of the board of directors of the corporation.

- (c) *Not-for-profit corporation.* A not-for-profit corporation is one that has been determined by a governmental agency to be tax exempt for reasons the same as or similar to those set forth in Section 501 of the Internal Revenue Code of the United States. The control of a not-for-profit corporation is vested in the voting members of the board of directors of the corporation.
- (d) *Limited partnership with corporate general partner.* A limited partnership is one that is organized in accordance with the partnership laws of its home jurisdiction. The control of the limited partnership is vested in the general partner, which must be a corporation as defined in subsection (a), (b), or (c) above.
- (e) *Limited liability company.* A limited liability company is one that has been granted a certificate of approval under the laws of the state corporation office or other appropriate regulatory body in its home jurisdiction. A limited liability company may or may not issue certificates of ownership. The control of a limited liability company is vested in the members, whose ownership interests are defined in the limited liability company operating agreement or other such governing document, who are in control of a majority of the direct or beneficial ownership interest in the company.

**2-2-401. Change of Ownership or Control.** A change of ownership or control generally means that a transaction has occurred whereby a new person, combination of persons, or entity can exercise control of a corporation or limited liability company as described in Section 2-2-400. The following subsections outline the typical changes of ownership or control of the three types of corporations that own accredited institutions, including corporate general partners in limited partnerships, and limited liability companies. Transactions other than those outlined below, however, may constitute a change of ownership or control, and the Council reserves the right in its discretion to make the determination of whether a change of ownership or control has occurred in all cases. Institutions, therefore, must keep the Council informed of all substantive changes in the ownership of stock and the composition of the board of directors.

In addition to the transactions outlined below, any change from one type of entity to another as defined in Section 2-2-400 constitutes a change of ownership or control. Institutions also are reminded that nonmain campuses cannot be bought or sold independently of their main campus.

- (a) *Privately held corporation.* A change of ownership or control of a privately held corporation occurs as a result of any of the following transactions:
  - (i) the transfer of 50% or more of the total outstanding voting stock from one party or parties to another party or parties;
  - (ii) a transfer of voting stock that results in the ownership of 50% or more of the total outstanding voting stock by any party other than any previous owner of 50% or more of the total outstanding voting stock;
  - (iii) a transfer of voting stock whereby a stockholder's ownership of outstanding voting stock decreases from more than 50% to 50% or less, or from 50% to less than 50%; or
  - (iv) any other transaction whereby a stockholder or group of stockholders who previously could not exercise control of the corporation as described in Section 2-2-400(a) now can exercise control.
- (b) *Publicly traded corporation.* A change of ownership or control of a publicly traded corporation occurs as a result of any of the following transactions or events:
  - (i) the change of 50% or more of the voting members of the board of directors in any rolling, 12-month period;

- (ii) a change in the number of voting members of the board of directors in any rolling, 12-month period that will allow a group of directors to exercise control who could not exercise control before the change;
  - (iii) the acquisition of outstanding voting shares by any entity whereby that entity owns 50% or more of the total outstanding voting shares; or
  - (iv) any other transaction that is deemed by an appropriate governmental agency to constitute a change of control, including but not limited to a transaction that requires the corporation to file Form 8-K with the Securities and Exchange Commission of the United States.
- (c) *Not-for-profit corporation.* A change of control of a not-for-profit corporation occurs as a result of any of the following occurrences:
  - (i) the change of 50% or more of the voting members of the board of directors in any rolling, 12-month period; or
  - (ii) a change in the number of voting members of the board of directors in any rolling, 12-month period that will allow a group of directors to exercise control who could not exercise control before the change.
- (d) *Limited partnership with corporate general partner.* A change of ownership or control of a limited partnership with a corporate general partner occurs when the corporate general partner has undergone a change of ownership or control as defined in subsection (a), (b), or (c) above.
- (e) *Limited liability company.* A change of ownership or control of a limited liability company occurs as a result of any of the following transactions:
  - (i) the transfer of 50% or more of the direct or beneficial ownership interest from one member or members to another member or members;
  - (ii) a transfer of direct or beneficial ownership interest that results in the holding of 50% or more of the total direct or beneficial ownership interest by any member other than any previous member who owned 50% or more of the total direct or beneficial ownership interest;
  - (iii) a transfer of direct or beneficial ownership interest whereby a member's direct or beneficial ownership interest decreases from more than 50% to 50% or less, or from 50% to less than 50%; or
  - (iv) any other transaction whereby a member or group of members who previously could not exercise control of the company as described in Section 2-2-400(e) now can exercise control.

A change of ownership or control also occurs when ownership or control of the primary assets of an institution or the authority to operate an institution is transferred from the controlling corporation, limited partnership, or limited liability company to another corporation, limited partnership, or limited liability company. A change of ownership or control, however, has not occurred when there is a transfer of assets among wholly owned subsidiary corporations or between a wholly owned subsidiary corporation and its parent corporation; a transfer of assets from a subsidiary corporation to its parent corporation where the parent corporation owns a majority of the outstanding stock of the subsidiary corporation; or a transfer of assets among subsidiary corporations where the common parent owns a majority of the outstanding stock of the subsidiary corporations.

The Council, for purposes of determining ownership or control, views married couples as a single entity, and it views closely related family groups as a single entity in most cases where all of the present and future relevant stockholders actively participate in the management of the corporation. No change of ownership occurs when stock is transferred to a close family member by operation of law or inheritance upon the death of one of the stockholders.

**2-2-402. *Contingent Sales.*** The Council will not grant reinstatement of accreditation after a change of ownership or control if the sale of the stock or assets triggering the change of ownership is contingent on approval of the transaction by the Council. If the transaction is rescinded as a result of a condition subsequent to the change of ownership or control of an institution, then the previous owner must apply to the Council for reinstatement.

**2-2-403. *Change of Ownership or Control Review Procedures.*** The following procedures govern the Council's review of changes of ownership or control:

- (a) *Automatic Discontinuation.* Any change of ownership or control results in the immediate and automatic discontinuation of an institution's grant of accreditation. The grant of accreditation may be reinstated only upon application to and approval by the Council. Because the discontinuation results without action or prior approval on the part of the Council, this change in status does not constitute withdrawal of accreditation and is not a negative action.
- (b) *Reinstatement.* After the grant of accreditation has been discontinued, it may be reinstated at the discretion of the Council at such time and according to terms and conditions that it has established or may establish in the future. Those terms and conditions are set forth in policy statements issued to the field and in the change of ownership application document that institutions must file to initiate the reinstatement process. When the Council is not in session, the Financial Review Committee is authorized to grant a temporary reinstatement of the grant of accreditation for a period sufficient to permit the Council to review and consider the application and all required supporting documentation.

The Council will conduct a site visit at any institution that has undergone a change of ownership or control within six months of the effective date of the change. The Council will not consider the final reinstatement of an institution's grant of accreditation until this visit has been conducted. In addition, the Council may require the new owner(s) or the chief on-site administrator to attend an Accreditation Workshop before the final reinstatement of an institution's grant of accreditation will be considered.

- (c) *Effect.* Until either temporary or final reinstatement of the grant of accreditation is granted, the accreditation of the institution remains in abeyance. If approval of the application for reinstatement is withheld, the matter will be treated procedurally as a deferral or denial, as the case may be. (See Title II, Chapter 3, Council Actions, for further information.)

## **2-2-500 – PROGRAMS OF STUDY**

**2-2-501. *Initiation and Evaluation of New Programs.*** The Council must be notified prior to the start of all new programs. All new programs and modes of delivery must be initiated within one year of the planned start date. A new program must be approved by the Council before an institution advertises, recruits, or enrolls students in the proposed program. The institution must submit a program outline, course descriptions, an explanation of the mode of educational delivery, and supporting data. Additional information must be submitted on Council forms. The submission of an Annual Institutional Report or catalog identifying a new program does not constitute appropriate notification to the Council. Any institution required to report placement and/or retention data to the Institutional Effectiveness Committee or financial reports to the Financial Review Committee may be required to obtain prior permission from ACICS for the initiation of any new program. Any institution under a show-cause directive, a negative action, or in a probation status will not receive approval for the initiation of any new programs while the directive is in effect. Any of the following changes to an existing program creates a new program:

- (a) any change of 25% or more in existing contact hours, credit awarded, curriculum content (courses offered), or program length of a currently approved program;

- (b) a change in academic measurement from clock hours to credit hours or vice versa, or a change from quarter to semester credit hours or vice versa; or
- (c) any additions or deletions of courses offered that may change the overall objective of a currently approved program.

For changes in academic measurement described in (b) above, the institution must submit Parts I and II of the New Program Application.

All other substantive changes to programs require the submission of a complete New Program Application. The submission of an Annual Institutional Report or catalog identifying program changes does not constitute appropriate notification to the Council.

An institution proposing new programs must assure ACICS that the programs conform to the stated mission of the institution and its current program offerings. The Council reserves the right when reviewing new programs to review the entire institution.

If a new program complements the general and occupational objectives upon which the institution previously has been evaluated and accredited, and the program is being presented to the public and students as it was presented to ACICS, ordinarily no further evaluation will be required at the time of approval. However, all program offerings of an institution are appropriately evaluated during an institution's regular evaluation for a new grant of accreditation.

If a new program is determined to be substantially different in course content, general or occupational objective, or in promotional description from other programs offered by the institution, ACICS may direct that a visit be conducted even before granting initial inclusion. If the institution has no prior experience with a particular program, a site visit by a subject specialist and Council staff is required before ACICS will grant final inclusion.

If, as a result of any new program visit, ACICS determines that the overall quality of an institution is being diminished, the institution may be scheduled for a full reevaluation.

**2-2-502. *Initiation and Evaluation of New Programs at Higher Credential Levels than Previously Offered.*** An institution that intends to offer its first new program at a higher credential than it previously has awarded must submit additional materials and undergo evaluation beyond those procedures outlined in Section 2-2-501 above. In addition to the New Program Application, the institution must submit a detailed transition plan describing how it is or intends to come into compliance with the requirements for this new credential as described in the applicable chapter of Title III of the *Accreditation Criteria*.

The New Program Application and transition plan will be reviewed by the Council. Any institution required to report placement and/or retention data to the Institutional Effectiveness Committee or financial reports to the Financial Review Committee must obtain prior permission from the Council for the initiation of its first new program at a higher credential. If the application and plan are determined to be complete, an institution will be granted approval to advertise, recruit, and enroll for the program(s) and an evaluation visit will be scheduled within six months of the initial start date of the program. The purpose of the evaluation visit will be to assess the institution's initial compliance with the Accreditation Criteria for the higher credential program, and the appropriate composition of the team will be determined by the Council.

The application and transition plan, the site visit report, and the institution's response to the report will be reviewed by the Council at its next regularly scheduled meeting. If the Council determines that the transition plan is appropriate and that the institution is sufficiently prepared to offer the new credential, it will grant the institution initial inclusion for the new program. The Council will provide the institution in the initial inclusion notice with a timetable for the submission of periodic progress reports and for a follow-up site visit once the program has a sufficient enrollment and/or a sufficient number of graduates.

Final inclusion of the new program will be granted by the Council only after the follow-up visit has been conducted. The institution may request that the follow-up visit take place earlier than scheduled by the Council if it has a sufficient number of graduates who have earned the new credential. The Council retains the right to determine when the follow-up visit will occur.

Subsequent new programs at the new credential level will be evaluated by the Council using the new program procedures described in Section 2-2-501 above.

An institution may not submit an application for a new program at a higher credential when approval of final inclusion of a program at a lower credential level is pending.

### **2-2-503. *Changes to Programs.***

- (a) **Substantive Changes.** Institutions must apply for approval from ACICS for any of the following changes to a program prior to their implementation or the revised program will be considered an unapproved program. Failure to do so will result in a show-cause action for offering an unapproved program or unapproved mode of delivery. Institutions must submit the appropriate form and supporting documentation for the following:
  - (i) the offering of a program at a higher education credential than currently approved for;
  - (ii) any changes of 25% or more in existing contact hours, credit awarded, curriculum content (courses offered), or program length of a currently awarded program;
  - (iii) a change from clock to credit hours or vice versa, or a change from quarter to semester credit hours or vice versa;
  - (iv) a change in the overall objective of the program;
  - (v) the initiation of an on-line delivery format for less than 50% of a program of study;
  - (vi) the initiation of an on-line delivery format for 50% or more of a program of study.

Changes (i) through (iv) to programs as indicated above require the submission and approval of a New Program Application Form. Changes, as noted in (v) and (vi) above, require the submission and approval of a Distance Education Activity Application. An institution with initial approval may offer only programs or courses included in the Distance Education Activity Application until final approval by the Council. If the institution wishes to offer additional programs on-line before final action by the Council, it must separately obtain approval for each program. If the institution wishes to add, delete, or modify on-line courses before final action by the Council, it must separately obtain approval for each course change.

For changes as described in (iii) above, the institution must submit only Parts I and II of the New Program Application.

- (b) **Non-Substantive Changes.** Institutions must notify, but do not need approval from the Council before implementing the following changes to programs.
  - (i) any change of less than 25% in existing contact hours; credit awarded, curriculum content (courses offered), or program length of a currently approved program; or
  - (ii) a change in the name of an existing program that does not change the overall objective of the program.

All changes to program as indicated above require official notification be submitted to the Council using the “Non-Substantive Program Modification Form.”

The submission of an Annual Institutional Report or catalog identifying program changes does not constitute appropriate notification to the Council.

Furthermore, if cumulative changes to a single program within a twelve-month period equal or exceed 25% of the contact hours, credit hours, curriculum content or program length, a New Program Application form must be submitted (See Section 2-2-503(a)).

**2-2-504. *Termination of Programs.*** A decision by an institution to terminate any program voluntarily must be appropriately communicated to all interested publics. These publics include, but are not limited to, students, governmental agencies, the local community, and ACICS.

New students may not be enrolled in any program which cannot be completed prior to the termination date for which public notice has been given. Moreover, the institution is obligated to continue to offer appropriate courses, including prerequisites, so that currently enrolled students will be able to complete the program and receive the credential which was their designated educational objective. For this purpose, the period of time need not extend beyond sufficient time for students already enrolled and maintaining normal academic progress to complete the program.

To maintain approval, an institution must maintain enrollment in each program of study. If an approved program is inactive for at least three years, the program will be considered discontinued and will be removed from the institution's list of approved programs. To reinstate the program, the institution must submit an ACICS New Program Application.

**2-2-505. *Consortium Agreements.*** A consortium agreement permits an institution to arrange for a portion of its approved program to be delivered by another accredited institution in the consortium. Consortium agreements must be in writing and must be disclosed in the catalog. Institutions are advised that specific state and federal regulations may apply.

- (a) The entire consortium agreement must be submitted to and approved by the Council prior to the institution's participation in the consortium. The institution seeking approval of such an agreement must submit documentation that demonstrates that the other members of the consortium that will deliver instruction hold institutional accreditation from an accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and that the portion of the program to be delivered by any other institution have been approved by that institution's accrediting agency.
- (b) The consortium agreement must identify how the curriculum and instruction will be monitored, how curriculum revisions will be undertaken, and how student grievances will be addressed. The institution seeking approval of a consortium agreement must acknowledge in writing that it retains ultimate responsibility for the delivery of its programs and the satisfaction of its students.
- (c) At least 25% of the program must be delivered by the institution that awards the academic credential.

**2-2-506. *Contracts with Unaccredited Institutions or Entities.*** An institution may enter into a contract with an unaccredited institution or entity for the delivery of up to 25% of a program of study.

The institution must submit the contract and provide the following information to ACICS for review and approval prior to the initiation of the contract:

- (a) a full catalog description of the program and the services to be provided by the contractor;
- (b) a systematic plan for administrative and student evaluations of instructors provided by the contractor;

- (c) evidence of the qualifications of faculty to teach the contracted courses;
- (d) a description of the instructional facilities provided by the contractor; and
- (e) plans for the completion of the program should the contractor fail to provide contracted services.

**2-2-507. *Articulation Agreements with Secondary Schools.*** An institution may enter into an articulation agreement with a secondary school to transfer credit for courses taken at the secondary level that are equal to courses offered in a postsecondary institution. Articulation agreements must be in writing, periodically reviewed, signed, and dated. The institution must maintain a file consisting of the following: (1) a Letter of Intent to Articulate signed by both institutions specifying the numbers and titles of courses to be articulated, (2) a written description of the standards for acceptable transfer of credit, and (3) a comparison of the course objectives of the secondary and postsecondary courses(s) with signed approvals of both institutions. These credits appear on both the secondary and postsecondary transcripts.

**2-2-508. *International Partnership Agreements.*** An ACICS-accredited institution may enter into an international partnership agreement with an institution of higher education in a geographic location other than that of the United States or its territories. At least 25% of the program must be delivered by the institution that awards the academic credential.

The ACICS-accredited institution must submit an international partnership agreement to the Council and provide the following information to ACICS for review and approval prior to the initiation of the partnership agreement:

- (a) evidence provided by the institution or agency that the international partner and the programs to be delivered are recognized by an educational approval agency equivalent to an accrediting agency recognized by the US Department of Education;
- (b) a full catalog description of the program and the services to be provided through the partnership agreement;
- (c) a plan which describes recruitment, admission, standards of satisfactory academic progress;
- (d) a plan which describes student financial relations, including tuition and fees, and refund policies;
- (e) a description of the program(s) of study or courses offered;
- (f) a systematic plan for administration and student evaluations of instructors provided by in the partnership agreement;
- (g) evidence of the qualifications of faculty to teach;
- (h) a description of the instructional facilities at the international site;
- (i) a plan for the completion of the program(s) should the international partner fail to provide agreed upon services;
- (j) a plan for the safety and security of students, faculty, and staff.
- (k) specify which programs or portions are to be delivered via distance education and how the institutions will monitor growth.

**2-2-600 – OTHER CHANGES**

**2-2-601. *Change of Name.*** The Council must be notified and grant approval when an institution decides to change its name. Forms are supplied for the institution to explain and justify the change. The Executive Director has the authority to review and approve a change in name. The following limitations apply:

- (a) “junior college” may be used only by those institutions that offer at least an academic associate’s degree;
- (b) “senior college” may be used only by those institutions that offer at least a bachelor’s degree; and
- (c) “university” may be used only by those institutions that offer a master’s degree.

These limitations are effective for all Change of Name applications received after January 1, 1997. All institutional names approved prior to that date may be retained.

**2-2-602. *Change of Location.*** The Council must be notified and grant approval when an institution decides to change its physical location or its address and prior to the initiation of classes at any new location. Forms are supplied for the institution to explain and justify the change. The Executive Director has the authority to review and approve a change of location. In addition, the Executive Director may require an on-site evaluation visit as part of its review in order to determine compliance with Council standards.

## TITLE II            GENERAL PROCEDURES

### Chapter 3        Council Actions

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#### INTRODUCTION

When the Council has considered all of the information and reports submitted as a result of the accrediting process, it will make a judgment as to an institution's compliance with the *Accreditation Criteria*. The Council's decision is based on the extent of an institution's compliance. The judgment made is referred to as a "Council action." The actions which the Council may take are described in this chapter. Procedures available to institutions to challenge those actions also are explained. There are four general areas of Council actions: accreditation granted, accreditation deferred, accreditation denied, and accreditation withdrawn.

If the Council believes that an institution is not in compliance with the *Accreditation Criteria*, it will take prompt adverse action against the institution, or it will require the institution to take appropriate action to bring itself into compliance with the *Accreditation Criteria* within a time frame specified by the Council after the institution has been notified that it is not in compliance. That time frame will not exceed the following:

- (a) twelve months, if the longest program is less than one year in length;
- (b) eighteen months, if the longest program is at least one year, but less than two years in length; and
- (c) two years, if the longest program is at least two years in length.

The above time frames may be extended at the sole discretion of the Council for good cause, including evidence that there has been significant improvement in the deficient area(s) and the applicable time frame does not provide sufficient time to demonstrate full compliance, e.g., significant improvement in completion or placement rates.

#### 2-3-100 – ACCREDITATION GRANTED

If an institution is found to be in compliance with the *Accreditation Criteria*, ACICS may grant accreditation for a specific period of time from a minimum of one year to a maximum of six years. The length of the grant shall be at the discretion of ACICS. A grant of accreditation for less than six years is not a negative action and, therefore, is not appealable.

The Council will not grant accreditation for a full six-year term if the grant is awarded following any hearing resulting from a previous action to deny accreditation.

**2-3-101. *Admonition.*** The Council may judge an institution to be generally in compliance with the criteria, but it also may wish to call the institution's attention to one or more deficiencies that are not serious enough to preclude a grant of accreditation but that nonetheless must be corrected. In these cases, the institution will be awarded a grant of accreditation but will be admonished to correct the deficiencies. An admonition is an instruction to an institution either to initiate some prescribed practice or to refrain from some proscribed activity. An admonition does not condition the grant of accreditation, but failure to respond to it could result in a subsequent negative action.

**2-3-200 – ACCREDITATION DEFERRED**

When an institution is measured against the criteria and is found to be in marginal compliance, or there is insufficient evidence available for the Council to make a decision, ACICS may defer action until a later date pending receipt of additional information. In such cases, ACICS will provide in writing the reasons for the deferral, state what the institution needs to provide, and invite a response to the findings by a specific date.

Deferral is, in effect, “no action at this time” and is not a negative action. Therefore, deferral is not an appealable action. Neither is a deferral a final action. In all cases of deferral on reevaluation of accredited institutions, the Council will extend the present grant of accreditation for a period sufficient for the institution to provide the information needed, including time for procedural due process following the Council’s review of the information.

**2-3-300 – ACCREDITATION DENIED**

Denial of an accredited status is characterized by the Council as a “withholding” action and is differentiated from suspension of accreditation, which is a “withdrawal” action. There are two levels of denial. One totally withholds accreditation of the institution or a branch; the other denies approval of a requested substantive change. Denial at either level constitutes a negative action and is challengeable by the institution. The process of challenge, however, is different for each level of denial as separately described in Sections 2-3-301, 2-3-302, and 2-3-303. In all cases of denial, the Council will give the institution written reasons for the denial, which are subject to modification through the appeals processes as later described and explained. Denial actions that are not appealed in accordance with the appeals procedures provided by the Council are considered final actions.

**2-3-301. *Denial of Initial Grant.*** An institution that objects to a Council decision to deny an application for an initial grant of accreditation has the right and will be given the opportunity to present its case and to be heard at the next meeting of the Review Board. At such a hearing, the institution may not present new evidence for consideration and must follow the procedures described in Section 2-3-600.

**2-3-302. *Denial of New Grant, Branch Inclusion, or Change of Ownership/Control.*** An institution that objects to a Council decision to deny an application for a new grant of accreditation, inclusion of a branch campus, or reinstatement of accreditation following a change of ownership or control has the right and will be given the opportunity to present its case and to be heard pursuant to the hearing procedures described in Section 2-3-500.

Additionally, in cases of denial of a new grant, branch inclusion or reinstatement of accreditation following a change of ownership or control, the Council may place the institution on probation as described in Section 2-3-800.

**2-3-303. *Other Denial Actions Not Affecting Overall Accreditation.*** An institution that objects to a Council decision to deny an application for branch-to-freestanding status or new program inclusion will be given the opportunity to present its case to a panel of the Council and to be heard at a subsequent regularly scheduled meeting of the Council. The institution may offer new evidence that will be considered by the Council if timely submitted.

**2-3-304. *Subsequent Action.*** After consideration of the institution’s objection to the denial and any new evidence presented, the Council may affirm, modify, or reverse its previous decision. If the denial of a new grant, branch inclusion, or change of ownership or control is affirmed, the denial action may be appealed to the Review Board pursuant to Section 2-3-600. If the denial not affecting overall accreditation as described in Section 2-3-303 is affirmed, the denial action becomes final and no further remedy is available to the institution. In all cases of denial,

the Council retains discretion to specify whether and under what conditions the institution might initiate a request for consideration of the same type of application.

## **2-3-400 – ACCREDITATION WITHDRAWN**

“Withdrawal of accreditation” differs from “denial of accreditation” in that denial rejects an institution’s application for an initial grant of accreditation or for a new grant to take effect upon the expiration of an existing grant of accreditation; withdrawal of accreditation takes away a current grant of accreditation before its expiration. Accreditation may be withdrawn from an institution through two types of Council action: “revocation of accreditation” or “suspension of accreditation.”

**2-3-401. *Revocation.*** Revocation occurs without a hearing for any of the following reasons:

- (a) An institution notifies the Council that it has closed and/or ceased operation.
- (b) An institution whose accreditation has been summarily suspended does not challenge the suspension within 10 days of receipt of the suspension notice (see Section 2-2-301).
- (c) The institution fails to file an annual report as required by the Council (see Sections 2-1-801 and 2-1-802).
- (d) The institution fails to pay its annual fees, application fees, other assessed fees, or evaluation expenses (see Section 2-1-804).

A revocation action is not appealable. It requires an institution to start anew and to undergo the entire accreditation process to regain accreditation.

**2-3-402. *Suspension.*** Suspension of accreditation may occur when, in the judgment of ACICS, an institution no longer complies with the criteria.

By way of illustration, ACICS might issue an order of suspension for reasons such as the following:

- (a) The institution or any of its components (a branch or new program, for example), is evaluated as directed by ACICS and is determined not to be in compliance with the criteria.
- (b) Periodic required reports filed by the institution fail to conform to Council reporting requirements.
- (c) The institution makes substantial or significant change, without notice to ACICS, in its operation, structure, governance, ownership, control, location, facilities, or programs of study.
- (d) The institution fails to respond to or cooperate with attempts by the Council to make arrangements for a site evaluation.
- (e) The institution has deviated from the criteria or other directives of ACICS.
- (f) The institution fails to disclose any agreements, options, or other contractual arrangements between the institution and other parties which bear on the management or control of the main campus or its nonmain campuses.

In all cases of suspension, the Council retains discretion to specify whether and under what conditions the institution might apply for an initial grant of accreditation.

**2-3-403. *Show-Cause Directive.*** When the accreditation of an institution is subject to suspension action (other than summary suspension under Section 2-2-301), the institution will be provided in writing with the alleged deficiencies and will be invited to “show cause” why its accreditation should not be suspended or otherwise conditioned.

A show-cause directive is not a negative or conditioning action. Rather, it is issued to an institution for it to come forward and prove that a negative or conditioning action should not be taken. However, the opportunity to show cause before the Council will be considered to be a hearing as defined in Section 2-3-500. A suspension order may be issued by ACICS as the result of this hearing, and such action is considered a final action which may only be appealed to the Review Board as described in Section 2-3-600.

In many circumstances, it is possible for an institution to respond to a show-cause directive in writing by which it demonstrates correction of the condition upon which the directive was based. When the reasons for the show-cause are satisfied, the directive may be lifted either by the Executive Director in cases where no evaluation is involved or by ACICS in cases where evaluation of additional material is required and following such evaluation. All institutions directed by the Council to show cause why their accreditation should not be suspended or otherwise conditioned will be directed to submit a school closure plan and may be required to submit a teach-out agreement as described in Section 2-2-303 of the *Accreditation Criteria*.

**2-3-404. *Procedural Guarantees.*** In all cases where accreditation is subject to withdrawal by suspension under Section 2-3-402, the institution is afforded the following procedural guarantees:

- (a) Opportunity for a hearing before ACICS on all material issues in controversy.
- (b) Written prior notice of the proceedings, the charges levied, and the standards by which the institution ultimately is to be judged.
- (c) A decision on the record alone and a statement of reasons for the ultimate decision.
- (d) A right of appeal as provided in Section 2-3-600.
- (e) If the Review Board affirms the withdrawal of accreditation by way of suspension, the appeal shall be deemed to be finally disposed of upon issuance of the decision and publication will be made as described in Section 2-3-607.

## **2-3-500 – COUNCIL HEARING PROCEDURES**

The following procedures will govern hearings to be held before the Council:

- (a) The request for a hearing must be made by a date determined by the Council, which will not be less than 10 days from the date of receipt of the letter of notification of the denial action or show-cause directive. The request for a hearing must be in writing and signed by the chief executive officer of the institution. Upon receipt of the request for a hearing, the Council will notify the institution of the procedures to follow to prepare for the hearing, including the dates by which the institution must submit its response to the findings of the denial action or show-cause directive.
- (b) The institution shall have the right to respond with evidence and facts concerning the areas of noncompliance with which it has been charged, to raise all reasonable questions, and to present evidence in opposition to or extenuation of the charges of noncompliance. Such written evidence must be submitted by the date prescribed by the Council unless the institution can show that such information was not available before the submission date and that failure to make a timely submission was outside of the institution's control.

- (c) At the hearing, the institution may present only evidence not already considered. The institution may send one or more representatives, including legal or financial counsel, to present its argument in opposition to or extenuation of the Council action. The Council transcribes all such hearings for its records. A copy of the transcript is available to the institution upon request.

**2-3-501. *Hearing Format.*** Hearings before the Council resulting from a denial motion or a show-cause directive and involving areas of noncompliance other than or in addition to financial concerns will take place before a panel of commissioners.

A hearing panel will consist of at least three commissioners designated by the chair of the appropriate commission of the Council to hear the presentation of the institution. The panel will present its findings and its recommended action to the full Council, which will make the final decision.

**2-3-502. *Financial Hearings.*** All hearings before the Council for financial concerns only will be heard by a panel of at least three commissioners, which will include at least one representative of the Financial Review Committee. The panel will present its findings and its recommended action to the full Council, which will make the final decision.

## **2-3-600 – REVIEW BOARD APPEAL PROCESS**

For those institutions that appeal to the Review Board a denial action as described in Sections 2-3-301 and 2-3-304 or a suspension action as described in Sections 2-3-402 and 2-3-404, the Council has established procedures designed to provide due process.

**2-3-601. *Purpose and Authority of Review Board.*** The Review Board is a separate, independent appeals body established by the Council for the purpose of hearing appeals by institutions for actions specified in Sections 2-3-301, 2-3-304, and 2-3-402.

**2-3-602. *Appointment of Members.*** The Review Board shall consist of fifteen (15) persons, all of whom have had experience in accreditation, who are appointed to three-year terms. A person appointed shall not have been a commissioner within one year prior to appointment.

A Review Board panel of three to five persons, depending on the scope and complexity of the matter or institution being reviewed, will be designated by the Council from the entire Review Board to hear an appeal from an institution. The Council also will designate one member of the Review Board panel to serve as chair. The selection and actions of the panel are subject to ACICS conflict of interest policies.

**2-3-603. *Jurisdiction and Authority.*** The Review Board is empowered to review, upon notice of appeal timely filed, actions specified in Sections 2-3-301, 2-3-304, and 2-3-402. The Review Board has the authority to:

- (a) affirm the decision of the Council; or
- (b) remand the case to the Council with recommendations for further consideration. It may remand the case if it finds the decision was:
  - (i) arbitrary, capricious, or otherwise in substantial disregard of the Accreditation Criteria, or
  - (ii) not supported by substantial evidence in the record on which the Council took the negative action.

The panel cannot reverse the decision of the Council or remand the decision based on argument by the appellant that the Council action was disproportionate to the violations cited. The Review Board is further limited in that it has no jurisdiction or authority concerning the reasonableness of the Accreditation Criteria.

Except as noted below, Review Board panels will not consider any evidence that was not in the record before the Council. Documents reviewed by or available to evaluation teams are not considered to be part of the record unless they are appended to the team report or the institution submits them to the Council as part of the institution's response to the evaluation team report.

An exception to the policy on evidence will be made where a final adverse action is based solely on the failure of an institution to comply with the standards of financial stability. In that case, the institution on one occasion may seek review of significant financial information that was unavailable to the institution prior to the determination of the adverse action and that bears materially on the financial deficiencies identified by the Council. The Financial Review Committee will determine if the new financial information submitted by the institution is significant and material. If these criteria are met, the Financial Review Committee will provide a report of its review to the Council, which then will reconsider its adverse action in light of the new information. If the Council reaffirms the adverse action, the Financial Review Committee report and the result of the Council's recommendation will become part of the record under review before the Review Board.

The panel acts on behalf of the entire Review Board. Therefore, a decision of a Review Board panel is final and will not be considered further by the full Review Board. In cases remanded to the Council for reconsideration, any recommendations of the Review Board panel, except the directive to reconsider, shall not bind or limit the Council in any way.

**2-3-604. *Request for Appeal.*** To exercise its right of appeal, the institution must file a request for a hearing before the Review Board within a time frame determined by the Council, normally not more than 10 days from date of receipt of notification of the denial or suspension action. The request for a hearing must be in writing and signed by the chief executive officer of the institution. Upon receipt of the request for a hearing, the Council will notify the institution of procedures to follow in preparing for it.

**2-3-605. *Hearing of Appeal.*** The hearing will be held at a time and place designated by the chair of the Review Board panel. Three members will constitute a quorum.

If the appealing institution intends to submit a written appeals brief or statement of points, it must be received by the Review Board panel and the Council at least 15 business days prior to the hearing date. The Council's reply brief must be received by the panel and the appealing institution at least seven business days prior to the hearing. The Review Board panel chair will preside at the hearing and will rule on all procedural matters. There will be no right to cross-examine the opposing party or its representatives.

The Council transcribes all Review Board hearings for its own records. A copy of the transcript is available to the institution upon request.

The hearing shall be as informal as may be reasonable and appropriate under the circumstances. Both the Council and the institution may appear by or with counsel or other representative. The institution may waive a personal appearance, in which case the matter will be handled solely on briefs.

The chair of the Review Board panel may promulgate such additional rules of procedure for the scheduling and conduct of hearings as are consistent with these procedures.

**2-3-606. *Decision of the Review Board.*** Every decision must have the concurrence of the majority of the Review Board panel. Within a reasonable time after the conclusion of the hearing, the hearing panel shall issue in writing its decision with a statement of its reasons and recommendation, if any, to the Council. The decision will indicate those members of the Review Board panel who concur with the decision. Dissenting opinions may be filed. The majority decision with dissenting opinions, if any, will be furnished to the institution.

**2-3-607. *Council Receipt of Review Board Decisions.*** Decisions by the Review Board panel are transmitted to the Council for disposition and publication.

If the Review Board panel affirms the prior decision of the Council, there is no further remedy available within these procedures. The Council's decision is final, and immediate publication is automatic. If the Review Board panel remands the matter, the case shall be deemed to be finally disposed of when the Council takes final action on remand.

**2-3-608. *Expenses of Appeal Hearing.*** The institution shall bear the following expenses in connection with the appeal:

- (a) travel and subsistence of the Review Board panel members participating in the hearing; and
- (b) cost of the hearing room and transcription.

An appeals deposit must be made with the Council at the time of the filing of the notice of appeal described in Section 2-3-604. This deposit shall be applied to the expenses listed above, and any excess deposit will be returned to the institution.

## **2-3-700 – COMPLAINTS AND ADVERSE INFORMATION**

Procedurally apart from Council actions heretofore described and explained, ACICS receives and is obligated to investigate legitimate complaints about an institution from any source. that in any way pertain to ACICS criteria.

Also, ACICS periodically receives and may investigate information from federal or state agencies or other accrediting agencies, or through public media sources, which may indicate possible criteria violations. Adverse information may include, but is not limited to, low completion rates, low placement rates, high default rates, tuition refund problems, negative audits or program reviews, and governmental agency investigations.

When the staff of ACICS, with delegated authority to do so, determines that a complaint or adverse information warrants investigation, it will notify the chief executive officer of the institution in writing about the complaint or adverse information, and a copy of the information will be provided. The institution is requested to submit to the Council office its version of the conditions or circumstances which led to the complaint or adverse information. The complainant also will be informed in writing that the institution has been contacted and has been requested to provide information. Any governmental agency providing adverse information to the Council may be informed at the discretion of the Council of the action taken on the adverse information.

The role of the Council in resolving complaints and investigating adverse information is to determine whether the institution is out of compliance with one or more accrediting standards to which the complaint is addressed or to which the adverse information applies. After such determination, ACICS may then do one of the following:

- (a) dismiss the complaint or terminate further investigation of the adverse information;
- (b) postpone a final action on the complaint or adverse information if there is evidence that the institution is making progress to rectify the situation or if more investigation is necessary; or

- (c) notify the institution that, on the basis of information available, ACICS has determined that the institution is failing to comply with the *Accreditation Criteria* and that the institution is:
  - (i) directed to show cause why its accreditation should not be suspended, revoked, or otherwise conditioned;
  - (ii) directed to submit a report to ACICS detailing plans for rectifying the area(s) of noncompliance; or
  - (iii) directed to undergo a special on-site evaluation.

The Council will inform the complainant of the determination by the Council and the disposition of the complaint.

## **2-3-800 – PROBATION**

Probation is a status that the Council may impose on an institution if the institution is unable to demonstrate that it consistently operates in accordance with the *Accreditation Criteria*.

**2-3-80. Imposition.** Probation may be imposed by the Council either when it continues a show-cause directive after at least one hearing either in person or in writing, or after an institution has notified the Council that it intends to appeal a denial action.

**2-3-802. Result of Probation.** The Council will not accept any applications for new programs or new campuses from any institution on probation unless the institution receives approval in advance to submit such an application.

**2-3-803. Probation Lifted.** Probation does not expire automatically. Instead, the institution is obligated to demonstrate to the Council that the conditions or circumstances which initially led to the imposition of probation have been corrected before probation will be lifted. Probation may be continued even if the show-cause directive has been vacated. The Council may order a special visit at the institution's expense before lifting probation.

**2-3-804. Notification of Probation.** The Council will notify the U.S. Secretary of Education, appropriate state regulatory agencies, other appropriate accrediting agencies, and the public of its decision to place an institution on probation. The institution is required to notify immediately in writing its current and prospective students that it has been placed on probation by its accrediting agency.

## **2-3-900 – SPECIAL AND FACT VISITS**

The Council reserves the right to initiate special on-site evaluation visits to or request specific reports from an institution at any time, both of which are to be completed under conditions and within a time frame determined by ACICS. Refusal of an institution to respond to or cooperate with such requests shall be grounds for suspension of its grant of accreditation.

At any time ACICS has substantive evidence or information that an institution is in jeopardy of having its eligibility status with a federal or state agency or its accreditation status with another accrediting agency conditioned, ACICS may direct a special on-site evaluation visit to that institution. The purpose of the visit will be to ensure that the students in the institution are not being harmed educationally because of the institution's alleged noncompliance with federal or state statutes or regulations or another accrediting agency's standards and criteria.

The Council also may direct a Fast Assessment and Compliance Team (FACT) visit to investigate and report on alleged improper practices at ACICS institutions.

The Council retains discretion to determine the size and composition of special and FACT teams and the length and breadth of the evaluation. In making these decisions, the Council will consider the issues and factors that prompted the visit, the size of the institution, and the nature of the institution's offerings.

## **2-3-1000 – DEBARMENT**

The Council may bar a person, including spouses and closely related family groups as defined in Section 2-2-401, from being an owner or senior manager of an ACICS-accredited institution if that person was an owner or manager of an institution that lost its accreditation as a result of a denial or suspension action or that closed without providing a teach-out or refunds to students matriculating at the time of closure.

The Council will notify a person or persons whom it intends to bar as the result of denial or suspension action within four months following the loss of the institution's accreditation. It will notify a person or persons whom it intends to bar as the result of the closing of an institution within a reasonable period of time following the closure, normally not more than six months following the closure of the institution. In each case, the Council will forward an intent to bar notice by both express and first-class mail to the last institutional mailing address known to the Council, unless the Council has received updated mailing information following the institution's closure or loss of accreditation. Those individuals will be considered notified when the Council has forwarded the intent to bar notice in accordance with these procedures.

The intent to bar notice will inform the person(s) that they are entitled to present information and materials in writing or in person to challenge the intent to bar at the next scheduled meeting of the Council. The notice will stipulate that if they intend to challenge the intent to bar, the person(s) must inform the Council office in writing within ten days of receipt of the notice as to whether they desire a personal appearance before the Council, or whether they will challenge the intent to bar in writing. A debarment order may be issued by the Council as a result of its consideration of the facts presented. Notice of the Council's decision will be sent to the individual(s) by first class and certified mail within ten days following their challenge before the Council.

The Council retains final discretion to establish the terms and length of the debarment. The length of debarment will vary depending on the circumstances that led to the debarment decision, but it typically will be for a period of at least one year and not more than three years. Individual circumstances may justify a longer period of debarment.

A person or persons barred by the Council may appeal this decision to the Council in accordance with such debarment appeals procedures as the Council may establish. The Council's decision is final if the person elects not to appeal or if the Council affirms its decision following appeal, and no additional appeal rights are available under these procedures.

After considering an individual's challenge to the intent to bar or when no challenge is presented, the Council's decision to bar an individual is final. No appeal rights are available under these procedures.



# TITLE III EVALUATION STANDARDS

## Chapter 1 General Standards Applicable To All Institutions

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### INTRODUCTION

This section of the *Accreditation Criteria* comprises the most heavily weighted part of the accrediting process. Chapter 1 states and explains the minimum operational and educational practices expected of all institutions, whatever methodology and mode of educational delivery is used and wherever the institution provides educational activities. Inasmuch as these are minimum expectations, extreme deviation from them is not permitted. The Council, while encouraging innovation at institutions and attempting to be somewhat flexible in its interpretation of these standards, does not grant waivers on criteria pertaining to good educational practice.

Chapters 2-6 contain additional criteria which are applicable to institutions offering nondegree programs and programs culminating in occupational associate's, academic associate's, bachelor's, and master's degrees. The Council recognizes that some requirements of these standards may not be appropriate for entities, and it may waive specific standards on a case-by-case basis.

### 3-1-100 – MISSION: PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

Every institution must have a mission which is its specific purpose for existing. This mission, together with a set of objectives to accomplish it, must be summarized in a mission statement. The objectives should be devoted substantially to career-related education and should be reasonable for the program of instruction, mode of delivery, and facilities of the institution.

Institutions may exhibit a variety of missions, ranging from those which have a singleness of purpose to those which are multi-purpose.

**3-1-101. *Disclosure.*** The mission statement of the institution, its purpose, and its supporting objectives must be stated in the catalog and in other publications readily available to the public. The mission statement must be expressed in terms readily understandable by a prospective student, parents, the public, and other educational institutions.

**3-1-102. *Implementation.*** The institution is measured both in terms of its stated purpose and in terms of its conscientious endeavor to fulfill this purpose. The faculty, financial resources, physical plant, administration, management, and educational activities shall be appropriate and committed to successful implementation of the stated mission of the institution.

### 3-1-110 – INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

An important indication of the overall effectiveness of an ACICS-accredited institution is the degree to which it meets its own predetermined educational outcomes. Each ACICS-accredited institution, consistent with its mission, shall develop and implement an Institutional Effectiveness Plan that identifies how it plans to assess and continuously improve its educational programs and processes, and that addresses its ability to meet the educational and occupational objectives of its programs. In this document, each institution should attempt to incorporate short-term objectives to be accomplished in order to achieve the mission of the institution and its future goals.

**3-1-111. *Institutional Effectiveness Plan.*** Each campus shall have on file an Institutional Effectiveness Plan (IEP). A main and its branches may share aspects of an IEP, such as the mission, but each main and branch campus is expected to have its own plan for effectiveness that describes the characteristics of the programs offered and of the student population, describes what types of data will be used for assessment, identifies outcomes, and states how continuous improvement will be made to improve or enhance outcomes at the institution. At a minimum, the following five elements will be evaluated for institutional effectiveness:

- (a) student retention rates;
- (b) student placement rates;
- (c) level of graduate satisfaction;
- (d) level of employer satisfaction; and
- (e) student learning outcomes.

In compiling the data needed to assess the five elements, each institution shall identify and describe how the data were collected, the rationale for using each type of data, a summary and analysis of the data collected, and an explanation of how the data have been used to improve educational processes. Baseline data must be identified for each of the five elements.

For example, the data needed to demonstrate student learning outcomes includes baseline data and data to support that student learning has occurred. Examples of data may include, but are not limited to, course grades, GPA, CGPA, pre- and post-tests, entrance assessments, portfolios, standardized tests, professional licensure examinations, and other measures of skill and competency attainment. Placement data should not be used exclusively to validate student learning outcomes.

Each institution shall publish annual placement and retention goals. In formulating these goals, each institution shall take into account the retention and placement rates from the previous three Annual Institutional Reports and the specific activities that will be undertaken to meet those goals. The activities must demonstrate the institution's ability to maintain or improve retention and placement outcomes each year.

Institutions are encouraged to include additional information in their plans which is relevant to improving their overall effectiveness.

**3-1-112. *Implementation and Monitoring of the Institutional Effectiveness Plan.*** Institutions shall document that the specific activities listed in the plan are carried out and that periodic progress reports are completed to ensure that the plan's activities are implemented. Appropriate individuals should be assigned responsibility for implementing and monitoring the Institutional Effectiveness Plan.

**3-1-113. *Evaluation of the Institutional Effectiveness Plan.*** Institutions shall evaluate the plan, its goals, and activities at least annually. Evaluation requires the determination of initial baseline rates and a measurement of results after planned activities have occurred. Institutions shall maintain documentation of historical outcomes and show evidence of how this documentation is used to achieve expected goals. Institutions should adjust their goals accordingly as a result of an evaluation of the Institutional Effectiveness Plan.

**3-1-200 – ORGANIZATION**

Each institution should have an organizational structure designed to promote among all staff and faculty a spirit of understanding, cooperation, and responsibility. Performance standards and monitoring controls need to be employed to insure adequate administrative functioning. The annual budget expenditures should be adequate to properly carry out the stated educational objectives of the institution.

**3-1-201. *Disclosure.*** The governance, control, and corporate organization of the institution shall be stated in appropriate publications, including the catalog, together with the names of the trustees, directors, administrators, and officers.

**3-1-202. *Integrity.*** The integrity of an institution is manifested by the professional competence, experience, personal responsibility, and ethical practices demonstrated by all individuals comprising the ownership, control, or management.

An institution must assume full responsibility for the actions, statements, and conduct of its representatives and must, therefore, select each of them with the utmost care, provide them with adequate training, and arrange for constant and proper supervision and evaluation of their work. The Council considers the following to be important:

- (a) Emphasis shall be placed upon the efficiency and effectiveness of the overall administration of the institution. Attention shall be given to educational activities, admissions, student financial aid, financial operations, plant and equipment, student services, and compliance with applicable local, state, and federal laws. The degree of institutional compliance with the criteria in these areas is a measure of the administrative capability of the chief on-site executive officer.
- (b) The institution must maintain written evidence that faculty and staff members clearly understand their duties and responsibilities, know the person to whom they report, and understand the standards by which the success of their work is measured. A copy of the document describing these terms and conditions shall be given to the faculty and staff member and a copy maintained by the institution. The administration must maintain documentation of the evaluation of the faculty and staff.
- (c) In the administrative organization of the institution, the professional integrity of the faculty and staff shall be respected. Administrative decisions shall not inhibit the academic freedom of the faculty. The institution shall adopt a policy assuring academic freedom and communicate the policy to all faculty.
- (d) An institution shall establish, publish, and implement appropriate grievance policies and procedures for considering complaints received from students, employees, and other interested parties. The grievance procedure for students shall be published in the institutional catalog or student handbook and shall include the name and address of ACICS.

**3-1-203. *Financial Stability.*** The financial well-being of an institution requires constant oversight by competent managers.

The institution shall have adequate revenues and assets to meet its responsibilities, to ensure continuity of service, and to accomplish its mission. Budgetary practices should reflect a balanced application of resources to operations; the amount of expenses and debt must not burden the educational objectives of the institution; the proportion of the budget allocated to instructional programs must be adequate; and the financial profile of the institution must support the intent of its objectives.

### 3-1-300 – ADMINISTRATION

Each institution must coordinate its administrative functions to best serve its educational mission. All staff should be well trained to carry out administrative functions. Detailed recordkeeping enhances the management of the institution.

**3-1-301. *Management.*** Each institution shall have a chief executive officer. Moreover, each institution also shall have a qualified on-site administrator at the main campus and at all branches. This person must be made known to ACICS and shall be responsible for the implementation of the stated mission as determined by the institution's governing body. The staff continuously shall evaluate the programs of study, student activity program, guidance services, financial aid services, instructional procedures and resources, and other aspects of the educational program of the institution. The chief executive officer shall seek to improve the educational program as a result of such evaluation. A current copy of the *Accreditation Criteria* shall be maintained by each main and branch location and shall be available to faculty and staff.

**3-1-302. *Evidence of Degrees.*** Institutions listing degrees of staff members in the catalog shall have on file appropriate evidence of the degrees. Copies of either transcripts or diplomas are acceptable.

**3-1-303. *Records.*** Careful recordkeeping is crucial to the smooth day-to-day operation of an institution. The data from these records are important to the institution for future planning, to students for informational purposes, and to evaluation teams during school visits. All such records should be maintained at each institutional site or shall be available at each site during evaluation visits. The Council expects at least the following:

- (a) Adequate records shall be kept by each institution relative to administrative operations. These include financial aid activities, admissions, curriculum, accreditation and licensure, guidance, instructional resources, supplies and equipment, school plant, faculty and staff, student activities, and student personnel.
- (b) For all students admitted under an ability-to-benefit determination, the institution shall maintain records of the validated test scores, initial and periodic academic and career advising, and any other factors used by the institution to support its admissions determination.
- (c) For institutions admitting students under an ability-to-benefit determination, documentation shall be maintained to evidence the relationship between test cut-off scores on whatever test the institution uses and successful academic or employment outcomes.

Such records could include such data as admissions rate (acceptances versus rejections), completion rate of those enrolled, general placement rate, or specific career placement rate.

For students tested and enrolled based on a test's validity to predict aptitude, the test score should predict successful completion of the program. Institutions must develop longitudinal data comparing the test cut-off score(s) utilized for acceptance with the eventual success of students.

An institution admitting a high percentage of applicants based on testing and losing a comparably high percentage of those students before completion (even allowing for factors other than ability) may not be using the appropriate test to measure aptitude, or the cut-off score for admission is too low, or both. The use of the minimum cut-off scores determined by the U.S. Department of Education will not, in and of itself, satisfy the requirements of this section.

- (d) For high school graduates or those with high school equivalency, the institution shall have on file evidence that the student has received a high school diploma or its equivalent. A signed statement by the student is acceptable documentation. The student's record also may include personal background information,

evidence of other educational experiences (including certificates, diplomas, or degrees earned), or information about the ability of the student to benefit from the education offered, including any aptitude testing information or recommendations from other sources.

- (e) A permanent academic record (transcript) of the student's progress shall be maintained. Compatible with the institution's mission, the transcript shall indicate student accomplishment in terms of clock hours, units of credit, or some other recognized system. The grading system used shall be fully explained on the transcript and must be consistent with that appearing in the institutional catalog.
- (f) All basic records and reports pertaining to students shall be safely protected. Acceptable methods of protecting records from theft, fire, water damage, or other possible loss include appropriately fire-rated file cabinets (that can be and are locked when not being used); a central location such as a vault, the entirety of which is protected; and microfilmed records, computer disk, backup tape, printout records, or other hard copies of records protectively stored off the premises.
- (g) Certain basic records shall be maintained by the institution for a specified period of time. Transcripts should be kept indefinitely, and admissions data and other records should be kept for at least five years from the last day of attendance. Financial aid records shall be maintained according to the guidelines established by the funding source.

### **3-1-400 – RELATIONS WITH STUDENTS**

Each institution should strive to ensure that its relations with students always reflect the highest ethical standards and conform to all applicable laws and regulations. Each institution also is required to develop a program of student services that is consistent with its stated mission, including services provided for students attending branch campuses and learning sites. Such services should support the educational program and reflect the institution's concern for the welfare of the student.

### **3-1-410 – ADMISSIONS AND RECRUITMENT**

It is up to an institution to establish its own admissions criteria. It is the responsibility of ACICS to ensure that all who are enrolled are accorded equal educational opportunity.

The ultimate responsibility for the activities of an institution's employees, vendors, contractors, or agents in the referral, recruiting, evaluation, and admissions processes always remains with the institution. An institution may not delegate without supervision these activities to anyone whose economic incentives are to recruit prospects through means that are unethical or subject to public criticism or to admit ill-prepared applicants. The institution may not contract, directly or indirectly, with third parties who are generally unfamiliar with the institution. "Non-employees" are independent contractors who are not considered "employees" under the Internal Revenue Code.

Institutions participating in Title IV programs must be aware of regulations imposed by the U.S. Department of Education as they apply to recruiting practices.

**3-1-411. Admissions.** The admissions policy shall conform to the institution's mission, shall be publicly stated, and shall be administered as written. The following minimums apply:

- (a) The requirements for students admitted to programs leading to a certificate, diploma, or degree shall include graduation from high school or its equivalent, or demonstration of the ability to benefit from the training offered. Such ability-to-benefit determination shall include, at a minimum, the administration of a test approved by the U.S. Department of Education and academic and career advising.
- (b) It is the responsibility of the institution to maintain student records which reflect the requirements for admission of all students.
- (c) Institutions are not precluded from admitting, under different requirements, students who are beyond the age of compulsory school attendance or who may be otherwise specially circumstanced, such as:
  - (i) having financial sponsorship through contractual arrangements with public or private organizations;
  - (ii) having identifiable needs requiring remedial instruction as a supplement to the regular curriculums;
  - (iii) participating in innovative postsecondary programs specially described to ACICS; or
  - (iv) being enrolled in individual courses not leading to an academic credential.

**3-1-412. *Recruitment.*** Recruiting shall be ethical and compatible with the educational objectives of the institution. The allocation of an institution's financial resources for purposes of recruitment shall be consistent with the stated mission of the institution. The following minimums apply:

- (a) An institution shall ensure that any person or entity engaged in admissions or recruitment activities on its behalf is communicating current and accurate information regarding courses and programs, services, tuition, terms, and operating policies.
- (b) No prospective student names obtained as a result of a survey, canvass, promise of future employment or income while a student, or other marketing activity by an institution may be used for recruitment purposes unless the name of that institution is clearly identified and purposes of such activity are communicated to the respondent. This does not preclude the use of surveys or other studies to determine the employment needs and the educational desires of the local community.
- (c) An institution shall conform to the laws and regulations of each of the states in which it operates and shall ensure that each of its representatives is properly licensed or registered as required by the laws of that state.
- (d) Representatives of an institution shall use only those titles which accurately reflect their actual duties and responsibilities. Recruitment and enrollment personnel may not be designated as counselors or advisors and may not make final decisions regarding financial aid eligibility, packaging, awarding, and disbursement.
- (e) Referrals are permitted, and the referrer may be paid a fee so long as the referrer provides full disclosure and does not misrepresent the purposes of soliciting a prospective referral and such payments do not violate state or federal laws.
- (f) All recruiters must be supervised by the institution's administration to ensure that their activities are in compliance with all applicable standards.

**3-1-413. *Transfer of Credit.*** An institution shall evaluate and consider awarding proper academic credit for credits earned at institutions accredited by agencies recognized by the United States Department of Education. The institution shall establish and adhere to a systematic method for evaluating and awarding academic credit for those courses that satisfy current program course requirements. Written policies and procedures must clearly outline the process by which transfer of academic credit is awarded. The institution shall make public its policies on transfer of credit, including a statement of the criteria established by the institution by which a determination is made with regard to accepting credits from another institution.

### 3-1-420 – STANDARDS OF SATISFACTORY PROGRESS

Each institution shall establish and administer measures of satisfactory academic progress for all students as referenced in Appendix D.

**3-1-421. *Compliance.*** The institution complies with the requirements of Appendix D.

**3-1-422. *Documenting Compliance.*** The institution documents compliance with its Satisfactory Academic Progress policy.

**3-1-423. *Oversight.*** The institution encourages and assists students who are experiencing difficulty in progressing satisfactorily in their programs.

### 3-1-430 – TUITION AND FEES

**3-1-431. *Institutionally Financed Grants, Scholarships and Loans.*** The Council recognizes that most accredited institutions offer or administer grants, scholarships and loans for students. Institutions must meet appropriate guidelines for such programs in order to ensure their legitimacy. Participation in ethical institutional grant (See Appendix E, “Guidelines for Institutionally Funded Student Aid”), institutional loan, and scholarship programs requires adherence to the following:

- (a) In addition to administering federal or state student aid programs, institutions may offer the following types of student financial aid:
  - (i) grants funded by the institution and awarded to all students within a qualifying category or to all students who demonstrate a need in accordance with published standards;
  - (ii) scholarships funded by the institution or a third-party and administered by the institution to provide aid to students who demonstrate academic achievement in accordance with published standards;
  - (iii) loans funded by the institution and available equally to all students.
- (b) Institutionally financed or administered grants, scholarships and loans must be described in the current catalog with a description of the criteria for the award, the application procedures and deadlines, and amounts that may be awarded. All information must avoid false, misleading or exaggerated statements.
- (c) Institutionally financed loans may vary in amount depending on the student’s need. The terms and conditions for loans, including forbearance and repayment, must be described in the current catalog. All institutionally financed loans must be collected in accordance with sound and aggressive business practices for the collection of student loans. Institutions must counsel students concerning their loan repayment obligations.

**3-1-432. *Tuition and Charges.*** Institutions may charge varying amounts of tuition and fees for different programs. All charges should be consistent for similarly circumstanced students enrolling at the same time and in the same programs, however, and detailed financial records should indicate at all times the financial obligation of the student to the institution. The following are minimum expectations:

- (a) The tuition and other charges, including the period for which the student is financially obligated, shall be clearly stated in the catalog of the institution. The existence of any separate or comparable publication containing tuition rates must be referenced specifically in the catalog. The schedule of charges must be uniformly administered to similarly circumstanced students.

- (b) The financial records of the students shall clearly show the charges and dates for the posting of tuition, fees, and other charges; the payments and dates of payment; and the balance after each transaction.
- (c) The enrollment agreement or catalog used by an institution must clearly outline the financial obligations of both the institution and the student. When an enrollment agreement is used, the student must receive a copy.
- (d) Announcements of changes in tuition or fees must state the effective date of the change and be uniformly administered.
- (e) Terms of payment may be varied by the institution so long as the tuition charges are uniformly administered.

**3-1-433. *Refund Policy.*** The institution must have a fair and equitable refund policy that is applicable to all students and that is published in the institution's catalog. Specific federal or state policies may apply.

**3-1-434. *Administration of Student Financial Aid.*** Participation in state or federal student financial aid programs requires serious administrative responsibility. The Council expects all institutions participating in such programs to be knowledgeable of and in compliance with applicable laws and regulations. The following requirements govern how such activities are evaluated by ACICS:

- (a) An institution participating in student financial aid programs shall designate at least one competent person at the site to administer student financial aid. The extent of this activity and the personnel needed shall be governed by the size and classification of the institution. The person who determines the amount of student awards cannot be responsible for disbursing those awards.
- (b) The person or persons assigned to administer student financial aid programs must in all cases be a part of the administration. Administrative personnel involved in student recruitment as their major activity shall not have the final decision-making authority in the approval or awarding of student financial aid.
- (c) There shall be professional awareness on the part of the financial aid administrator as shown by membership and participation in state, regional, or national financial aid associations and by other educational activities designed to keep the administrator up to date on procedures and changes in the field.

**3-1-435. *Cash Discounts.*** Any institution providing discounts for cash received in advance of the normal payment schedule must have a written policy. That policy must be provided in writing to all student applicants prior to enrollment.

The institution must demonstrate that the policy:

- (a) is available to all students at the institution; and
- (b) bases the size of the discount on the financial benefit the institution receives from the payment of cash earlier than otherwise would be required under the institution's normal tuition payment schedule or applicable retail installment contract.

### **3-1-440–STUDENT SERVICES**

**3-1-441. *Counseling and Guidance.*** Each institution shall designate at least one person on staff experienced in counseling students on personal or academic problems and employment opportunities. The extent of such activity, and the personnel assigned to it, shall be determined by the size, classification, and admissions standards of the

institution, the characteristics and location of students, and the means of communication with them. Orientation activities shall assist new students in adapting to the institution. The following are minimum expectations:

- (a) A system of educational, occupational, and personal advising shall be available to students and shall be provided on a periodic basis to ability-to-benefit students enrolled pursuant to Section 3-1-303(b).
- (b) Institutions shall emphasize retention and program completion for all students through activities that take into account their academic and socioeconomic characteristics.
- (c) Institutions shall provide employment assistance and document activity. An institution shall not guarantee employment or the starting salary of its graduates. Follow-up studies on graduates and employer satisfaction shall be conducted by all institutions at specific measuring points following placement of the graduate. All institutions that use placement percentages or salary projections as part of their recruiting activities shall maintain data on all graduates, including the percentage receiving jobs and the percentage receiving jobs in the career field for which they were trained. Institutions also should keep data on students who do not graduate but who become employed on their own or with the institution's assistance.  
  
An institution is encouraged to provide placement assistance, when requested, to graduates of other ACICS-accredited institutions who are relocating to a new community.
- (d) Institutions shall document that students are counseled concerning their student loan repayment obligations.

**3-1-442. *Extracurricular Activities.*** Institutions which sponsor or conduct programs of extracurricular activities shall base such programs on well-defined purposes. These programs shall be designed primarily to serve the educational needs of the students, and the institution shall provide guidance and supervision for them.

### **3-1-500 – EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES**

The major index of an institution's quality is the effectiveness of its educational program. The educational program must be consistent with the stated mission, be adequate in breadth and context to achieve it, and produce measurable results. Its educational activities, whether residential or otherwise and whether group or individually oriented, shall include definable instruction, interaction, and evaluation. A second index of institutional quality is the resources available to instructors and students.

The third index of an institution's quality is the competence of its faculty. The effectiveness of any institution depends upon contemporary teaching strategies and practices and upon the knowledge, ability, and commitment of its faculty. The selection, orientation, guidance, stimulation, and evaluation of the teaching staff is one of the most significant responsibilities of the administration. The faculty should actively participate in developing the total educational program of the institution.

The faculty shall have a clear responsibility, distinct from that of developing institutional policy, to participate in administering and implementing policy, especially as it pertains to academic affairs. The institution shall adopt and publish a policy on the responsibility and authority of faculty in matters of academic governance. At a minimum, the policy should address the role of faculty in development of the educational program of the institution; selection of course materials, instructional equipment and other educational resources; systematic evaluation and revision of the curriculum; assessment of student learning outcomes; and planning for institutional effectiveness.

For institutions offering programs in which state certification, licensing, or registration is mandatory in order to become employed in a specific career field, curriculums must contain the necessary course work to afford students the opportunity to obtain the minimum skills and competencies in order to become certified, licensed, or registered in that career field.

**3-1-510 – PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION, PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT, AND EVALUATION**

**3-1-511. *Program Administration.*** The administration of the academic programs shall be assigned to individuals whose academic or experiential qualifications are related to the programs of study. The amount of time devoted to the administration of the program(s) must be commensurate with the size and scope of the institution and its program offerings.

Within the administrative structure of the institution, program administrators or department heads shall have authority and responsibility for the development and administration of the programs and have adequate time and resources to fulfill these responsibilities.

**3-1-512. *Program Planning.*** Educational activities shall be consistent with the institution's mission and objectives. The credibility and integrity of an institution shall be reflected by the manner in which its mission and objectives correlate with the educational opportunities made available to students.

The Council recognizes the legitimacy of various modes of educational delivery. An institution using various modes of delivery should demonstrate overall effectiveness and quality consistent with the criteria (See Glossary definitions for distance learning, independent study, and self-paced instruction; see also Appendix H, Principles and Guidelines for Nontraditional Education). The following standards apply:

- (a) The formation of policies and design of educational programs should involve students, graduates, administrators, faculty, and other interested parties such as advisory committees. This practice also should serve as an evaluation process to determine effectiveness and relevance when the institution relies upon curricula, courses, courseware, or coursework that is designed, leased, or owned by another entity or provided by or through a network of entities.
- (b) Flexibility in organization and administration shall be provided to serve varying groups and situations. Provisions shall be made for individual differences among students in the learning applications, learning environments, and modes of instructional delivery available to students.
- (c) Resources of the community shall be utilized to enrich the program.

**3-1-513. *Program Development.*** The educational programs shall evidence a well-organized sequence of appropriate subjects leading to an occupational objective, an academic credential, or both. The following apply:

- (a) The curricula shall be published in the institution's catalog and shall state objectives specific to each curriculum. Additionally, there shall be a detailed syllabus on file for each course in each curriculum that is made available to each student enrolled in the class. For independent study courses, institutions are required to develop a learning contract that outlines the course objectives and procedures unique to this form of instruction. For practica, externships, and internships, institutions are required to develop a written and mutually signed agreement that outlines the arrangement between the institution and the practicum site, including specific learning objectives, course requirements, and evaluation criteria. The Council's expectations for detailed syllabi, independent study, practica, externships, and internships are outlined in the Glossary.
- (b) The courses offered shall be available when needed by the student in the normal pursuit of a program of study. Prerequisites must be indicated. The prerequisite system must assure proper qualifications of students in any given class and provide an increasing level of difficulty as the student progresses.

Institutions may record student progress in clock hours or credit hours as defined in the Glossary. When appropriate, special consideration should be given to remediation and English as a Second Language programs. (For additional information, see Appendix F, Guidelines for English as a Second Language).

**3-1-514. *Program Evaluation.*** The faculty shall participate in a systematic process of continuous curriculum evaluation and revision. Institutions are encouraged to consider curriculum changes designed to serve students' needs that may be determined by community surveys or other fact-finding procedures relating to educational or employer needs.

**3-1-515. *Specialized Accreditation.*** If a program is accredited by a specialized accreditor recognized by the U.S. Department of Education or the Council on Higher Education Accreditation, the Chief Executive Officer of the institution shall attest to ACICS and provide documentation that it is in compliance with the standards of the specialized accreditor.

**3-1-516. *Course and Program Measurement.*** The Council recognizes that institutions must provide for their students a learning environment in which achievement is encouraged. It further recognizes the legitimacy of both traditional (e.g., lecture/laboratory/practicum) and nontraditional (e.g., distance education or independent study) educational delivery methods. A framework for transfer of credit and consistent application of academic credit awards should apply to all of these varied forms of educational delivery.

Institutions, therefore, must demonstrate a knowledge of appropriate academic course and program measurement and correct application of the measurement.

- (a) Credit in traditionally delivered programs measured in credit hours must be calculated based on one of the following attribution formulas:
  - (i) One quarter credit hour equals, at a minimum, 10 classroom hours of lecture, 20 hours of laboratory, and 30 hours of practicum. The formula for calculating the number of quarter credit hours for each course is:  $(\text{hours of lecture}/10) + (\text{hours of lab}/20) + (\text{hours of practicum}/30)$ ; or
  - (ii) One semester credit hour equals, at a minimum, 15 classroom hours of lecture, 30 hours of laboratory, and 45 hours of practicum. The formula for calculating the number of semester credit hours for each course is:  $(\text{hours of lecture}/15) + (\text{hours of lab}/30) + (\text{hours of practicum}/45)$ .

Many courses are a combination of lecture, lab, and practicum. Therefore, the institution should be very careful in allocating the number of hours of each in a particular course.

The definition of a "clock (contact) hour" states that the minimum instructional time is 50 minutes of supervised or directed instruction and appropriate break(s). Therefore, when calculating conversions from clock to credit hours or allocating credit for courses, institutions must take great care to ensure that scheduled breaks are educationally appropriate. Long periods of instruction with unusually short or no breaks are not acceptable. The institution has the burden of convincing the Council that the breaks are sufficiently long and frequent for the program being taught. Thus, it is rare for an institution to be able to divide by 50 in calculating the credit-hour equivalent of contact hours; usually, the denominator should be 60 or something between 50 and 60.

- (b) Credit award rationales for nontraditional delivery of courses or programs (e.g., distance education or independent study) generally do not use the above lecture/laboratory/practicum formulas for credit calculation. The rationale used must be submitted to the Council for pre-approval of the credit calculation. As a part of the approval application, an institution must demonstrate that the clock or credit hours awarded are appropriate for the degrees and credentials offered using a thoroughly developed rationale. The institution may accomplish this by demonstrating that students completing these programs

or courses have acquired equivalent levels of knowledge, skills, or competencies to those acquired in traditional formats.

Courses offered in nontraditional formats must be structured to ensure that students have sufficient opportunity for preparation, reflection, and analysis concerning learned subject matter. Institutions should be aware that federal law requires a minimum number of weeks per academic year for Title IV eligibility purposes. The U.S. Department of Education uses eligibility criteria and definitions for Title IV disbursements that may be different from these in the *Accreditation Criteria*.

- (c) Institutions may award academic credit to students who demonstrate competency in a subject area based on their academic, occupational, or personal experiences. The following expectations apply:
  - (i) Institutions shall establish and adhere to a systematic method for evaluating and awarding academic credit for those experiences (e.g., experiential learning, advanced academic standing, credit by examination) that satisfy current program course requirements.
  - (ii) Institutions must maintain documentation to support that credit hours awarded are appropriate based on the assessment of the knowledge, skills, or competencies acquired.

**3-1-517. *Course Scheduling.*** Courses must be scheduled in such a way as to be educationally appropriate for the academic background of the students served, the type of the coursework involved, and the method of educational delivery. The Council will review the number of minutes of instruction provided, the appropriateness of the length of the breaks between classes, the number of classroom hours per week, the expectation of outside preparation, and the educational needs of the students.

### **3-1-520 – CREDENTIALS CONFERRED**

**3-1-521. *Conferring of Credentials.*** The conferring of certificates, diplomas, or degrees by an institution shall be consistent with its mission and objectives and in compliance with applicable state laws.

### **3-1-530 – INSTRUCTION**

**3-1-531. *Instructional Tools.*** Institutions shall:

- (a) provide appropriate facilities, instructional equipment, resources, support for modes of instructional delivery, and personnel;
- (b) ensure academic freedom and other conditions favorable for effective classroom instruction;
- (c) ensure that the quantity and type of instructional material and equipment is proportionate to the size of the institution and the nature of the program; and
- (d) comply with applicable copyright laws in the use of instructional materials.

**3-1-532. *Instructional Components.*** Required instructional components shall include:

- (a) systematic planning;
- (b) well-defined instructional objectives;
- (c) the selection and use of appropriate learning materials;
- (d) appropriate modes of instructional delivery;
- (e) the use of appropriate assessment strategies; and
- (f) the use of appropriate experiences.

### 3-1-540 – FACULTY

**3-1-541. *Faculty Preparation.*** Preparation of faculty members shall be academically and experientially appropriate to the subject matter they teach. Faculty members shall be competent to teach the subject matter offered and shall have reasonable latitude in their choice of teaching methods. The institution must provide evidence that all faculty members are graduates of institutions accredited by agencies recognized by the United States Department of Education. Faculty who are graduates from institutions outside the United States must be graduates of institutions recognized by their governments and their transcripts must be translated into English and be evaluated by a member of the the Association of International Credentials Evaluators (AICE) or the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES) to determine the equivalency of the credentials to credentials awarded by institutions in the United States.

**3-1-542. *Verification of Credentials.*** Institutions must maintain official transcripts for credentials that qualify faculty members to teach their assigned courses and for those credentials that are listed in the catalog. All these credentials shall be on file in the administrative offices at the campus location nearest to where the faculty member is primarily employed. An official transcript is one sent from the registrar's office at the institution where study was completed directly to an employing institution. A transcript bearing the notation "issued to student" is not an official transcript for employment purposes.

**3-1-543. *Faculty Development.*** Institutions are required to establish faculty development plans including in-service and/or professional growth activities to enhance faculty expertise. There shall be documented evidence on an annual basis of these development plans and their implementation. For those faculty who are trained in teaching methodology on the postsecondary level and who possess limited related outside employment, the plan should concentrate on content update, e.g., new software, equipment, techniques, etc. For those faculty who are practitioners trained in content rather than teaching methodology, the plan should concentrate on curriculum concepts, new theories and techniques of instruction, and new educational media. Institutions are responsible for demonstrating that these plans are appropriate given each faculty members' training, education, and related work experience and that they provide the proper mix of in-service training and/or professional growth based on the academic and experiential background of the faculty. (See Glossary for definitions of "in-service training", "professional growth", and "faculty development").

**3-1-544. *Faculty Meetings.*** Regularly scheduled faculty meetings or department meetings, with participation by full-time and part-time faculty, shall be held. Discussions and attendance shall be recorded.

### 3-1-600 – EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES

Each institution must provide an environment that is conducive to good instruction and learning and that supports the educational programs offered by the institution. The adequacy of the environment is assessed against the demands made upon it by the curricula, faculty, and students.

**3-1-601. *Plant and Equipment.*** The buildings, classrooms, equipment, furniture, grounds, instructional tools, support systems, instructional facilities, machinery, and other physical requirements of the educational program shall be appropriate and shall contribute to the achievement of the institution's objectives. Equipment, instructional tools, and machinery must be properly installed and maintained.

**3-1-602. *Code Requirements.*** The plant shall meet the general tests of safety, usefulness, cleanliness, maintenance, health, lighting, and compliance with any local or state laws governing physical facilities, particularly with respect to fire, safety, and sanitation.

### 3-1-700 – PUBLICATIONS

It is important for institutions to recognize the value of “truth in advertising” when promoting their operations. Publications must be prepared and presented in a professional manner to reflect favorably upon the institution. Information published must be accurate and factual and reflect the current status of the institution. Only the Council can accept or reject an institution’s catalog, and a final decision will not be made based on a draft.

**3-1-701. *Catalog.*** Each institution shall publish and provide to each enrolled student a catalog which complies with Appendix C, “Guidelines for Institutional Publications.”

**3-1-702. *Multiple-School Catalog.*** All institutions utilizing a common catalog must be of common ownership. Photographs of the physical facilities of any of the institutions must be captioned to identify the particular institution or campus depicted. The faculty and staff of each institution and the members of the general administration exercising supervisory responsibility for the group of institutions must be clearly identified with respect to each institution and the overall administration. Any information contained in the catalog that is not common to all institutions in the group should be presented in such a manner that no confusion, misunderstanding, or misrepresentation is possible. For further information, see Appendix C.

**3-1-703. *Advertising.*** Literature used by an institution must be presented in such a manner as to be factual with respect to services offered or benefits promised. An English translation for advertising that is in a language other than English must be available. For further information, see Appendix C.

If an institution publicly discloses incorrect or misleading information about its accredited status, the contents of an evaluation team report, or accreditation actions with respect to the institution, the institution must make a public disclosure of correction through the same media or means.

### 3-1-800 – LIBRARY RESOURCES AND SERVICES

The adequate provision of library resources and information services, appropriate to the academic level and scope of an institution’s programs, is essential to teaching and learning. It is incumbent upon all member institutions to assess the level of library resources needed in relation to their programs and to provide a range of support to meet these needs. The size of collections and the budget allowed for library resources and services do not ensure adequacy. The quality, relevance, accessibility, availability, and provision of support services ultimately will determine the adequacy of an institution’s efforts. In assessing library resources and services, ACICS requires that an institution, at a minimum, shall:

- (a) develop an adequate base of library resources;
- (b) ensure means to access these resources;
- (c) develop a continuous assessment strategy for library resources and information services;
- (d) provide adequate staff to support library development, collection organization, and accessibility;
- (e) ensure that library services are provided to all learners, including those at nonmain campuses; and
- (f) provide training and encouragement for students and faculty to utilize library resources as an integral part of the learning process.

# TITLE III

# EVALUATION STANDARDS

## Chapter 2 Standards For Nondegree Programs

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### INTRODUCTION

In addition to the general standards in Chapter 1, which apply to all institutions, the following standards apply specifically to nondegree programs.

### 3-2-100 – FACULTY

Teaching hours, assignments, and schedules will vary from field to field and from institution to institution but should in all cases allow time for adequate preparation and professional development. The institution shall devise a plan for the efficient use of faculty competence and time, including student-teacher ratios, number of teacher preparations, and number of teaching hours. Reasonableness may be defined by, but is not restricted to, the following expectations.

**3-2-101. *Teaching Load.*** An instructor's teaching load, including night school, shall not exceed 32 clock hours per week, except that an overload of not more than one subject per term for additional compensation is permitted. Teaching loads may differ when using alternative methods of instruction and must be commensurate with the type of delivery method utilized. For purposes of this calculation, assigned courses offered by nontraditional or distance learning modes of instruction are deemed to consist of one clock hour per week for each unit of academic credit awarded.

**3-2-102. *Field Preparation.*** Assignments requiring more than three preparations in different fields (e.g., secretarial studies, business administration, data processing) shall not be given to an instructor during one academic term.

**3-2-103. *Subject Preparation.*** Not more than five preparations in different subjects within the same field (e.g., Accounting I, Accounting II, Keyboarding I, Business Mathematics, Business Law) shall be assigned to an instructor during one academic term.

**3-2-104. *Assignments.*** The requirements for full- and part-time faculty members teaching in the referenced subject areas are as follows:

- (a) A bachelor's degree and appropriate coursework in the assigned subject are required for faculty members teaching general education and other academic courses.
- (b) A bachelor's degree is required for faculty members teaching business and business administration courses. If the bachelor's degree is not in the assigned teaching field, at least two years of related work experience or evidence of specialized training or competency in the assigned teaching field is required. The burden is on the institution to demonstrate and justify the qualifications of the faculty to teach their assigned courses.
- (c) Faculty members teaching courses not referenced above must demonstrate competency in the assigned teaching field, such as academic or vocational training and credentials, related work experience, licensure, or certification. The burden is on the institution to demonstrate and justify the qualifications of the faculty to teach their assigned courses.

**3-2-105. *Stability.*** There shall be an adequate core of full- and/or part-time faculty to ensure sound direction and continuity of development for the educational programs. The institution shall demonstrate through outcomes, length of service, reasonable retention of faculty, and other measures that the core faculty ensures that the institution will meet its stated mission and objectives. The institution shall promote stability in the faculty through compensation, fringe benefits, professional growth opportunities, and other incentives.

**3-2-106. *Student-Teacher Ratio.*** The student-teacher ratio shall be reasonable at all times in keeping with generally accepted delivery modes and course content. In determining a reasonable ratio, the institution shall consider the following factors:

- (a) the amount of lecture given by instructors in skills-building and practice classes;
- (b) the level of existing skills of the students;
- (c) the amount of direct supervision exercised by the instructor and the availability of instructional equipment in a lab setting where there is primary instruction in a specific skill; and
- (d) the use of technology in providing alternative instruction or evaluation.

### **3-2-200 – INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES, MATERIALS**

The instructional resources, audiovisual teaching equipment, and instructional materials shall be adequate to serve the needs of the institution's educational programs. The resources shall include current titles, periodicals, professional journals, or full-text online resources appropriate for the institution's educational programs. There shall be evidence that appropriate instructional resources, equipment, technology, and materials are utilized to support the educational objectives.

**3-2-201. *References.*** The institution shall have available and easily accessible to faculty and students standard reference works appropriate to the curriculum. Major consideration will be given to the variety of volumes, periodicals, online resources and information technology readily available to students and faculty, recency of publications, appropriateness, and relevance to the programs.

**3-2-202. *Distribution of Resources and Materials.*** The instructional resources and references may be consolidated or may be distributed throughout the educational facility, or they may be provided by the institution under contract with an external organization on behalf of its student body which ensures access to library resources and references pertinent to the programs offered by the institution. Easy access to and use of reference materials, periodicals, and information technology are of prime importance in determining if the institution is meeting the educational needs of its students and faculty. Availability and utilization of audiovisual equipment also are important.

**3-2-203. *Inventory.*** A current inventory of instructional materials and equipment shall be maintained by the institution.

**3-2-204. *Budget.*** Budget allocations and expenditures for instructional resources, equipment, and materials shall be sufficient to meet the needs and fulfill objectives of the institution's programs.

## Chapter 3 Standards For Occupational Associate's Degree Programs

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### INTRODUCTION

In addition to the general standards in Chapter 1, which apply to all institutions, the following standards apply specifically to institutions offering occupational associate's degree programs. Occupational associate's degree programs are those programs which award associate's degrees that contain less than 15 semester hours, 22.5 quarter hours, or the equivalent of general education.

### 3-3-100 – STATE AUTHORITY

The institution must be legally authorized by the appropriate state education agency, where such authority exists, to confer the associate's degree.

### 3-3-200 – EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

**3-3-201. Objectives.** The objectives of an occupational associate's degree program are an extension of the institution's awareness of its mission and its application to its constituencies. An institution applying for the inclusion of an occupational associate's degree program shall demonstrate that its programs and courses are appropriate to its mission and to its specific goals and objectives.

Occupational associate's degree programs should emphasize both achievement of vocational objectives and general education. This emphasis requires courses in general education that are relevant both quantitatively and qualitatively to the chosen degree.

**3-3-202. Education Requirements.** The minimum number of credits required for the occupational associate's degree shall be 60 semester hours, 90 quarter hours, or 1800 clock hours, normally earned over a period of four semesters, six quarters, or the equivalent. Transfer and award of credit may be granted for appropriate work at other institutions.

There shall be a minimum of 10 semester hours, 15 quarter hours, or their equivalent in general education or applied general education courses. The catalog must identify the courses that satisfy the general education requirements, and it must provide an explanation of the course numbering system.

The Council's expectations for general education and applied general education are outlined in the Glossary section.

**3-3-203. Curriculum.** The curriculum shall quantitatively and qualitatively approximate the standards at other institutions offering occupational associate's degrees, with due allowance for meeting special objectives. The primary purpose of the degree shall be technical in nature with courses designed to assist students in the application of these skills in the workplace. Instructional procedures, texts, materials, and technology shall be appropriate to the purposes, curriculums, and standards of institutions offering occupational associate's degrees. Evidence shall be provided that curricular offerings require appropriate use of library resources.

**3-3-204. Enrollment.** Enrollment in the second year of a two-year program must be sufficient to support regularly scheduled classes and laboratory work. Second-year work shall be based upon appropriate first-year prerequisites.

### **3-3-300 – FACULTY**

**3-3-301. Preparation.** An institution offering occupational associate's degrees shall have an adequate and competent faculty working under conditions that encourage the best efforts of each individual. In judging competence, consideration shall be given to the academic preparation and experience of each instructor.

**3-3-302. Assignments.** During any academic term, a faculty member shall not be assigned to teach in more than three fields of instruction (e.g., medical assisting, business administration, information technology). Not more than five preparations in different subjects (e.g., Accounting I, Accounting II, Keyboarding I, Business Mathematics, and Business Law) shall be assigned to an instructor during one academic term. Instructors shall be assigned based on their major and minor academic preparation and/or related experience. The size of the faculty shall be appropriate to the total student enrollment.

The requirements for full- and part-time faculty members teaching in the referenced subject areas are as follows:

- (a) A bachelor's degree and appropriate coursework in the assigned subject are required for faculty members teaching general education and other academic courses. Instructors at a minimum shall have earned 15 semester or equivalent hours of coursework through a combination of hours from associate's, bachelor's, and/or master's level coursework in the area of their teaching assignment.

Instructors teaching courses other than general education shall hold bachelor's degrees at a minimum and shall be assigned based on their major and minor academic preparation and/or related experience. However, exceptions to the bachelor's degree requirement may be justified for instructors who have demonstrable current exceptional professional level experience in the assigned field, such as documented coursework in the field, professional certification(s), letters of recommendation or attestations from previous employer(s), letters attesting to this expertise from professional peers not connected to the college, real examples of previous success in the field such as published work, juried exhibits and shows, evidence of a professional portfolio accepted by the college and available for review, and other significant documented experience relevant to the courses to be taught. Minors or related degrees could be considered but will not be the sole determining factor. Duration of time associated with this alternative justification is dependent on the quality and significance of the work experience. The institution must be able to justify the assignment of any instructor who does not hold a bachelor's degree in the assigned teaching field.

- (b) A bachelor's degree is required for faculty members teaching business and business administration courses. If the bachelor's degree is not in the assigned teaching field, at least two years of related work experience or evidence of specialized training or competency in the assigned teaching field is required. The burden is on the institution to demonstrate and justify the qualifications of the faculty to teach their assigned courses.
- (c) Faculty members teaching courses not referenced above must demonstrate competency in the assigned teaching field, such as academic or vocational training and credentials, related work experience, licensure, or certification. The burden is on the institution to demonstrate and justify the qualifications of the faculty to teach their assigned courses.

**3-3-303. Teaching Load.** An instructor's teaching load, including night school, shall not exceed 32 clock hours per week, except that an overload of not more than one subject per term for additional compensation is permitted. Teaching loads may differ when using alternative methods of instruction and must be commensurate with the type of delivery

method utilized. For purposes of this calculation, assigned courses offered by nontraditional or distance learning modes of instruction are deemed to consist of one clock hour per week for each unit of academic credit awarded.

**3-3-304. *Stability.*** There shall be an adequate core of full- and part-time faculty to ensure sound direction and continuity of development for the educational programs. The institution shall demonstrate through outcomes, length of service, reasonable retention of faculty, and other measures that the core faculty ensures that the institution will meet its stated mission and objectives. The institution shall promote stability in the faculty through compensation, fringe benefits, professional growth opportunities, and other incentives.

**3-3-305. *Student-Teacher Ratio.*** The student-teacher ratio shall be reasonable at all times in keeping with generally accepted delivery modes and course content. In determining a reasonable ratio, the institution shall consider the following factors:

- (a) the amount of lecture given by instructors in skills-building and practice classes;
- (b) the level of existing skills of the students;
- (c) the amount of direct supervision exercised by the instructor and the availability of instructional equipment in a lab setting where there is primary instruction in a specific skill; and
- (d) the use of technology in providing alternative instruction or evaluation.

### **3-3-400–LIBRARY, INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES, AND TECHNOLOGY**

**3-3-401. *Staff.*** An individual with the ability to maintain the resources and to assist students and faculty shall be designated to oversee the resources of the institution.

**3-3-402. *Budget.*** An annual library budget, appropriate to the size and scope of the institution and the programs offered, shall be established and the allocation expended for the purchase of books, periodicals, library equipment, and other resource and reference materials.

**3-3-403. *Function.*** The library function is shaped by the educational programs of the institution. Appropriate reference, research, and information resources must be made available to enhance, augment, and support the curricular and educational offerings. The resources shall include the study, reading, and information technology facilities necessary to make the educational programs effective. The ultimate test of the library's adequacy is determined by the extent to which its resources support all the courses offered by the institutions.

**3-3-404. *Use and Accessibility.*** In evaluating the use of library resources by students, consideration shall be given to accessibility and to methods used by the faculty to encourage the use of these resources by students. Records of physical and/or online circulation and inventory shall be current and accurate.

Physical and/or online library materials and services must be available at times consistent with the typical student's schedule in both day and evening programs. Easy access to and use of reference materials, periodicals, and information technology are of prime importance in determining if the institution is meeting the educational needs of its students and faculty. If online resources are utilized, an appropriate number of terminals shall be provided for student use. Interlibrary agreements are not substitutes for an institution's library, but rather a means to supplement the institution's holdings in limited areas. In determining the appropriateness of such agreements, consideration will be given to the uniqueness of the lending library's collection, provisions for interlibrary loans, and the degree of accessibility to the students.

**3-3-405. *Holdings.*** The institution shall have available and easily accessible standard reference works, professional journals, and current periodicals appropriate to the curriculum. Consideration also shall be given to supplementary library resources contracted by the institution and online resources available to its student body.

**3-3-406. *Acquisitions.*** Library acquisitions are the joint responsibility of the faculty and library staff, with the greater amount of input emanating from the faculty. Moreover, it is the faculty's responsibility to inspire, motivate, and direct student usage of the library resources.

## TITLE III EVALUATION STANDARDS

### Chapter 4 Standards for Academic Associate's Degree Programs

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#### INTRODUCTION

In addition to the general standards in Chapter 1, which apply to all institutions, the following standards apply specifically to academic associate's degree programs. All Associate of Art and Associate of Science degree programs are academic associate's degree programs. Any other associate's degree programs that include at least 15 semester hours, 22.5 quarter hours, or the equivalent of general education also are considered to be academic associate's degree programs. Institutions that offer academic associate's degree programs are collegiate institutions, and only those institutions that offer academic associate's degree programs may refer to themselves as junior colleges.

#### 3-4-100 – STATE AUTHORITY

The institution must be legally authorized by the appropriate state education agency, where such authority exists, to confer the associate's degree.

#### 3-4-200 – EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

**3-4-201. Objectives.** The objectives of an associate's degree program reflect the application of an institution's mission to its constituencies. An institution applying for the inclusion of an academic associate's degree program shall demonstrate that its programs, courses, and services are appropriate to its mission and to its specific goals and objectives.

Programs at collegiate institutions should emphasize both the achievement of vocational objectives and general education. This emphasis requires courses in general education that are both quantitatively and qualitatively relevant to the chosen degree.

**3-4-202. Education Requirements.** The minimum number of credits required for the academic associate's degree shall be 60 semester hours, 90 quarter hours, or their equivalent, normally earned over a period of four semesters, six quarters, or the equivalent. Transfer and award of credit for appropriate work at other institutions may be granted.

There shall be a minimum of 30 semester hours, 45 quarter hours, or their equivalent in courses within the areas of concentration; and a minimum of 15 semester hours, 22.5 quarter hours, or their equivalent in general education courses. Courses within the area of concentration of the subject matter of the program shall not be considered general education courses. The catalog must identify the courses that satisfy the concentration and general education requirements, and it must provide an explanation of the course numbering system.

General education and academic subject offerings, as distinguished from the professional or vocational offerings of a collegiate institution, shall place emphasis on principles and theory and not on practical applications associated with a particular occupation or profession. General education courses give balance to the total program and must be appropriate for the program and the needs of the students. The Council's expectations for general education, humanities, mathematics and the sciences, and social sciences are outlined in the Glossary section.

**3-4-203. Curriculum.** The curriculum shall quantitatively and qualitatively approximate the standards at other collegiate institutions offering academic associate's degrees. It should help students acquire necessary skills such as reading, writing, communicating, critical thinking, and the basic use of computers. Instructional procedures, texts, materials, and technology shall be appropriate to the purposes, curriculums, and standards of collegiate institutions. Evidence shall be provided that curricular offerings require appropriate use of library resources.

**3-4-204. Enrollment.** Enrollment in the second year of a two-year program must be sufficient to support regularly scheduled classes and laboratory work. Second-year work shall be based upon appropriate first-year prerequisites.

### **3-4-300 – FACULTY**

**3-4-301. Preparation.** The institution shall have an adequate and competent faculty working under conditions that encourage the best efforts of each individual. In judging competence, consideration shall be given to the academic preparation and experience of each instructor.

**3-4-302. Assignments.** During any academic term, a faculty member shall not be assigned to teach in more than three fields of instruction. The size of the faculty shall be appropriate to the total student enrollment.

Instructors teaching general education shall hold a master's degree at a minimum and shall be assigned based on their major and minor academic preparation. Instructors at a minimum shall have earned 18 semester or equivalent hours of coursework in the area of their teaching discipline.

Instructors teaching courses other than general education shall hold bachelor's degrees at a minimum and shall be assigned based on their major and minor academic preparation and/or related experience. However, exceptions to the bachelor's degree requirement may be justified for instructors who have demonstrable current exceptional professional level experience in the assigned field, professional certification(s), letters of recommendation or attestations from previous employer(s), letters attesting to this expertise from professional peers not connected to the college, real examples of previous success in the field such as published work, juried exhibits and shows, evidence of a professional portfolio accepted by the college and available for review, and other significant documented experience relevant to the courses to be taught. Minor or related degrees could be considered but will not be the sole determining factor. Duration of time associated with this alternative justification is dependent on the quality and significance of the work experience. The institution must be able to justify the assignment of any instructor who does not hold a bachelor's degree in the assigned teaching field.

In addition to the degree requirements outlined above, at least one-half of the courses, including those core courses common to nonacademic degree or nondegree programs, shall be taught by faculty members holding graduate degrees, professional degrees such as J.D. or M.D., or bachelor's degrees plus professional certification. This calculation does not apply, however, to courses in fields in which graduate degrees, professional degrees, or professional certifications are not generally available.

**3-4-303. Teaching Load.** Teaching loads shall be reasonable and shall be justified by factors such as the number of different preparations required; the type and method of instruction; the size of classes; the level of instruction; the qualifications of the instructor; the academic advising, committee membership, and guidance and student organizations assigned; and the other administrative, research, publication, and community relations responsibilities of the instructor.

**3-4-304. *Stability.*** There shall be an adequate core of full- and part-time faculty to ensure sound direction and continuity of development for the educational programs. The institution shall demonstrate through outcomes, length of service, reasonable retention of faculty, and other measures that the core faculty ensures that the institution will meet its stated mission and objectives. The institution shall promote stability in the faculty through compensation, fringe benefits, professional growth opportunities, and other incentives.

### **3-4-400 – LIBRARY, INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES, AND TECHNOLOGY**

**3-4-401. *Staff.*** A professionally trained individual shall supervise and manage library and instructional resources, facilitate their integration into all phases of the institution's curricular and educational offerings, and assist students in their use. A professionally trained individual is one who holds a bachelor's or master's degree in library or information science or a comparable program, or state certification to work as a librarian, where applicable. The institution must provide evidence that the degree is from an institution accredited by an agency recognized by the United States Department of Education. If the degree is from an institution outside of the United States, the institution must be recognized by its government and the transcript must be translated into English and be evaluated by a member of the Association of International Credentials Evaluators (AICE) or the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES) to determine the equivalency of the degree to degrees awarded by institutions in the United States. The professionally trained individual must participate in documented professional growth activities.

During scheduled library hours, there shall be a trained individual on duty to supervise the library and to assist students with library functions. This individual shall be competent both to use and to aid in the use of the library technologies and resources.

**3-4-402. *Budget.*** An annual library budget, appropriate to the size and scope of the institution and the programs offered, shall be established and the allocation expended for the purchase of books, periodicals, library equipment, and other resource and reference materials.

**3-4-403. *Function.*** The library function is shaped by the educational programs of the college. Appropriate reference, research, and information resources must be made available to provide basic support for curricular and educational offerings and to enhance student learning.

**3-4-404. *Use and Accessibility.*** The faculty should inspire, motivate, and direct student usage of the library resources. The library's adequacy ultimately is determined by the extent to which physical and/or online resources including full-text resources support all the courses offered by the institution.

For library resources, the Dewey Decimal System, Library of Congress classification system, or other appropriate system of classification should be used. Records of physical and/or online circulation and inventory shall be current and accurate and must be maintained to assist staff and faculty in evaluating the adequacy and utilization of the physical and/or online resources including full-text holdings.

Physical and/or online, full-text library materials and services must be available at times consistent with the typical student's schedule in both day and evening programs. If computer software is utilized on site, a sufficient number of terminals shall be provided for student use. If interlibrary agreements are in effect, provisions for such use must be practical and accessible and use must be documented. In determining the appropriateness of such agreements, consideration will be given to the nature of the participating library's collection, provisions for interlibrary loans, and the degree of accessibility to the students. A college's library must contain, at a minimum, a core collection of physical and/or online resources including full-text reference materials appropriate for the offerings of the institution.

**3-4-405. *Holdings.*** A collegiate library shall contain up-to-date physical and/or online resources including full-text titles appropriate for the size of the institution and the breadth of and enrollment in its educational programs. The library collection shall include holdings on the Humanities, Arts, Social Sciences, and Sciences, including mathematics; magazines and essential professional journals and periodicals; and, when appropriate, online data networks and retrieval systems, CD-ROMs, and interactive research systems that support the offerings of the institution.

**3-4-406. *Acquisitions.*** Library acquisitions are the joint responsibility of the faculty and library staff, with the greater amount of input emanating from the faculty.

## TITLE III EVALUATION STANDARDS

### Chapter 5 Standards for Bachelor's Degree Programs

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#### INTRODUCTION

In addition to the general standards in Chapter 1, which apply to all institutions, the following standards apply specifically to bachelor's degree programs. Institutions that offer bachelor's degree programs are considered to be collegiate institutions, and only those institutions that offer bachelor's degree programs may refer to themselves as senior colleges.

#### 3-5-100 – STATE AUTHORITY

The institution must be legally authorized by the appropriate state education agency, where such authority exists, to confer the bachelor's degree.

#### 3-5-200 – EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

**3-5-201. Objectives.** The objectives of a bachelor's degree program reflect the application of an institution's mission to its constituencies. An institution applying for the inclusion of a bachelor's degree program shall demonstrate that its programs, courses, and services are appropriate to its mission and to its specific goals and objectives.

Programs at collegiate institutions should emphasize both the achievement of vocational objectives and general education. This emphasis requires courses in general education that are both quantitatively and qualitatively relevant to the chosen degree.

**3-5-202. Education Requirements.** The minimum number of credits required for the bachelor's degree shall be 120 semester hours, 180 quarter hours, or their equivalent, normally earned over a period of eight semesters, 12 quarters, or their equivalent. Transfer and award of credit for appropriate work at other institutions may be granted.

There shall be a minimum of 60 semester hours, 90 quarter hours, or their equivalent within the areas of concentration; and a minimum of 36 semester hours, 54 quarter hours, or their equivalent in general education courses. Courses within the area of concentration of the subject matter of the program shall not be considered general education courses. The catalog must identify the courses that satisfy the concentration and general education requirements and those that are upper-division courses, and it must provide an explanation of the course numbering system. The catalog must state the expectations for all four years of the bachelor's degree curriculum and comply with Appendix C, Guidelines for Institutional Publications. If the institution offers only the last two years of the bachelor's degree program, the catalog and all advertising materials must clearly describe the requirements for admission, including requirements for the completion of necessary prerequisite courses and general education courses to ensure that the student will complete all of the requirements for the bachelor's degree upon graduation.

General education and academic subject offerings, as distinguished from the professional or vocational offerings of a collegiate institution, shall place emphasis on principles and theory and not on practical applications associated with a particular occupation or profession. General education courses give balance to the total program and must be appropriate for the program and the needs of the students. The Council's expectations for general education, humanities, mathematics and the sciences, and social sciences are outlined in the Glossary section.

**3-5-203. Curriculum.** The curriculum shall quantitatively and qualitatively approximate the standards at other collegiate institutions offering bachelor's degrees. It should help students acquire necessary skills such as reading, writing, communicating, critical thinking, and the basic use of computers. Instructional procedures, texts, materials, and technology shall be appropriate to the purposes, curriculums, and standards of collegiate institutions. Evidence shall be provided that curricular offerings require appropriate use of library resources.

**3-5-204. Enrollment.** Enrollment in upper-division courses must be sufficient to support regularly scheduled and conducted classes and laboratory work. Upper-division work shall be offered and shall be based upon appropriate prerequisites.

### **3-5-300 – FACULTY**

**3-5-301. Preparation.** The institution shall have an adequate and competent faculty working under conditions that encourage the best efforts of each individual. In judging competence, consideration shall be given to the academic preparation and experience of each instructor.

**3-5-302. Assignments.** During any academic term, a faculty member shall not be assigned to teach in more than three fields of instruction and preferably in not more than two fields. The size of the faculty shall be appropriate for the total student enrollment.

Instructors teaching general education shall hold a master's degree at a minimum and shall be assigned based on their major and minor academic preparation. Instructors at a minimum shall have earned 18 semester or equivalent hours of coursework in the area of their teaching discipline.

Instructors teaching courses other than general education shall hold bachelor's degrees at a minimum and shall be assigned based on their major and minor academic preparation and/or related experience. However, exceptions to the bachelor's degree requirement may be justified for instructors who have demonstrable current exceptional professional level experience in the assigned field, such as documented coursework in the field, professional certification(s), letters of recommendation or attestations from previous employer(s), letters attesting to this expertise from professional peers not connected to the college, real examples of previous success in the field such as published work, juried exhibits and shows, evidence of a professional portfolio accepted by the college and available for review, and other significant documented experience relevant to the courses to be taught. Minor or related degrees could be considered but will not be the sole determining factor. Duration of time associated with this alternative justification is dependent on the quality and significance of the work experience. The institution must be able to justify the assignment of any instructor who does not hold a bachelor's degree in the assigned teaching field.

In addition to the degree requirements outlined above, at least one-half of all lower-division courses and all upper-division courses, including those core courses common to nonacademic degree or nondegree programs, shall be taught by faculty members holding graduate degrees, professional degrees such as J.D. or M.D., or bachelor's degrees plus professional certification. This calculation does not apply, however, to courses in fields in which graduate degrees, professional degrees, or professional certifications are not generally available.

**3-5-303. Teaching Load.** Teaching loads shall be reasonable and shall be justified by factors such as the number of different preparations required; the type and method of instruction; the size of classes; the level of instruction; the qualifications of the instructor; the academic advising, committee membership, and guidance and student organizations assigned; and the other administrative, research, publication, and community relations responsibilities of the instructor.

**3-5-304. *Stability.*** There shall be an adequate core of full- and part-time faculty to ensure sound direction and continuity of development for the educational programs. The institution shall demonstrate through outcomes, length of service, reasonable retention of faculty, and other measures that the core faculty ensures that the institution will meet its stated mission and objectives. The institution shall promote stability in the faculty through compensation, fringe benefits, professional growth opportunities, and other incentives.

### **3-5-400 – LIBRARY, INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES, AND TECHNOLOGY**

**3-5-401. *Staff.*** A professionally trained individual shall supervise and manage library and instructional resources, facilitate their integration into all phases of the institution's curricular and educational offerings, and assist students in their use. A professionally trained individual is one who holds a bachelor's or master's degree in library or information science or a comparable program, or state certification to work as a librarian, where applicable. The institution must provide evidence that the degree is from an institution accredited by an agency recognized by the United States Department of Education. If the degree is from an institution outside of the United States, the institution must be recognized by their government and the transcript must be translated into English and be evaluated by a member of the Association of International Credentials Evaluators (AICE) or the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES) to determine the equivalency of the degree to degrees awarded by institutions in the United States. The professionally trained individual must participate in documented professional growth activities.

During scheduled library hours, there shall be a trained individual on duty at all times to supervise the library and to assist students with library functions. This individual shall be competent both to use and to aid in the use of the library technologies and resources.

**3-5-402. *Budget.*** An annual library budget, appropriate to the size and scope of the institution and the programs offered, shall be established and the allocation expended for the purchase of books, periodicals, library equipment, and other resource and reference materials.

**3-5-403. *Function.*** The library function is shaped by the educational programs of the college. Appropriate reference, research, and information resources must be made available to provide basic support for curricular and educational offerings and to enhance student learning.

**3-5-404. *Use and Accessibility.*** The faculty should inspire, motivate, and direct student usage of the library resources. The library's adequacy ultimately is determined by the extent to which physical and/or online resources including full-text resources support all the courses offered by the institution.

For library resources, the Dewey Decimal System, Library of Congress classification system, or other appropriate system of classification should be used. Records of physical and/or online circulation and inventory shall be current and accurate and must be maintained to assist staff and faculty in evaluating the adequacy and utilization of the physical and/or online resources including full-text holdings.

Physical and/or online, full-text library materials and services must be available at times consistent with the typical student's schedule in both day and evening programs. If computer software is utilized on site, a sufficient number of terminals shall be provided for student use. If interlibrary agreements are in effect, provisions for such use must be practical and accessible and use must be documented. In determining the appropriateness of such agreements, consideration will be given to the nature of the participating library's collection, provisions for interlibrary loans, and the degree of accessibility to the students. A college's library must contain, at a minimum, a core collection of physical and/or online resources including full-text reference materials appropriate for the offerings of the institution.

**3-5-405. *Holdings.*** A collegiate library shall contain up-to-date physical and/or online resources including full-text titles appropriate for the size of the institution and the breadth of and enrollment in its educational programs. The library collection shall include holdings on the Humanities, Arts, Social Sciences, and Sciences, including mathematics; magazines and professional journals and periodicals; and, when appropriate, online data networks and retrieval systems, CD-ROMs, and interactive research systems that support the offerings of the institution.

**3-5-406. *Acquisitions.*** Library acquisitions are the joint responsibility of the faculty and library staff, with the greater amount emanating from the faculty.

## Chapter 6

Standards for Master's Degree Programs

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## INTRODUCTION

In addition to the general standards in Chapter 1, which apply to all institutions, the following standards apply specifically to master's degree programs.

**3-6-100 – NATURE OF GRADUATE EDUCATION**

The awarding of a master's degree signifies that, in the judgment of the faculty, the student has attained specialized competence which qualifies the recipient for opportunities and additional responsibilities not ordinarily available to the baccalaureate degree recipient. To make a graduate program distinctive, a component designed to teach research skills should be included.

**3-6-200 – STATE AUTHORITY**

The institution must be legally authorized by the appropriate state education agency, where such authority exists, to confer the master's degree.

**3-6-300 – ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION**

**3-6-301. *Committee Oversight.*** The responsibility for developing, modifying, and maintaining the graduate program shall be performed by a qualified designated committee to include, but not restricted to, students, faculty, administrators, and employers.

**3-6-302. *Program Administration.*** The administration of the graduate program shall be performed by a qualified individual with appropriate administrative and educational background and experience for the direction of a graduate program. The duties of this individual may be full- or part-time with adequate staff support.

**3-6-400 – EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES**

**3-6-401. *Objectives.*** The objectives of a master's degree program reflect the application of an institution's mission to its constituencies. An institution applying for the inclusion of a master's degree program shall demonstrate that its programs, courses, and services are appropriate to its mission and to its specific goals and objectives. Master's degree programs should emphasize both mastery of subject matter and an understanding of related research and research methodology. This emphasis implies development of the student's ability to integrate and apply the subject matter.

**3-6-402. *Program Development.*** Graduate faculty must be directly involved in the development and modification of master's degree program policies, procedures, and curricula. Flexible instructional approaches and scheduling patterns are encouraged in developing innovative graduate programs in order to serve varying student groups and their special needs.

**3-6-403. *Education Requirements.*** The minimum number of credits required for the master's degree shall be 30 semester hours, 45 quarter hours, or their equivalent, of course work plus a thesis at the graduate level; or 36 semester hours, 54 quarter hours, or their equivalent, of course work at the graduate level if a thesis is not required. The master's degree normally is earned over three semesters, five quarters, or the equivalent. The catalog must provide an explanation of the course numbering system.

**3-6-404. *Curriculum.*** The curriculum shall quantitatively and qualitatively approximate the standards at other institutions offering master's degrees. Instructional procedures, texts, materials, and technology shall be appropriate to the purposes, curriculums, and standards of collegiate institutions. Evidence shall be provided that curricular offerings require the appropriate use of library resources.

**3-6-405. *Enrollment.*** Enrollment in graduate-level courses must be sufficient to support regularly scheduled and conducted classes and laboratory work. Graduate-level courses shall be offered and shall be based on appropriate prerequisites.

### **3-6-500 – FACULTY**

**3-6-501. *Preparation.*** The institution shall have an adequate and competent faculty working under conditions that encourage the best efforts of each individual. In judging competence of faculty, consideration shall be given to the academic preparation and experience of each instructor.

**3-6-502. *Assignments.*** Instructors shall be assigned in terms of their major and minor areas of academic preparation and related experience. The size of the faculty shall be appropriate for the graduate enrollment. All master's program faculty should have appropriate graduate degrees, and the number with terminal degrees should be appropriate for the graduate enrollment. At least one-half of the graduate-level courses are to be taught by faculty possessing terminal degrees. Professional certification is not a substitute for a terminal degree. The institution also should encourage graduate faculty members to engage in scholarly research and to publish in professional journals.

Faculty who do not possess appropriate graduate degrees may be assigned to teach in master's degree programs if they have exceptional practical or professional experience in the assigned field or if the assigned field is one in which graduate degrees are not widely available. In either case, the burden is on the institution to demonstrate and justify the qualifications of the faculty to teach their assigned courses. Faculty assigned under this exception are not considered to have the equivalent of a terminal degree.

**3-6-503. *Teaching Load.*** Teaching loads shall be reasonable and shall be justified by factors such as the number of different preparations required; the type and method of instruction; the size of classes; the level of instruction; the qualifications of the instructor; the academic advising, committee membership, and guidance and student organizations assigned; and the other administrative, research, publication, and community relations responsibilities of the instructor.

**3-6-504. *Stability.*** There shall be an adequate core of full- and part-time faculty to ensure sound direction and continuity of development for the educational programs. The institution shall demonstrate through outcomes, length of service, reasonable retention of faculty, and other measures that the core faculty ensures that the institution will meet its stated mission and objectives. The institution shall promote stability in the faculty through compensation, fringe benefits, professional growth opportunities, and other incentives.

### **3-6-600 – ADMISSIONS**

**3-6-601. *Enrollment Prerequisites.*** The threshold admission requirement to a master's degree program is a baccalaureate degree.

**3-6-602. *Evaluation of Applicants.*** Institutions should use appropriate techniques to evaluate applicants and to determine whether they have the academic qualifications to benefit from graduate study.

**3-6-603. *Transfer of Credit.*** Transfer of credit for appropriate master's-level course work from another institution may be granted according to the policy established by the institution. No more than one-half of the credits required for the master's degree may be transferred from another institution.

**3-6-604. *Conformance to Institutional Objectives.*** Admissions procedures, transfer policies, and requirements for graduation shall be consistent with the overall philosophy and objectives of the institution.

### **3-6-700–LIBRARY, INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES, AND TECHNOLOGY**

**3-6-701. *Staff.*** A professionally trained individual shall supervise and manage library and instructional resources, facilitate their integration into all phases of the institution's curricular and educational offerings, and assist students in their use. A professionally trained individual is one who holds a M.L.S. degree or the equivalent, with special qualifications to aid students in research. The institution must provide evidence that the degree is from an institution accredited by an agency recognized by the United States Department of Education. If the degree is from an institution outside of the United States, the institution must be recognized by their government and the transcript must be translated into English and be evaluated by a member of the Association of International Credentials Evaluators (AICE) or the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES) to determine the equivalency of the degree to degrees awarded by institutions in the United States. The professionally trained individual must participate in documented professional growth activities.

There shall be a professionally trained individual on duty for sufficient hours, as published by the institution, to support the programs and to assist students with library functions and research. This individual shall be competent both to use and to aid in the use of the library technologies and resources.

**3-6-702. *Budget.*** An annual library budget, appropriate to the size and scope of the institution and the programs offered, shall be established and the allocation expended for the purchase of books, periodicals, library equipment, and other resource and reference materials.

**3-6-703. *Function.*** The library function is shaped by the educational programs of the institution. Institutions offering master's degree programs shall provide access to substantially different library resources in terms of their depth and breadth from those required for baccalaureate degree programs.

These resources shall include bibliographic and monographic references, major professional journals and reference services, research and methodology materials, and, as appropriate, information technologies. The depth and breadth of the accessible library holdings shall be such as to exceed the requirements of the average student in order to encourage the intellectual development of superior students and to enrich the professional development of the faculty.

Appropriate reference, research, and information resources must be made available to enhance, augment, and support the curricular and educational offerings and to enhance student learning. The resources shall include the study, reading, and information technology facilities necessary to make the educational programs effective.

**3-6-704. *Use and Accessibility.*** It is the faculty's responsibility to inspire, motivate, and direct student usage of the library resources. The library's adequacy ultimately is determined by the extent to which physical and/or online, full-text resources support all the courses offered by the institution.

For library resources, the Dewey Decimal System, Library of Congress classification system, or other appropriate system of classification should be used. Records of physical and/or online circulation and inventory shall be current and accurate and must be maintained to assist staff and faculty in evaluating the adequacy and utilization of the physical and/or online, full-text holdings.

Physical and/or online, full-text library materials and services must be available at times consistent with the typical student's schedule in both day and evening programs. If computer software is utilized on site, a sufficient number of terminals shall be provided for student use. If interlibrary agreements are in effect, provisions for such use must be practical and accessible and use must be documented. In determining the appropriateness of such agreements, consideration will be given to the uniqueness of the lending library's collection, provisions for interlibrary loans, and the degree of accessibility to the students. A college's library must contain, at a minimum, a core collection of physical and/or on-line, full-text reference materials appropriate for the offerings of the institution.

**3-6-705. *Holdings.*** The library shall support the academic programs and the intellectual and cultural development of students, faculty, and staff; shall provide current and appropriate physical and/or online, full-text resources for the size of the institution and the breadth of and enrollment in its educational programs; shall provide, when appropriate, on-line data networks and retrieval systems, CD-ROMs, and interactive research systems; and shall be capable of supporting an understanding of scholarly research and/or scholarly research at the graduate level.

**3-6-706. *Acquisitions.*** Library acquisitions are the joint responsibility of the faculty and library staff, with the greater amount of input emanating from the faculty.

### **3-6-800 – PUBLICATIONS**

There shall be a separate section in the institution's catalog describing the master's degree objectives, program requirements, admissions procedures, transfer policies, graduation requirements, regulations, and course descriptions.

## TITLE III

## GENERAL PROCEDURES

### Chapter 7

### Standards for Doctorate Degree Programs

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#### INTRODUCTION

In addition to the general standards in Chapter 1, which apply to all institutions, the following standards apply specifically to doctorate degree programs. Institutions may confer only professionally-oriented doctorate degrees. These include degrees such as the J.D., Ed.D., DFA, DBA, etc., but excluding the Ph.D.

#### 3-7-100 – NATURE OF DOCTORATE EDUCATION

The awarding of a professional doctorate degree signifies that, in the judgment of the faculty, the student has attained specialized and practical competence which qualifies the recipient for opportunities and additional responsibilities beyond the master's degree level.

The doctorate degree is to be professionally oriented and must include the following:

- (a) coursework which heightens the level of professional expertise in the area or field of study sought.
- (b) an understanding of appropriate research methods relevant to the area or field of study sought. Original research, however, is not necessary.
- (c) evidence that the coursework enables graduates to function/perform in the area or field of study sought.

To make a doctorate program distinctive, a component shall be designed to include practical research or a capstone project, or thesis, or other required academic activities. A doctorate degree program is further designed to provide the mastery of a subject, theory, and methodology in a specific field of study.

#### 3-7-200 – STATE AUTHORITY

The institution must be legally authorized by the appropriate state or national education agency, where such authority exists, to confer the doctorate degree.

#### 3-7-300–ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION

**3-7-301. *Committee Oversight.*** The responsibility for developing, modifying, and maintaining the doctorate degree program shall be carried out by a qualified designated committee to include, but not restricted to, faculty and administrators who, at a minimum, possess a doctoral/terminal professional degree in a related subject area. In addition, the committee shall include other professionals or practitioners (between three and five individuals) with similar qualifications not directly employed or affiliated with the institution.

**3-7-302. *Program Administration.*** The administration of the doctorate degree program shall be the responsibility of a qualified individual with appropriate administrative and educational background and experience related to a doctorate degree program. These qualifications must include a doctoral/terminal professional degree in a related subject area. The duties of this individual should be full-time with adequate staff support. The program must require students to work with a well-qualified and credentialed committee knowledgeable in methods of research and in the subject matter, chaired by an appropriately credentialed individual with expertise in the program area.

**3-7-400–EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES**

**3-7-401. Objectives.** The objectives of a doctorate degree program reflect the application of an institution's mission to its constituencies. An institution applying for the inclusion of a doctorate degree program shall demonstrate that its programs, courses, and services are appropriate to its mission and to its specific goals and objectives. Doctorate degree programs should emphasize both mastery of subject matter and an understanding of related research and research methodology. This emphasis implies development of the student's ability to integrate and apply original (if appropriate) and practical research into the subject matter.

Doctorate degrees must emphasize the practical application of the research conducted and specific program objectives must be clearly stated.

**3-7-402. Program Development.** Doctorate faculty must be directly involved in the development and modification of a doctorate degree program's policies, procedures, and curricula. Flexible instructional approaches and scheduling patterns are encouraged in developing innovative doctorate degree programs to serve varying students and their needs. The learning objectives must be advanced and provide the depth of practical learning or research.

**3-7-403. Education Requirements.** The number of credits required for the doctorate degree shall be, at a minimum, 90 semester hours, 120 quarter hours, or their equivalent, of course work beyond the bachelor's degree, plus a capstone project or other required academic or professional activities.

The doctorate degree normally is earned over three to five years or the equivalent. Statutes of limitations for program completion must be clearly disclosed to students and included in the institutional catalog, as well as on the enrollment agreement.

The catalog must provide a detailed explanation of the required courses in the program, as well as a description of the required activities and research elements necessary to complete the program.

**3-7-404. Curriculum.** The curriculum shall quantitatively and qualitatively approximate the standards at other institutions offering comparable degrees. Instructional procedures, texts, materials, and technology shall be appropriate to the purposes, curriculums, and standards of collegiate institutions. Evidence shall be provided that curricular offerings require the appropriate use of research and library resources.

The program must be designed for each student to accomplish specified goals and objectives and contribute to competence in the subject area or profession at an advanced level. Such activities and requirements must be approved by a designated individual and at least two additional individuals within the respective field of study with appropriate credentials.

The capstone project or other required academic or professional activities must be reviewed, evaluated, and assessed by a committee as described above. At least one individual on the committee must be from another appropriately accredited institution within the subject area.

**3-7-405. Enrollment.** Enrollment must be sufficient to support regularly scheduled and conducted classes and coursework. Doctorate-level courses shall be offered and shall be based on appropriate prerequisites.

### **3-7-500 – FACULTY**

**3-7-501. *Preparation.*** The institution shall have an adequate and competent faculty working under conditions that encourage the best efforts of each individual. In judging competence of faculty, consideration shall be given to the academic preparation and experience of each instructor.

**3-7-502. *Assignments.*** Faculty shall be assigned in terms of their major and minor areas of academic preparation and related experience. The size of the faculty shall be appropriate for the enrollment. All doctorate program faculty should have appropriate graduate and terminal degrees. All courses are to be taught by faculty possessing terminal degrees. Professional certification is not a substitute for a terminal degree. The institution also should encourage faculty members to engage in practical or scholarly research and to publish in professional journals.

The principal faculty members must possess doctoral/terminal professional degrees from accredited institutions. These individuals also must demonstrate expertise in the field of study taught and possess applicable experience in participating in a doctorate degree program.

**3-7-503. *Teaching Load.*** Teaching loads shall be reasonable and shall be justified by factors such as the number of different preparations required; the type and method of instruction; the size of classes; the level of instruction; the qualifications of the instructor; academic advising, committee membership, and student guidance assigned; and the other administrative, research, publication, and community relations responsibilities of the instructor.

**3-7-504. *Stability.*** The proportion of faculty employed on a full-time basis shall be sufficient to ensure sound direction and continuity of development for the educational programs. The institution shall demonstrate through outcomes and other measures that the proportion of full-time faculty and the faculty's average length of service to the institution allow the institution to meet its stated mission. The institution shall promote stability in the faculty through compensation, fringe benefits, professional growth opportunities, and other incentives.

### **3-7-600 – ADMISSIONS**

**3-7-601. *Enrollment Prerequisites.*** The threshold admission requirement to a doctorate degree program is, as appropriate, a bachelor's or master's degree earned from an appropriately accredited institution recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. A specific enrollment agreement must be established for the doctorate degree program.

**3-7-602. *Evaluation of Applicants.*** Institutions should use appropriate techniques to evaluate applicants and to determine whether they have the academic qualifications to benefit from doctorate degree study.

**3-7-603. *Transfer of Credit.*** Transfer of credit for appropriate master's or doctorate-level course work from another institution may be granted according to the policy established by the institution. No more than 20% of the credits required for the doctorate degree may be transferred from another institution. Academic credit shall not be awarded for experiential learning activity.

**3-7-604. *Conformance to Institutional Objectives.*** Admissions procedures, transfer policies, and requirements for graduation shall be consistent with the overall philosophy, mission, and objectives of the institution.

**3-7-700 – LIBRARY, INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES, AND TECHNOLOGY**

**3-7-701. *Staff.*** A professionally trained individual shall supervise and manage library and instructional resources, facilitate their integration into all phases of the institution's curricular and educational offerings, and assist students in their use. A professionally trained individual is one who holds a M.L.S. degree or the equivalent, with special qualifications to aid students in research. The institution must provide evidence that the degree is from an institution accredited by an agency recognized by the United States Department of Education. If the degree is from an institution outside of the United States, the institution must be recognized by their government and the transcript must be translated into English and be evaluated by a member of the the Association of International Credentials Evaluators (AICE) or National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES) to determine the equivalency of the degree to degrees awarded by institutions in the United States. The professionally trained individual must participate in documented professional growth activities.

There shall be a professionally trained individual on duty for sufficient hours, as published by the institution, to support the programs and to assist students with library functions and research. This individual shall be competent both to use and to aid in the use of the library technologies and resources.

**3-7-702. *Budget.*** An annual library budget, appropriate to the size and scope of the institution and the programs offered, shall be established and the allocation expended for the purchase of books, periodicals, library equipment, and other resource and reference materials.

**3-7-703. *Function.*** The library function is shaped by the educational programs of the institution. Institutions offering doctorate degree programs shall provide access to resources which enhance, support, and are influential to research activities conducted with regard to the field of study.

These resources shall include bibliographic and monographic references, major professional and scholarly journals and reference services, research and methodology materials, and, as appropriate, information technologies. The depth and breadth of the accessible library holdings shall be such as to exceed the requirements of the student to encourage the intellectual development of students and to enrich the professional development of the faculty.

Appropriate reference, research, and information resources must be made available to enhance, augment, and support the curricular and educational offerings and to enhance student learning. The resources shall include the study, reading, and information technology facilities necessary to make the educational programs effective.

**3-7-704. *Use and Accessibility.*** Faculty are responsible for inspiring, motivating, and directing student usage of the library resources. The library's adequacy ultimately is determined by the extent to which physical and/or on-line, full-text resources support all the courses offered by the institution. For library resources, the Dewey Decimal System, Library of Congress classification system, or other appropriate system of classification should be used. Records of physical and/or on-line circulation and inventory shall be current and accurate and must be maintained to assist staff and faculty in evaluating the adequacy and utilization of the holdings.

Physical and/or on-line, full-text library materials and services must be available at times consistent with the typical student's schedule in both day and evening programs. If computer software is utilized, a sufficient number of terminals shall be provided for student use. If interlibrary agreements are in effect, provisions for such use must be practical and accessible and use must be documented. In determining the appropriateness of such agreements, consideration will be given to the uniqueness of the lending library's collection, provisions for interlibrary loans, and the degree of accessibility to the students. A college's library must contain, at a minimum, a core collection of physical and/or on-line reference materials appropriate for the offerings of the institution.

**3-7-705. *Holdings.*** The library shall support the academic programs and the intellectual and cultural development of students, faculty, and staff; shall provide current and appropriate resources for the size of the institution and the breadth of and enrollment in its educational programs; shall provide, when appropriate, physical and/or on-line, full-text data networks and retrieval systems, CD-ROMs, and interactive research systems; and shall be capable of supporting scholarly research at the graduate level.

**3-7-706. *Acquisitions.*** Library acquisitions are the joint responsibility of the faculty and library staff, with the greater amount of input emanating from the faculty.

### **3-7-800 – PUBLICATIONS**

There shall be a separate section in the institution's catalog describing the doctorate degree program requirements, admissions procedures, transfer policies, graduation requirements, regulations, and course descriptions.



## GLOSSARY OF DEFINITIONS

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*The following definitions are provided in order to assist institutions in understanding and interpreting the Accreditation Criteria. The definitions include some of the most commonly used terms and are defined to reflect their most common usage. These normative definitions drawn from no single source are offered by way of example rather than limitation. The Council recognizes the evolving and dynamic nature of American postsecondary education. It has no intention of imposing rigid expectations. When an institution departs from these norms it may be called upon to defend the academic integrity of the questioned activity.*

**Ability to Benefit.** A determination made by the institution that, in the absence of a high school diploma or GED certificate, the student will be able to benefit, with or without remediation, from the program(s) offered at the institution. The determination should be made before the person is financially obligated or enrolled in a program.

**Academic Probation.** Students placed on academic probation are subject to increased scrutiny of their academic achievements due to a previous history of academic difficulty. The probation policy must define the conditions of probation, including how long a student may remain on probation and the requirements for being removed from probation. The institution may establish additional policies as it desires.

**Academic Credential.** A certificate, diploma, or degree stating that the student has been graduated from a certain curriculum or has passed certain subjects.

**Academic Year.** A period of time generally divided into two semesters, three quarters, or their equivalent, in which a full-time student is expected to complete the coursework equivalent to at least two semesters, three quarters, or their equivalent.

**Additional Space.** Part of the main or branch campus. Additional space and the campus are within walking distance or adequate transportation is provided by the institution between the locations.

**Accreditation.** The process whereby a nationally recognized agency or organization grants public recognition to a unit of an educational organization (such as a school, institute, college, university, or specialized program of study) indicating that it meets established standards of quality as determined through initial and periodic self-study and evaluation by peers. The essential purpose of the accreditation process is to provide a professional judgment as to quality of the educational institution or program(s) offered and to encourage continual improvement thereof.

**Achievement Test.** A test which measures a student's existing skills and knowledge (that which has been taught to the student) in particular areas such as reading, math, map skills, grammar, etc.

**Aptitude Test.** Aptitude and its tests refer to the ability/potential to do schoolwork in different areas such as mechanics, art, clerical procedures, verbal, and numerical ability. (Important factors such as home environment, familiarity with the English language, and physical and psychological well-being at the time of the test all affect this kind of measure.) Aptitude tests often are timed, often are multiple choice, and are "normed" for cutoff score on a nationwide sampling of students.

**Applied General Education.** Applied general education is defined as courses that involve the application of principles and concepts in communications, humanities and fine arts, mathematics, natural and physical sciences, social and behavioral sciences, and technology to the practical affairs of a specific occupation or occupational cluster. Applied general education courses enhance the ability of an individual to apply academic and occupational skills in the workplace. Examples of applied general education courses include technical writing, business writing, business statistics, business mathematics, organizational behavior, and human relations.

**Area of Concentration.** In a degree program, the focus of study. Also known as the major. The requirements for the major or area of concentration are based upon clearly defined and articulated learning objectives, including a mastery

of the knowledge, methods, and theories pertinent to a particular area of inquiry, discipline, or field. General education and other courses not related to the major do not qualify as concentration coursework.

**Articulation.** An understanding or agreement between institutions to accommodate the movement of students and the transfer of credits between institutions.

**Asynchronous Interactions.** Teaching/learning interactions between students and instructors which take place intermittently or non-simultaneously with a time delay.

**Audioconferencing.** Structured voice-only teaching/learning interaction among individuals or groups in two or more sites.

**Blended Course or Blended Learning.** A course or learning activity that combines online and face-to-face, in-class sessions. Also called “hybrid” course or learning.

**Bulletin Board System (BBS).** A computer-based online community which allows participants to interact with each other through text messages.

**Calendar.** The system by which the institution structures its school (academic) year. The three common types of calendars are the semester, the quarter, and the trimester. The semester calendar is generally composed of two semesters of 15 to 17 weeks of classes each, including final examinations. The quarter calendar is generally composed of three quarters, usually with 10 to 12 weeks of classes each, including final examinations. The summer quarter is sometimes subdivided into terms of shorter length. The trimester calendar is composed of three 15-week terms including final examinations. The third may be subdivided.

**Category Grant.** An institutionally financed award to all students who qualify by meeting the published standards for a grant to similarly circumstanced students, such as a grant to active members of the military.

**Certificate.** A document issued to evidence completion of a course, seminar, or an academic program. An academic program awarding a certificate is usually shorter in length than a program resulting in a diploma. See definition of a Diploma.

**Chat Room.** An online or virtual meeting space for multiple learners to engage in real-time text-based discussions.

**Clock (or Contact) Hour.** A minimum of 50 minutes of supervised or directed instruction and appropriate break(s).

**Community Resources.** Individuals, organizations, or businesses that provide information, guidance or support to an institution, such as professional and trade associations, employers, guest speakers, and advisory committees.

**Competency Test.** A test with pre-established standards to measure performance. An example would be a spelling component consisting of ten questions where a score of seven or more is passing. The cutoff “pass-fail” point is referred to as criterion referenced. Usually used for promotion or graduation purposes, these tests are not standardized nationally.

**Computer-Assisted Instruction (CAI).** A type of self-paced instruction that uses the computer as the primary medium for tutorials, drills, repetitive practice, simulation, or games.

**Connect Time.** The amount of time that an online student has been logged on to the education provider’s computer or server for a particular session. The connect time may be used by a school to monitor an online student’s “attendance” and participation in a class session.

**Course.** A single subject described in an institutional catalog or bulletin.

**Credit.** (1) The quantitative measurement assigned to a course generally stated in semester hours, quarter hours, or clock hours. (2) The recognition awarded upon successful completion of coursework.

**Credit Conversion.** The process of converting units of credit based on one kind of calendar to units based on another kind of calendar. For example, the three most common calendars convert as follows: quarter hours multiplied by two-thirds equal semester hours; semester hours multiplied by one and one-half equal quarter hours; and trimester hours are equal to semester hours unless the trimester is of less than 15 weeks' duration, in which case the number of weeks and length of class sessions must be considered. While the institution may present itself as credit-without-term, one of the three traditional calendars must be used.

**Credit Hour.** A unit by which an institution may measure its course work. The number of credit hours assigned to a traditionally delivered course is usually defined by a combination of the number of hours per week in class, the number of hours per week in a laboratory, and/or the number of hours devoted to externship times the number of weeks in the term. One unit of credit is usually equivalent to, at a minimum, one hour of classroom study and outside preparation, two hours of laboratory experience, or three hours of internship or practicum, or a combination of the three times the number of weeks in the term. The number of credit hours assigned to a nontraditionally delivered course must be determined and justified by the institution and approved by the Council.

**Credit Hour, Quarter.** The number of credit hours assigned to a traditionally delivered course consists of a minimum of 10 classroom lecture periods of not less than 50 minutes each and which assumes outside reading and/or preparation; 20 laboratory clock hours where classroom theory is applied and explored, or manipulative skills are enhanced; 30 hours of external discipline-related work experience with indirect instructor supervision or employer assessment; or an appropriate combination of all three. The number of credit hours assigned to a nontraditionally delivered course must be determined and justified by the institution and approved by the Council.

**Credit Hour, Semester.** The number of credit hours assigned to a traditionally delivered course consists of a minimum of 15 classroom lecture periods of not less than 50 minutes each and which assumes outside reading and/or preparation; 30 laboratory clock hours where classroom theory is applied and explored, or manipulative skills are enhanced; 45 hours of external discipline-related work experience with indirect instructor supervision or employer assessment; or an appropriate combination of all three. The number of credit hours assigned to a nontraditionally delivered course must be determined and justified by the institution and approved by the Council.

**Credit Hour, Trimester.** A minimum fifteen-week term. Trimester credits are equivalent to semester credits.

**Curriculum.** A program of courses fulfilling the requirements for a certificate, diploma, or degree in a particular field of study. (See definition of Program.)

**Degree.** Credential awarded as official recognition for the successful completion of an academic program.

**Degree, Advanced.** A degree beyond the bachelor's degree (e.g., M.A., M.S., M.B.A., Ph.D.).

**Degree, Associate.** The academic credential granted upon successful completion of an educational program of at least two but less than four academic years of college work.

**Degree, Baccalaureate.** The academic credential granted upon successful completion of an educational program of at least four academic years of college work.

**Degree, First Professional.** The first degree signifying completion of the minimum academic requirements for practice of a profession. A first professional degree is most commonly a bachelor's degree, but is sometimes a master's or doctorate (e.g., M.L.S., J.D., M.D.).

**Degree, Graduate.** (1) In general, any degree conferred by a graduate division or a graduate school of an institution of higher education. (2) More specifically, all advanced degrees, and also all first professional degrees which are conferred by graduate schools.

**Degree, Professional Doctorate.** The degree signifying completion of the advanced academic requirements for practice of a profession. A professional doctorate degree is most commonly a practitioner-based degree beyond the master's degree level (i.e., J.D., Ed.D., DFA, DBA, etc., but excluding the Ph.D.).

**Degree, Specialized.** The credential granted upon successful completion of an educational program of at least two academic years or equivalent of college-level work which includes an emphasis on occupational and technical course work.

**Diploma.** A document issued to evidence successful completion of an academic program. A diploma is awarded for programs varying in length from only a few months to those lasting several years and awarding degrees.

**Distance Education or Distance Learning.** A structured educational situation in which the instructors and learners are separated by time and location. Distance education supports regular and substantive interaction synchronously and asynchronously, between instructor and learner, among learners, and between learners and learning resources through one or more interactive technologies. The technologies may include the following: the internet; interactive transmissions through broadcast, closed circuit, cable, satellite, or wireless communications devices; and two-way audio or videoconferencing.

**Electronic Learning or E-learning.** Refers to a wide range of methodologies used in the delivery of instructional content via Internet, satellite broadcast, interactive TV, CD-Rom, etc.

**Enrollment, Full-Time Equivalent.** The equivalent number of full-time students at an established census date, equivalency being established by dividing the total student credit hours by the assumed normal individual load of credit hours.

**Externship.** See Practicum.

**Face-to-Face or F2F.** Refers to the traditional classroom teaching/learning environment. Also known as Instructor-led Training or ILT, on-ground training, or on-site training.

**Faculty Contact Hours.** The total hours of scheduled instructional activity spent by instructional faculty as of a specific period of time. If a course meets three hours per week for 15 weeks, it yields 45 contact hours.

**Faculty Development.** The activities by which faculty gain knowledge and skills to enhance expertise in the specific area(s) of instruction or on new curriculum concepts, theories and techniques of instruction, and educational media. The institution must demonstrate that the balance between methodology training (in-service) and content knowledge enhancement (professional growth) is appropriate for the individual faculty member. All activities must be documented. (See also “in-service training” and “professional growth”)

**Financial Aid.** Student financial assistance funded by state or federal programs and administered by the institution.

**Follow-up.** The study of any group of students or former students of the institution who have shared a common experience to determine if patterns emerge in their subsequent actions or behavior which prove useful in understanding, counseling, and establishing policies for other students; for example, a study of the number of graduates who have entered graduate schools or a study of the number of graduates who have obtained employment.

**Four-Year Institution.** (1) Literally, an institution of higher education offering four years of college-level work culminating in a bachelor's degree. (2) In common usage, distinguished from a two-year institution, and characterized by offering four or more years of coursework normally creditable toward a bachelor's or higher degree or equivalent award. In addition to coursework normally creditable toward a bachelor's or higher degree, four-year institutions may also offer other types of instruction; e.g., courses in general and continuing education, short courses, occupational curriculums leading to an associate degree, etc.

**Full-Motion Video.** Transmission of the complete action taking place at the originating site.

**General Education.** Those areas of learning which are deemed to be the common experience of all “educated” persons, including subject matter from the humanities, mathematics and the sciences, and the social sciences.

**General Education. Humanities**—Courses in fields such as literature, philosophy, logic, foreign language, art, music appreciation, and communications, including rhetoric, composition, and speech; but excluding business communica

tions, spelling, letter writing, and word study.

**General Education. Mathematics and the Sciences**—Courses such as biology, chemistry, physics, geology, astronomy, and mathematics theory and analysis, including algebra, trigonometry, geometry, calculus, and other advanced mathematics courses, but excluding business mathematics and basic computations.

**General Education. Social Sciences**—Courses such as history, economics, political science, geography, sociology, anthropology, and general psychology, but excluding courses such as practical psychology, selling techniques and social or business behavior.

**Home Institution.** In a case where an institution collaborates with another entity for the delivery of distance education courses, “home institution” is the campus through which the student enrolls for the course. The Home Institution is responsible for assuring that accrediting standards are met, for providing on-campus services, and for clearly demonstrating through a formal Consortium Agreement the roles and responsibilities of the Home Institution and the Host Institution, which may deliver the distance education courses and specified online services. The Consortium Agreement must be approved by ACICS and must provide for evaluation visits to the Host Institution as may be required by ACICS.

ACICS expects the Home Institution to offer a minimum of 25% of a program if courses are delivered under a distance education Consortium Agreement with an approved accredited institution, and to offer a minimum of 75% of a program if courses are delivered under a distance education Consortium Agreement with an approved unaccredited entity.

**Host Institution.** The institution which collaborates with an accredited institution in delivering distance education courses and specific online services as described in a formal Consortium Agreement approved by ACICS. The Consortium Agreement must provide for evaluation visits to the Host Institution as may be required by ACICS.

If the Host Institution is an approved unaccredited entity, it is subject to an evaluation visit once every three years as required by ACICS.

**Humanities.** See General Education (Humanities).

**Hybrid Course or Hybrid Program.** A hybrid course is one which mixes face-to-face, traditional classroom instruction with online instruction. A hybrid program is one which offers or requires a percentage of the required courses in a program online. ACICS requires the school to clearly outline the percentage of online activity included in a course or a program. Institutions are required to apply for and secure approval prior to initiating any distance education activity and also when it increases its distance education activity to the extent that it constitutes 50% or more of a program.

**Independent Study.** Independent study involves a high level of independence and self-direction on the part of the student to read, conduct research, and complete written examinations, reports, research papers, and similar assignments designed to measure the student’s grasp of the subject matter. Under the supervision of a faculty member, a learning contract shall be developed which outlines specific learning objectives, texts, supplemental readings, course requirements, evaluative criteria, and examination dates. Because independent study classes are the exception and not the rule, the number of courses that a student will be allowed to take independently should be limited.

**Information Technology.** Method or modes of delivering training, education, or research information via current or new tele-communications technologies, such as television broadcasts, closed circuit television systems, cable television, satellite transmissions, computers and computer-based access to external learning resources, videotape and interactive video disc, audio by disc, tapes or broadcasts, and other such information and telecommunications systems that alone or in combination assist in teaching and learning.

**In-Service Training.** Special planned and systematic experiences sponsored by an institution and related to curriculum and instruction that affect the majority of the faculty in a collective fashion. In-service education has as its major goal

the updating of teachers in (1) subject matter, (2) curriculum concepts, (3) new theories and techniques of instruction, and (4) new educational media. The most common activity is a lecture by an outside speaker on a subject related to curriculum, the institution, or a societal issue.

**Integrated Learning System or ILS.** A network system that provides a complete package of curriculum, assessment capabilities, record keeping, and other aids to monitor and manage student learning activity.

**Internship.** See Practicum.

**Junior College.** A two-year institution of higher education. A junior college may offer a transfer or university parallel curriculum, but more often also offers an occupational and/or academic curriculum and other types of curriculums such as general education, adult education, short courses, and special lectures. The term junior college generally refers to an independently organized institution (public or private), or to one which is part of a public school system (city, county, or state). It does not refer to the lower division of a four-year institution, even if the lower division is on an entirely different campus from the parent institution (such an off-campus division would constitute a branch campus or learning site). A junior college must award at least one degree which includes a general education component.

**Laboratory.** A setting, usually with equipment, where students apply knowledge or instruction acquired in another setting, usually a class lecture or outside reading, to enhance skills and solve problems. Normally, two hours of work in a laboratory setting with an instructor present has the credit equivalency of one hour of classroom lecture.

**Learning Management System or LMS.** A system to manage courses created by a variety of publishers and providers. The LMS also helps the school manage online or distance education activity by providing critical reporting mechanisms.

**Learning Object.** An e-learning content module which is reusable, easily classified and stored in a data repository.

**Lecture.** A setting, usually a classroom, where a teacher instructs students in the theory, principles, or history of an academic or vocational subject. To maximally benefit from such instruction, a student is assumed to have done outside preparation. Two hours of preparation for each hour of lecture instruction are generally assumed.

**Loan.** An advance of money, generally evidenced by a promissory note, on the agreement to repay absolutely such advance, with or without interest.

**Lower-Division Course.** Generally, a survey course that includes an introductory overview of a particular area of knowledge. These courses often do not include a prerequisite for enrollment and frequently are offered to freshmen- and sophomore-level students. Lower-division courses usually carry course numbers in the 100-299 or 1000-2999 range.

**Mathematics and the Sciences.** See General Education (Mathematics and the Sciences).

**Need-based Grant.** An institutionally financed award to a student who demonstrates a need for financial assistance in order to participate in the educational program. Need-based grants must be made available to all students on the same terms.

**Online Learning.** A term used interchangeably with Internet-based Learning, Web-based Learning, or Distance Learning.

**Outcomes.** The effectiveness of an institution is determined by its outcomes. In determining effectiveness, institutions are required to evaluate the following outcomes: placement rates (in field, related field); graduate pass rates relative to minimum quantitative standards for state licensing examinations; employer satisfaction as determined by periodic surveys of those who employ graduates; graduate satisfaction as determined by periodic surveys of graduates; and student satisfaction as determined by periodic surveys of current students. Institutions also may use additional outcomes in evaluating effectiveness.

**Practicum.** A supervised practical experience that is the application of previously studied theory. Normally, three hours of work in a practical setting has the credit equivalency of one hour of classroom lecture. Under the supervision of a faculty or staff member, a written agreement shall be developed that outlines the arrangement between the institution and the practicum site, including specific learning objectives, course requirements, and evaluation criteria.

**Professional Growth.** The process by which employees gain knowledge and skills which enhance their expertise. Professional growth may be accomplished through a combination of the following activities: membership and participation in educational associations, professional organizations, continuance of education, concurrent related business experience, educational research, and awareness of current practices and standards.

Attendance at seminars, conventions, field visits, vendor shows, equipment exhibits, etc., are excellent opportunities for instructors to gain enrichment. Professional writing by an instructor is also an example of professional growth.

**Program.** A sequential grouping of courses which forms a considerable part, or all, of the requirements for an academic credential or an occupational objective. May refer to the total educational offering of an institution. See Curriculum.

**Record, Permanent Academic.** The official document on which is listed the courses attempted, grades and credit earned, and status achieved by a student.

**Record, Student.** A file which may contain the following: a record of the student's scholastic progress, the extracurricular activities, personal characteristics and experiences, family background, secondary school background, aptitudes, interests, counseling notes, etc.

**Refund.** Return of money, cancellation of obligation, or otherwise resolution of the debt.

**Regular student.** A student who is enrolled in a program leading to a certificate, diploma, or degree at an institution and is satisfactorily progressing toward program completion in compliance with the Standards of Satisfactory Progress as stated in Sections 3-1-420 through 3-1-423. Any other student attending the institution is considered in an extended enrollment status and is not eligible for government student aid.

**Scalability.** Provisions available for a computer application to handle expansions in size, volume, or number of users without undue disruption.

**Self-paced Instruction.** An educational delivery method by which a student progresses through a course or program of study in residence utilizing either computer software or instructional materials and resources. Students progress through the course or program at their own pace with limited interaction with the instructor. The instructor, however, is responsible for overseeing the progress of the student and for evaluating and grading the student.

**Scholarship.** (1) The quality of a student's achievement in the student's studies. (2) A financial award which does not involve repayment. A scholarship may be institutionally financed or funded by a third party. It is awarded by the institution in accordance with published standards which describe student qualifications and the source of funding. Reasons for the award may include one or more qualifications such as the student's performance (or potential for performance) in the educational program of the institution, financial need, talents sought or service valued by the institution or the third party.

**Simulations.** Computer applications that offer highly interactive options for the learner to practice skills, model or role-play in realistic scenarios.

**Social Sciences.** See General Education (Social Sciences).

**Student, Full-Time.** A student who is enrolled in a minimum of 12 credit hours per term or its equivalent.

**Syllabus.** A description of how the course will be taught with a planned arrangement of materials and activities. The minimum requirements for a course syllabus consist of the title and course description, course number, course prerequisites and/or corequisites, instructional contact hours/credits, learning objectives, instructional materials and references, topical outline of the course, instructional methods, assessment criteria, method of evaluating students, and the date the syllabus was last reviewed. A course syllabus should be reviewed to ensure that it reflects the most recent trends, developments, and instructional materials for the specific subject areas. A current syllabus prepared and utilized by instructors in guiding and directing the learning experience of the students is necessary to ensure the quality of instruction.

**Synchronous Interactions.** Teaching/learning interactions between instructors and students which take place in real time or simultaneously through the use of various online technologies. These may include: virtual classrooms, audio- or videoconferencing, Internet teleconferences, etc.

**Term.** (1) A calendar unit. (2) Division of the school year during which an educational institution is in session; it may designate the summer term or may be used as a synonym for quarter, school term, semester, or trimester. Historically, a term has been any one of the two or three major periods during which classes were in session, specifically referred to as the fall term, spring term, etc.

**Terminal Degree.** The highest credential generally available in a discipline, which usually is an earned doctorate such as Ph.D., Ed.D., J.D., or D.B.A. In some disciplines, however, the master's degree is considered the terminal degree. Examples include the M.F.A., M.S.W., and M.L.S.

**Threaded Discussions.** Online classroom activity in which the instructor may post a series of messages on a particular topic and invite the students to participate in the discussion forum.

**Transcript.** A copy of the permanent academic (educational) record at an institution of higher education. It becomes an official transcript when the seal of the institution is affixed and the signature of an authorized person is appended.

**Two-Year Institution.** (1) Literally, an institution of higher education offering the first two years of college-level coursework. (2) In common usage a two-year institution is distinguished from a four-year institution and is characterized by offering at least two, but less than four, years of an organized curriculum. The curriculum may be of the transfer type (with credits normally transferable at full value toward a bachelor's degree), terminal-occupational, or open-ended. Two-year institutions include junior colleges, technical institutes, and semi-professional schools. In addition to organized curriculums, two-year institutions also may offer other types of instruction, e.g., courses in general education and adult education, short courses, and special lectures.

**Upper-Division Course.** Generally, a course that presents more specialized course content and is more rigorous than a lower-division course, and that often includes at least one prerequisite. Upper-division courses usually carry course numbers in the 300-499 or 3000-4999 range.

**Validated Test.** A nationally recognized, standardized or industry-developed test which consistently measures what it is designed to measure, e.g., ability of non-high school graduates to benefit from post-secondary education.

**Videoconferencing.** A teaching/learning activity which uses video and audio signals to communicate with student groups at diverse locations.

**Webinar.** A synchronous online conference in which the teacher or presenter may communicate with students via text, audio, video, electronic whiteboard and other devices. The event may include listener participation and archived for asynchronous delivery.

**Withdrawal.** The termination of a student's attendance in a class or in all classes before the end of the term.

**ACCREDITING COUNCIL FOR  
INDEPENDENT COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS  
(ACICS)**



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## BYLAWS

### ARTICLE I General Provisions and Definitions

*Section 1–Name.* The name of the corporation shall be the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools, which corporation also is referred to herein as “ACICS” or “the Corporation”.

*Section 2–Board of Directors.* The governance and administration of the affairs of the Corporation shall be vested in a Board of Directors (sometimes referred to herein as the “Board”). The Board shall be constituted as provided in Article II.

*Section 3–Council.* The Council shall consist of elected and appointed commissioners.

*Section 4–Recognition.* ACICS shall be the body holding recognition from the U.S. Secretary of Education and any other appropriate recognition bodies.

*Section 5–Directors.* Directors are those persons serving on the Board of Directors.

*Section 6–Commissioners.* Commissioners are those persons elected by their peers or appointed by the Council to serve designated terms on the Council.

*Section 7–Public Representatives.* Representatives of the public are persons who are interested in career education; have knowledge or experience useful to the accreditation process; are willing to contribute opinion, advice, and expertise to the endeavors of ACICS and the Council; and are not (1) employed by an institution or program that either is accredited by the agency or has applied for accreditation or (2) associated as members of the governing board, owners, shareholders, consultants or in some other similar capacity with an institution or program that either is accredited by the agency or has applied for accreditation; or (3) a member of any related, associated, or affiliated trade association or membership organization; or (4) a spouse, parent, child or sibling of an individual identified in paragraph (1), (2) or (3) of this definition.

*Section 8–Membership.* Membership shall be institutional or organizational in nature and shall consist of accredited colleges, postsecondary schools, branches, and other entities, all as defined in the Accreditation Criteria of ACICS.

*Section 9–Offices.* The main offices of ACICS shall be in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area. ACICS may have other temporary or permanent offices to facilitate its work. The office of the Corporation’s registered agent shall be an office of ACICS.

*Section 10–Executive Director.* The Executive Director of the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools shall be designated by the Board of Directors and shall be ACICS’s chief executive officer.

## ARTICLE II

### Board of Directors

*Section 1–Composition.* The Board of Directors shall be composed of the commissioners and the Executive Director. The Executive Director shall serve ex officio as a member of the Board and shall have no vote.

*Section 2–Powers and Duties.* Except as otherwise provided by law or in these Bylaws, the Board of Directors shall have the right and responsibility to manage and direct the affairs and exercise the powers of the Corporation. Responsibilities of the Board shall be to:

- (a) provide for an annual certified audit and management letter regarding all financial affairs of ACICS;
- (b) oversee revenues, expenditures, investments, budget development, and internal financial controls;
- (c) monitor and coordinate external affairs, including government and consumer concerns;
- (d) assure canons of ethical business operations and personal conduct;
- (e) employ a chief executive officer whose title shall be Executive Director;
- (f) conduct an annual meeting of the membership of ACICS;
- (g) facilitate communication and coordination among the commissioners;
- (h) coordinate strategic planning, assess the effectiveness of the strategic plan, and take final action on the strategic plan;
- (i) assess the effectiveness of ACICS in fulfilling its mission and meeting its goals and objectives;
- (j) take all actions necessary to perform required functions of the Corporation; and
- (k) amend the Bylaws as provided for herein.

*Section 3–Officers of the Board and officers of the Council.* The officers of the Board of Directors shall be: Chair; Chair-elect; Secretary, by virtue of service as Executive Director; and Treasurer. The officers of the Council shall be: Chair and Chair-elect.

- (a) *Chair.* The Chair of the Council shall serve also as the Chair of the Board of Directors. The Chair shall preside over all meetings of the Board and of the Council and is responsible for seeing that policies established and actions taken by those bodies are carried out. The Chair will represent the Board and the Council in their dealings with governmental bodies, the press, and the public, and may sign or approve correspondence and other instruments.
- (b) *Chair-elect.* The Chair-elect of the Council shall serve also as Chair-elect of the Board. The Chair-elect assumes responsibilities as delegated by the Board; in the absence of the Chair, shall serve as Chair of the Board and of the Council; serves as Chair of the Nominating Committee; and shall serve as Chair of the Board and Council in the subsequent year.
- (c) *Secretary.* The Executive Director shall serve as the Secretary of the Board. The Secretary is responsible for preparing and maintaining custody of the minutes of all meetings of members, the Board, and the Council for the purpose of authenticating the records of the Corporation for each, for giving all notices required in accordance with these Bylaws, for receiving service in legal matters, and for performing all duties customary to the office of Secretary. The Secretary shall have custody of the corporate seal and authority to affix the seal to any instrument requiring it.

- (d) *Treasurer.* The Treasurer shall be a Director and shall be elected by majority vote of the Directors present and voting at a duly constituted meeting of the Board. The Treasurer shall have custody of and be responsible for all funds and securities of the Corporation. The Treasurer shall keep or cause to be kept complete and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements and shall ensure deposit of all moneys and other valuable property of the Corporation in such banks or depositories as the Board may designate. The funds, books, and vouchers under supervision of the Treasurer or other delegated persons, with the exception of confidential reports submitted by the members, shall at all times be subject to verification and inspection by the Board. The Treasurer shall serve on the Audit and Investment Committees of the Board of Directors. The Treasurer shall, at the annual meeting of members or by direct mail, report on the financial condition of the Corporation at least once annually.
- (e) *Additional Officers.* The Board may create positions of Assistant Treasurer and Assistant Secretary as necessary for the orderly conduct of business. When so authorized, the Executive Director shall appoint individuals from the professional staff to fill such offices and may assign appropriate duties to them. The Executive Director shall be responsible for filling all vacancies occurring in these positions.
- (f) *Terms.* Except as otherwise provided in these Bylaws, officers of the Board or the Council shall serve in office for one (1) year or until election of a successor or, if ex officio, as long as they hold the position which entitles them to serve as an officer of the Board or Council.

## ARTICLE III

### Council

*Section 1–Composition.* The Council shall consist of the elected and appointed commissioners generally representing both non degree and degree-granting institutions. It shall consist of fifteen (15) commissioners, six (6) of whom shall be elected by the membership and nine (9) of whom shall be appointed by the Council. Three of the appointed commissioners shall be public members as heretofore defined. Notwithstanding the foregoing, an elected commissioner may be replaced by an appointed commissioner for the remainder of the elected commissioner’s term in the event of a vacancy.

*Section 2–Powers and Duties.* Responsibilities of the Council shall be to:

- (a) promulgate standards of accreditation and establish eligibility conditions, policies, and procedures for accreditation;
- (b) take final action on initial grants of accreditation;
- (c) take final action on denial, suspension, and withdrawal motions;
- (d) provide mechanisms for appeals and dispute resolution to ensure due process in resolution of conflicts between members and the Council;
- (e) provide to members appropriate accreditation-related services such as consultation, accreditation process workshops, and training opportunities for evaluators;
- (f) disseminate information on standards, procedures, and activities;
- (g) monitor compliance with the standards;
- (h) receive and act on other applications;
- (i) issue show-cause directives and place institutions on probation;

- (j) serve as liaison to recognition agencies or bodies;
- (k) issue a list of accredited colleges, schools, and organizations;
- (l) develop and approve an annual budget;
- (m) assess and collect fees from members;
- (n) take final action on the strategic plan; and
- (o) exercise other powers and duties incidental to the foregoing.

*Section 3–Chair and Chair-elect.* The Chair of the Council shall be the Chair-elect from the previous year. The Council shall elect the Chair-elect of the Council, who will become Chair in the subsequent year, annually by majority vote of the commissioners present and voting at a duly constituted meeting of the Council.

## **ARTICLE IV**

### **Elections, Terms, Vacancies, Removal, Resignations, and Compensation**

*Section 1–Elections.* Elections shall be held annually for the selection of persons each of whom shall serve on the Council and the Board. No person shall serve as a member of the Council and not of the Board, nor shall any person other than the Executive Director serve as a member of the Board and not of the Council.

*Section 2–Eligibility.* Any person employed by a member in good standing and meeting other eligibility criteria is eligible to run for Council and Board membership provided that person has been registered pursuant to these Bylaws with the Board of Directors by the ownership of a member institution. That person must be identified as the “Designated Delegate” of that member. Each main and branch campus is entitled to one Designated Delegate. Such designation also authorizes that person to be the voting representative of the member on all ACICS matters requiring a vote of the members. Changes of Designated Delegate shall be made in writing fifteen (15) days prior to the date of any scheduled election which becomes the record date for determining eligibility to vote. Results of elections shall be certified by the Executive Committee.

*Section 3–Voting Procedures.* Specific election procedures concerning candidate qualifications, deadlines for registration, dates and methods of balloting and absentee balloting shall be developed by the Board and may vary from election to election. The following general procedures shall apply to all voting:

- (a) there shall be at least two candidates nominated for each elective position by the Nominating Committee;
- (b) nominations by petition for each elective position will be permitted if such petition (i) is received at least 45 days prior to the date of the election, (ii) contains the names and signatures of Designated Delegates representing at least ten percent of the institutions that are members of ACICS, (iii) demonstrates that the petitioner satisfies the eligibility requirements contained in Section 2 of this Article, and (iv) meets any other procedural requirements which may be established by the Board;
- (c) every member, if properly registered and current with financial obligations, shall have the opportunity to vote;
- (d) proxy voting is not permitted in elections;
- (e) no more than one person from any institution or group of institutions commonly owned, may serve at any one time on the Council;

- (f) voting on behalf of multiple members by one Designated Delegate may be permitted on membership-wide matters; provided that a corporation may authorize a Designated Delegate to cast votes for up to ten (10) members under common ownership and control, the multiple members represented by one Designated Delegate must be recorded with the Secretary prior to the vote, and the multiple members represented by a single Designated Delegate shall count toward a quorum;
- (g) only the Designated Delegate of each member is eligible to vote;
- (h) voting shall be by secret ballot;
- (i) a majority vote, unless otherwise provided by these Bylaws, shall decide all non-candidate matters; and
- (j) a plurality vote shall decide all candidate elections.

*Section 4–Assumption of Office.* New commissioners shall assume office on January 1 of the calendar year following election or appointment, unless otherwise provided for by the Council. Incumbent commissioners will remain in office until new commissioners are seated.

*Section 5–Terms.* Term of service as a commissioner shall be five years, except that a person elected or appointed to fill a term of less than two years is entitled to submit for nomination and election or appointment to a full term. Upon completion of a commissioner's term, the commissioner shall not be eligible to serve another term through election or appointment until three (3) years have elapsed.

*Section 6–Vacancies.* Where a vacancy exists, the Nominating Committee shall review and make recommendations to the Council for its consideration.

*Section 7–Resignations.* Resignation from service as a commissioner and Director may be voluntarily tendered at any time. The resignation becomes effective upon receipt of written notice by the Chair of the Board and Council or the Executive Director. Automatic tendering of resignation is required under the following circumstances or conditions:

- (a) denial, suspension, or revocation of accreditation at the institution with which affiliated;
- (b) cessation or announced cessation of operations at such institution;
- (c) filing for reorganization or bankruptcy by such institution or its parent corporation;
- (d) debarment by the U.S. Department of Education from employment at any institution participating in federal student funding programs;
- (e) indictment for a criminal offense;
- (f) change of control or ownership at the institution with which affiliated;
- (g) failure of such institution to meet its financial obligations to ACICS which results in loss of membership;
- (h) change in employment status (other than internal); and
- (i) change in Designated Delegate status.

Not all of the foregoing necessarily will result in acceptance of resignation but must be considered by the Council before service can continue.

*Section 8–Removal.* A commissioner may also be removed by not less than a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Council for breach of any code, canons, or tenets of ethics formally adopted pursuant to these Bylaws.

*Section 9–Compensation.* Commissioners shall serve without compensation. Public representatives shall receive honoraria for service in such amounts as the Board shall fix. Commissioners, as well as members of committees, if so provided in advance, shall be reimbursed for expenses incurred in performance of authorized duties.

## **ARTICLE V**

### **Committees**

*Section 1–Standing Committees of the Council.* There shall be the following standing committees of the Council:

- (a) *Nominating Committee.* The Nominating Committee shall be responsible for the screening of nominees and the selection of candidates for election as commissioners. It also shall identify persons qualified to be appointed as commissioners and recommend them to the Council for appointment. The Nominating Committee shall seek to maintain a Council that is generally representative of the types of member institutions.
  - (1) *Composition.* The Nominating Committee shall consist of five (5) members, including at least one (1) person from a nondegree institution and one from a degreegranting institution, two (2) representatives from the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors, and one (1) person from an ACICS-accredited institution. The Chair of the Council and Board shall appoint the members of the Nominating Committee; the Chairelect of the Council and Board automatically serves as the Chair of the Nominating Committee.
  - (2) *Procedures.* The membership of ACICS shall be notified of the composition of the committee and invited to submit to it names of qualified nominees. The committee in its selection of candidates shall be mindful of diversity of programs, size and types of institutions, and geographic representation. It shall develop and publish eligibility criteria, permissible campaign practices by candidates, and any special voting procedures. Interviews of nominees by the committee are permitted.
- (b) *Business Practices Committee.* The Business Practices Committee shall consist of commissioners appointed by the Chair of the Council and Board. The mission of the committee is to identify and promote quality business practices of career colleges and schools, to ensure integrity and ethical relations, and to foster cooperation among institutions on behalf of students and others served.
- (c) *Education Enhancement and Evaluation Committee.* The Education Enhancement and Evaluation Committee shall consist of commissioners appointed by the Chair of the Council and Board. The mission of the committee is to establish standards for educational quality that assist institutions in mission fulfillment, program planning and development, institutional evaluation activities, and successful educational outcomes.
- (d) *Financial Review Committee.* The Financial Review Committee shall consist of commissioners appointed by the Chair of the Council and Board. The mission of the committee is to monitor the financial stability of accredited institutions in order to ensure they maintain sufficient financial resources to deliver a quality education to their students.
- (e) *Institutional Effectiveness Committee.* The Institutional Effectiveness Committee shall consist of commissioners appointed by the Chair of the Council and Board. The mission of the committee is to assist institutions in the improvement of their outcomes by establishing and assessing criteria for institutional effectiveness. In order to assist ACICS-accredited institutions to meet established standards, the committee shall review Annual Institutional Reports, Institutional Effectiveness Plans, and institutional outcomes and measurements.

*Section 2–Standing Committees of the Board of Directors.* There shall be the following standing committees of the Board:

- (a) *Executive Committee.* The Executive Committee shall consist of the Chair of the Board of Directors, who shall serve as Chair of the Executive Committee; the Chairelect of the Board, who shall serve as Chair of the Executive Committee in the absence of the Chair of the Board; the Secretary; the Treasurer; and two additional Directors elected annually by majority vote of the Board. The Executive Committee acts on behalf of the Board during the periods between Board meetings. Accurate minutes of each Executive Committee meeting shall be maintained and shall be provided to the Board of Directors at the next subsequent meeting of the Board of Directors. The Executive Committee's responsibilities shall be: between meetings of the Board, act on issues requiring the timely attention of the Board of Directors; in consultation with the Board of Directors, oversee the Executive Director's performance of his or her duties; and assume such other duties as the Board of Directors may from time to time delegate to the Executive Committee.
- (b) *Audit Committee.* The Audit Committee shall consist of a minimum of three members of the Board, including the Treasurer, as well as such other members as the Chair appoints. The committee shall work with the Executive Director to ensure an annual certified audit of the organization's financial activities is completed, that the findings of the audit are reviewed, and that actions are taken to address recommendations and areas of concern identified as part of the audit process.
- (c) *Investment Committee.* The Investment Committee shall consist of the Executive Director, a minimum of three other members of the Board, including the Treasurer, and such other members as the Chair appoints. The Investment Committee shall work with the Executive Director to provide oversight of ACICS's investment funds. The Investment Committee shall select investment advisors, develop an investment plan, and review investment reports at least annually.
- (d) *Governance Committee.* The Governance Committee shall consist of commissioners appointed by the Chair of the Council and Board. The mission of the committee is to ensure that ACICS operates within the construct of the Bylaws. The committee will evaluate and make recommendations for modifications to the Bylaws in response to proposed changes in standards or operational policies at ACICS.

*Section 3–Other Committees.* The Board of Directors may establish and appoint members to other ad hoc committees as deemed necessary.

## ARTICLE VI

### Membership, Fees, Meetings

*Section 1–Gaining Membership.* Membership in ACICS is voluntary and can only be obtained through accreditation. Members shall be institutions or organizations which provide education or training as heretofore defined. Each main or branch campus is entitled to all of the rights and privileges and assumes all of the obligations of membership as provided in these Bylaws. The term of membership shall be coexistent with accreditation.

*Section 2–Loss of Membership.* Any member that ceases to be accredited by ACICS shall automatically, and without the necessity for further action, be deemed to be removed from membership. Members may voluntarily resign, which also results in loss of accreditation. All obligations owed to ACICS, including payment of fees, shall be fulfilled prior to resignation. The loss of accreditation shall be retroactive to the date that all outstanding obligations had previously been fulfilled.

*Section 3–Types of Fees.* There shall be three types of fees: (a) annual sustaining fees, (b) user (or service) fees, and (c) late fees. The annual sustaining fee shall be scaled by formula to the annual educational revenue generated by each

member. The user fees shall relate to the cost of services requested or the actions initiated by the members or applicants for membership. The late fees shall be established by the Council.

*Section 4–Change in Fees.* The Council may adjust the fees annually equivalent to the change in the national Consumer Price Index. Any increase above the CPI percentage shall be presented to the membership for approval.

*Section 5–Conditions of Payment.* Sustaining fees are due and payable on October 31. The Council may authorize a discount for sustaining fees received by September 30 each year. Nonpayment of annual fees by October 31 subjects a member to automatic loss of membership and loss of accreditation without a hearing. Any request for extension of time to pay or for a periodic payment plan must be received and approved prior to September 30. Payment plans will not extend beyond December 31. Institutions using periodic payment plans shall be assessed an interest rate of one and one-half percent (1.5%) per month on the unpaid balance. User fees must accompany the request for applicable service before the request will be processed.

*Section 6–Proration of Fees.* A member becoming eligible for membership during the first month of the fiscal year shall pay the full amount of the annual sustaining fees as applicable. Members becoming eligible during succeeding months shall pay a proportionate amount of the otherwise applicable fee as determined by the number of months remaining in the fiscal year, including the month in which membership is attained.

*Section 7–Other Costs.* In addition to fees herein described, costs of visits conducted by the Council will be invoiced to the institution following the visit.

*Section 8–Assessments.* The Council, upon a majority vote, may propose an assessment in addition to the annual sustaining fees provided for in this Article where there has occurred or is impending an emergency which may impair the ability of the Council to achieve its purposes and the amount of annual dues is insufficient to meet the Council's requirements. The proposed assessment shall be submitted to the members for approval or disapproval on majority vote.

*Section 9–Annual Meeting.* A meeting of the members shall be held annually at a date and place to be determined by the Board of Directors. This meeting may be held concurrent with a meeting of similar or common interest groups. The purpose of such meeting shall be the receipt of reports on the budget and finances of ACICS and its activities and affairs, and the transaction of other business as may be specified by the Board in the call for and notice of the meeting. The meeting may combine these business purposes with informational and educational sessions; meetings of the Board, the Council, commissions, or committees; and special events for the members.

*Section 10–Special Meetings.* Special meetings of the members may be called by the Board of Directors upon request of a majority of the Board or upon petition to the Board by not fewer than the lesser of fifty (50) members or ten percent (10%) of the membership not under common ownership or control.

*Section 11–Notice of Meetings.* Normally, members shall be notified at least thirty (30) days in advance of the date, location, time, and purpose of all meetings of the members. Waiver of notice may be recorded at any special meeting of the members by majority vote of a quorum present at such meeting.

*Section 12–Quorum.* Twenty percent (20%) of the members eligible to vote and represented by Designated Delegates shall constitute a quorum at a meeting of the members for the transaction of business, except that any issue not properly noticed in the call for the meeting and that requires membership-wide participation may not be acted upon under new business. The Board of Directors may adopt such procedures as it deems necessary for the conduct of business. In the absence of an established procedure, *Robert's Rules of Order* shall apply.

*Section 13–Meetings of the Council.* The Council shall convene as often as necessary to review materials attendant to the accrediting process and to take formal action on the accredited status of applicants.

## ARTICLE VII

### Appeals Process

*Section 1–Review Board for Appeals.* A Review Board for Appeals shall be appointed by the Council. The purpose of the Review Board shall be to review, according to pre-established procedures and guidelines, appeals by members, of final negative actions by the Council and either to affirm the action of the Council or to remand the case for further review, or to amend or overturn actions. The Review Board shall consist of fifteen (15) persons, all of whom have had experience in accreditation. Members of the Review Board shall be appointed to terms of three years, with terms of initial appointees staggered so that one-third of the terms expire each year. A person appointed to the Review Board shall not have been a commissioner within one year prior to appointment. The Chair of the Council shall convene timely a panel of the Review Board when necessary.

*Section 2–Due Process.* Criteria promulgated by the Council shall ensure that institutions are provided a fair and reasonable opportunity to present reasons why denial, suspension, withdrawal, or other final actions taken by the Council are inappropriate and should be remanded for further consideration. The due process provided is not required to be a full hearing on the record or before the full Council. However, all appeals to the Review Board for Appeals shall be on the record and shall provide for the submission of briefs and oral testimony by institutional representatives.

## ARTICLE VIII

### Miscellaneous

*Section 1–Liability.* No applicant, member, or former member shall be liable for the debts of ACICS in any amount except to the extent of the fees required of each member pursuant to Article VII, Sections 3 and 8, hereof.

*Section 2–Corporate Seal.* The corporate seal shall be in such form as may be approved by the Board of Directors.

*Section 3–Checks, Notes, Contracts.* The Board of Directors shall determine the persons who will be authorized on the Corporation's behalf to sign checks, drafts, or other orders for payment of money; to sign acceptances, notes, or other evidences of indebtedness; to enter into contracts; or to execute and deliver other documents and instruments. The Board of Directors shall, at its discretion, require officers, agents, employees, and other persons so authorized pursuant to this Section to give security for the faithful performance of their duties.

*Section 4–Books and Records.* The Corporation shall keep at its office correct and complete books and records of the accounts and transactions of the Corporation and a current list of the members, directors, and officers of the Corporation. Such books and records may be in written form or in any other form capable of ready conversion to written form.

*Section 5–Confidentiality.* The Council shall maintain the confidentiality of the accrediting process with members insofar as permitted by accrediting criteria, law, and regulation. The Council shall have written policies on disclosure of information to third parties.

*Section 6–Indemnification and Insurance.* The Corporation shall indemnify and hold harmless each director, officer, commissioner, member of an appeals board, member of a visiting team, agent, employee, or other person acting on behalf of the Corporation or the Council against and from all loss, cost, and expense reasonably incurred by such person in the payment, defense, or settlement of any claim, suit, or proceeding brought against such person because they acted as part of or on behalf of ACICS, the Council, or the Review Board, as a director, officer, commissioner, member of an appeals board, member of a visiting team, agent, or employee. The rights specified in this Section shall apply whether or not persons continue to act in such capacity at the time the loss, cost, or expense is incurred. Such rights shall not apply in relation to any matters as to which any such person shall be finally adjudged to be liable for

willful misconduct. The Board of Directors also may authorize the purchase and maintenance of insurance on behalf of such persons and the Corporation against any liability that arises from their actions in such capacities.

*Section 7–Amendments.* The Bylaws of the Corporation may be amended by the Board of Directors by majority vote of all the directors.

*Section 8–Dissolution.* ACICS shall use its funds only to accomplish the objectives and purposes set forth in these Bylaws, and no part of said funds shall inure or be distributed to the members of ACICS. On dissolution of ACICS, any funds remaining shall be distributed to one or more regularly organized and qualified charitable, educational, scientific, or philanthropic organizations to be selected by the Board of Directors.

*Section 9–Fiscal Year.* The fiscal year of ACICS shall be July 1 through June 30.

## **ARTICLE IX**

### **Litigation, Jurisdiction and Venue, and Expenses**

*Section 1–Suits Against ACICS, Jurisdiction, and Exhaustion of Administrative Remedies.* Jurisdiction and venue of any suit, claim, or proceeding relating to membership, accreditation, or accredited status, whether a claim for damages or injunctive or declaratory relief, brought by an accredited member, former member, or applicant for membership and accredited status against ACICS, the Council, the Review Board, or a commissioner, officer, committee member, Review Board member, or staff member acting in his or her official capacity shall only be in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division, or the Circuit Court for the City of Alexandria, Virginia. Accredited members, former members, and applicants must exhaust all administrative remedies provided for in the ACICS Criteria and Bylaws before initiating any suit, claim, or proceeding in Court.

*Section 2–Reimbursement of ACICS’s Litigation Expenses.* An applicant for membership, member, or former member of ACICS shall reimburse ACICS for all costs and expenses (including attorney’s fees) actually and reasonably incurred by ACICS in defending any suit, claim, or proceeding, whether for damages or for injunctive or declaratory relief, brought by an applicant, member, former member, or one or more present or former students of any of the foregoing against ACICS, the Council, the Review Board, any commissioners of the Council, or members of the Review Board, or officers, employees, or agents of ACICS, the Council, acting in their official capacity, where ACICS, the Council, the Review Board, the commissioner, officer, employee, or agent shall have been adjudged to be the prevailing party in the suit, claim, or proceeding.

*Section 3–Other Expenses.* Each member shall reimburse ACICS for all costs and expenses (including attorney’s fees) incurred by it in the production of any of the Corporation’s, or the Council’s, records relating to such member in response to lawful requests from parties in litigation or from state or federal agencies.

*Section 4–Binding Effect.*

- (a) Each existing member and new member of ACICS shall be provided with a copy of these Bylaws. Acceptance or continuation of membership in ACICS shall constitute each member’s agreement to be bound by the provisions of these Bylaws, as they may be amended from time to time, while a member of and subsequent to the termination of membership in ACICS.
- (b) Each applicant for membership in ACICS shall be provided with a copy of these Bylaws. Application for membership in ACICS shall constitute such applicant’s agreement to be bound by the provisions of these Bylaws, as they may be amended from time to time, regardless of whether such applicant becomes a member of ACICS.

## APPENDIX B

## Procedures and Guidelines for Unannounced Visits

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### UNANNOUNCED VISIT FACT SHEET

The Council, at its discretion, may direct an unannounced visit to occur at an institution about which it has received adverse information or when general operations of the institution may be called into question. This Fact Sheet is designed to assist the institution and the visiting team in conducting this visit as smoothly and efficiently as possible.

### VISIT PROCEDURES

The purpose of this visit is to review records, interview students and staff, and, if applicable, review previously cited problem areas and verify responses to previous requests for information, such as complaints and admonishments. The team may consist of a staff member, an experienced evaluator, or both. Expect the team to spend the full day at your institution.

Upon arrival, the team will ask to speak with the chief on-site administrator. Following a brief interview, the team is to be given a short tour of the facility, including records storage areas, and then shown to a work room. This room could be an empty classroom or office or the resource room/library, and it should be available exclusively for the team for the entire visit.

The institution must make the following information available to the visiting team:

1. Most recent Annual Institutional Report.
2. Current catalog and addenda (if applicable).
3. Current class schedule, including names of instructors and room numbers.
4. Most recent ACICS accreditation visit team report and institutional response.
5. Copy of each government program review and compliance audit conducted within the prior two years and any institutional responses.
6. Faculty/personnel records.
7. All student records, including admissions, academic, and financial.
8. Copies of institutional advertising.

Additional records may be requested by the team. Staff, faculty and students will be interviewed. Institutions are encouraged to have these records in a central location where more than one person can access them, should the chief on-site administrator not be present.

### REPORT AND SUBSEQUENT ACTIONS

A report will be prepared and sent to the institution for response. If the institution is found to be operating in accordance with the *Accreditation Criteria*, no further action will be taken.

If the institution is found to be violating provisions of the *Accreditation Criteria*, the Council may direct the institution to show cause why its accreditation should not be withdrawn, or it may direct that a full team visit the institution to evaluate its correction of these violations.

## **EXIT CONFERENCE**

At the conclusion of the visit, the team will meet with the chief administrator to discuss the visit and to answer any questions regarding the Council policies, procedures, and standards.

## **EXPENSES**

A fee will not be assessed for this visit, but each institution will be billed for expenses incurred during the visit. Failure to remit payment for expenses may result in a directive to show cause why the accreditation of the institution should not be withdrawn.

## **INSTITUTIONAL PARTICIPATION**

Any institution that refuses to undergo an on-site unannounced visit evaluation will be directed to show cause why its accreditation should not be withdrawn by suspension.

These guidelines are designed to assist institutions in complying with the Council's criteria for institutional publications, including catalogs, advertising literature, and other published documents describing the institution.

**CATALOG**

The Council requires all accredited institutions and all applicant institutions to publish an acceptable catalog. Accredited institutions under the same ownership or control may publish a common catalog, but it should be specific as to the faculty, programs, and student services available at each location (see "Multiple-School Catalogs" in these Guidelines). All enrolled students must have access to the current catalog.

A catalog is written for many purposes and is directed toward a varied audience. The catalog becomes an announcement and a record and should be dignified in appearance. It must not be primarily a promotional publication, nor should it be directed toward a single segment of its varied audience. The catalog has been determined by the courts to be a legal document of the institution concerned.

The catalog should explain the offerings and services of an institution, but it should not glorify or extol. It should reflect the dignity and integrity of the institution it describes. The catalog must be available in hard copy, and may also be available in a read-only electronic format. The hard copy catalog must be appropriately printed and bound. The catalog may include illustrations and photographs that are pertinent to the institution.

At a minimum, the catalog must contain the following items. Items 7, 8, and 16 (listing of faculty, academic calendar, and statement of tuition and fees) may be listed on a catalog supplement, provided that such supplement is printed, dated, and identified as part of the current catalog, and the catalog makes reference to the supplement. Thereafter, this supplement must be enclosed in each copy of the catalog.

1. A table of contents and/or an index.
2. An indication, on the front cover or on the title page, of the year or years for which the catalog is effective.
3. The names and titles of the administrators of the institution.
4. A statement of legal control which includes the names of trustees, directors, and officers of the corporation.
5. If the institution is now accredited, a statement denoting this fact (see "Statement of Accreditation" in these Guidelines).
6. A statement of the mission of the institution.
7. A listing of the full-time faculty members, showing:
  - (a) academic credentials held;
  - (b) institutions awarding the credentials; and
  - (c) the area of teaching specialization.
8. An academic calendar (calendar of events) showing beginning and ending dates of terms, quarters, or semesters; holidays; registration dates, etc.
9. The full disclosure of the institution's admission requirements, policies, and procedures, including the basis for admissions, test requirements, advanced standing requirements, and experiential learning assessment requirements.

10. A statement of the curriculums (programs) offered, including for each:
  - (a) a statement of the objective or purpose of the curriculum;
  - (b) an accurate and complete listing of the courses included in each curriculum, each with a unique identifying number and title;
  - (c) the credit or clock hours awarded for each subject;
  - (d) the total credits or clock hours required for satisfactory completion of the curriculum;
  - (e) requirements for certification, licensing, or registration in the program career field, as appropriate; and
  - (f) any additional or special requirements for completion (e.g., typing, shorthand).
11. A description of each course (subject) offered, including:
  - (a) identifying number;
  - (b) title;
  - (c) credit or clock hours awarded;
  - (d) a complete but concise description of the contents of the course; and
  - (e) prerequisites, if any.
12. An explanation of the grading or marking system (consistent with that appearing on the student transcript).
13. A definition of the unit of credit. If credit hour, identify whether quarter or semester. (See Section 3-1-515 for additional information.)
14. An explanation of standards of satisfactory progress. (See Section 3-1-420 for additional information).
15. A description of the certificates, diplomas, and/or degrees awarded, together with a statement of the requirements to be met in each instance.
16. A statement of the tuition, fees, and all other regular and special charges.
17. A complete and accurate listing of all scholarships offered (see Section 3-1-431 of the *Accreditation Criteria*).
18. A statement of the institution's refund policy and formula relative to method of financial obligation. This policy must be clearly outlined and must comply with Sections 3-1-433 and 3-1-434, of the *Accreditation Criteria*.
19. A statement pertaining to the nature and extent of student services offered (e.g., counseling and placement).
20. A grievance procedure that includes the name and address of ACICS, unless the grievance procedure is published in a student handbook.
21. If the institution offers degrees, the catalog must include the following information:
  - (a) for occupational associate's degree programs, identification of courses that satisfy the general education requirement and an explanation of the course numbering system;
  - (b) for academic associate's degree programs, identification of courses that satisfy the general education and concentration requirements and an explanation of the course numbering system;

- (c) for bachelor's degree programs, identification of upper-division courses and courses that satisfy the general education and concentration requirements and an explanation of the course numbering system; and
  - (d) for master's degree programs, an explanation of the course numbering system.
22. If the institution offers courses via distance education, the catalog must include the following information:
- (a) a description of each mode of distance education delivery method used;
  - (b) the admission requirements for the courses or program(s) of study offered through distance education if different from the admission requirements for the residential programs;
  - (c) a description of tests used in determining access to distance education courses and programs, if applicable;
  - (d) a description of the resources and equipment the students must have to avail themselves of the instruction (including, computer requirements such as hardware and software, internet access, access to library/college for monitoring of examinations, etc.); and
  - (e) the special costs and fees associated specifically with distance education (e.g., platform access fees, on-line library access fees, purchase of books on-line).

## **MULTIPLE-SCHOOL CATALOGS**

1. All institutions utilizing a common catalog must be of common ownership or control.
2. Pictures of the physical facilities of any of the institutions must be captioned to identify the particular institution or campus depicted.
3. Faculty and administrative staff must be listed in the catalog and be clearly identified for each institution. The administrative staff for the group of institutions also must be listed.
4. Any information contained in the catalog that is not common to all institutions in the group shall be presented in such a manner that no confusion, misunderstanding, or misrepresentation is possible.
5. The catalog must comply with the existing standards in all respects as outlined in these Guidelines.

## **ADVERTISING**

Any advertisement or promotional literature written or used by an institution shall be completely truthful and dignified. The material shall be presented in a manner which avoids leaving any false, misleading, or exaggerated impressions with respect to the institution, its personnel, its courses and services, or the occupational opportunities for its graduates. An English translation for advertising that is in a language other than English must also be available.

1. All advertising and promotional literature used by an institution must clearly indicate that training or education, and not employment, is being offered.
2. All advertising and promotional literature must include the correct name of the institution. So-called "blind" advertisements are considered misleading in character.
3. Institutions placing advertisements in classified columns of newspapers or other publications to attract students must use only classifications such as "Education," "Schools," or "Instruction." Headings such as "Help Wanted," "Employment," or "Business Opportunities" may be used only to procure employees for the institution.

4. Letters of endorsement, commendation, or recommendation may be used in catalogs, sales literature, or advertising, provided prior consent is obtained and no remuneration is made for either the consent or use of the endorsement. Such letters shall be kept on file and be subject to review. Testimonial letters may be used only when they are strictly factual and portray currently correct conditions or facts.
5. An institution shall not use the words “free” and “guarantee” for advertising or sales promotion purposes in a manner that is misleading to potential or current students. A disclosure must be made for services which are funded by third parties that are offered at no cost to students.
6. An institution shall not offer monetary incentives to the general public to visit, enroll in, attend, or complete a program. Further, monetary incentives for failure to be placed in a job shall not be offered as an inducement to enroll.
7. References to financial aid availability shall include the phrase “for those who qualify.”

## STATEMENT OF ACCREDITATION

When making public disclosure of accredited status in its catalog, the institution must include the name, address, and telephone number of ACICS.

For institutional catalogs, the fact of accreditation shall be stated only as follows:

*“Accredited by the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools to award (name all applicable specific credential levels from among certificates, diplomas, associate’s degrees, bachelor’s degrees, and master’s degrees).”*

*or*

*(Name of institution) is a (junior college [if institution awards an academic associate’s degree] or senior college [if institution awards a bachelor’s degree]) accredited by the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools to award (name all applicable specific credential levels from among certificates, diplomas, associate’s degrees, bachelor’s degrees, and master’s degrees).*

Institutions may add the following statement in announcing their accreditation:

*The Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools is listed as a nationally recognized accrediting agency by the United States Department of Education and is recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.*

For publications and advertising other than catalogs, institutions that wish to state the fact of accreditation shall use either the catalog language noted above or one of the following disclosure statements:

*“Accredited by the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools”; or*

*“Accredited Member, ACICS”*

An institution is not permitted to use such statements as “fully accredited” or “accredited” without including the name of ACICS. An institution will not use or publicize the term “accredited” unless it is in fact accredited by ACICS or another recognized agency, or it has affirmative authority under state law. An applicant for accreditation may not disclose this fact in any manner that implies that accreditation is imminent or guaranteed. Any reference to stated authority for status as “registered,” “approved,” or “accredited” must include the name of the state extending the approval and must accurately identify the state agency.

For electronic media and web sites, the institution may provide a hypertext mark-up language link (“html”) to the ACICS web site when making public disclosure of its accredited status. Disclosure must be in compliance with Appendix C.

## APPENDIX D      Standards of Satisfactory Progress

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An essential element in providing appropriate instruction and support services to students is monitoring their satisfactory academic progress (SAP). The Council requires all institutions to develop a policy of satisfactory academic progress that measures whether students are maintaining satisfactory academic progress in their educational program. The policy must contain all of the elements required by the Council and federal regulations. The Council expects institutions to publish those standards for students enrolled in the institution's educational program(s). The Council also expects institutions to monitor whether a student meets the minimum qualitative and quantitative components of the standards.

The Council has determined that the institutional policy must include the following requirements, which are consistent with the regulations specified by the U.S. Department of Education for student eligibility for receiving Federal Title IV financial assistance.

Each of these requirements must be strictly observed:

1. The institution has written standards and a schedule of satisfactory academic progress for all students, which are published in the catalog and in appropriate institutional literature, and are consistently applied to all students.
2. The institution strictly adheres to its published standards of satisfactory academic progress and notifies students when satisfactory academic progress is not being made.
3. The standards of satisfactory academic progress provide for minimum qualitative standards, such as a grade point average or completion of work projects, which can be measured against a norm.
4. The policy defines a maximum time frame, not to exceed 150% of the normal program length, as defined by the institution, for all programs, in which the educational objective must be successfully completed (e.g., number of academic years, credit hours attempted, clock hours completed, months/weeks, terms or modules, etc. as appropriate), as opposed to simply setting a time limit on eligibility for Title IV financial aid.
5. The institution has provisions for an evaluation point at least by the end of each academic year (or at 50% of the normal program length if the program is one academic year or less) that determine whether the student has met the qualitative and quantitative components of the standards.
6. The institution has provisions for utilizing and publishing a schedule designating the minimum percentage or amount of work that a student must successfully complete at the end of each increment to complete the educational program within the maximum time frame.
7. The institution has provisions for determining at the end of each increment whether the student has met the qualitative and quantitative components of the standards. The qualitative and quantitative standards must be cumulative and must include all periods of the student's enrollment regardless of whether or not the student receives federal financial aid.
8. The institution's policies define the effect on satisfactory academic progress of course withdrawals, incomplete grades, repeated courses, and non-punitive grades. The institution's policies define the effect of non-credit or remedial courses on satisfactory academic progress.

9. The institution may allow a student to have a probation period for a specified period of time. The institution should state whether the student will remain eligible for federal financial aid during the probation period.
10. The institution has provisions for an evaluation at the end of the second academic year and at the end of each subsequent academic year(s) where the student must have a minimum cumulative grade point average (CGPA) of 2.0 on a scale of 4.0, C, or its equivalent, or has academic standing consistent with the institution's requirements for graduation. A student receiving federal financial aid who does not meet the CGPA standards at the end of the second year will no longer be eligible for financial aid, may not be placed on probation, and must be dismissed, unless the student wishes to continue without being eligible for federal financial aid. However, a student not meeting the CGPA standards at the end of the second year may remain as an enrolled student who is eligible for federal financial aid if there are documented mitigating circumstances (i.e., death in the family, sickness of the student, etc.).
11. The institution must have an appeal process for students who do not meet the requirements of the institution's satisfactory academic progress policy. When an institution grants a student's appeal for mitigating circumstances, the student will be placed on a specified period of probation and will be considered making satisfactory academic progress during that period.

If a student is not making satisfactory academic progress, the institution may place the student in an extended enrollment status. A student placed in an extended enrollment status is not eligible for federal financial aid. However, all credits attempted count toward the 150% of the normal program length even if the student is on extended enrollment. Grades may be replaced if that is the institution's written policy. In no case can a student exceed one and one-half times the standard time frame as defined by the institution either as a regular student or in an extended enrollment status and receive the original academic credential for which he or she enrolled.

12. The institution must have clearly defined procedures for re-establishing satisfactory academic progress.
13. The institution has rules for students who change programs, as well as for students who seek to earn additional credentials. For instance, an institution may have a policy that for a student who changes programs it will include in the determination of a student's satisfactory academic progress standing the credits attempted and grades earned that count toward the student's new program of study. Such a policy must be part of the institution's written policy.
14. The institution must have a policy that addresses the implications of transfer of credit on satisfactory academic progress.
15. The institution has provisions that the student must have a minimum CGPA of 2.0, C, or its equivalent upon graduation from all programs.

In evaluating institutionally funded student aid, ACICS will consider the characteristics listed below. These characteristics are not listed in any priority order. Any institution whose aid program is not in accordance with any or all of these characteristics may be subject to a directive by ACICS to show cause why its grant of accreditation should not be suspended, revoked, or otherwise conditioned. The greater the number of these characteristics evident in an institution's grant program, the greater the presumption of acceptability. ACICS will, however, review each institutional grant program in its entirety.

1. Grants are made from segregated funds or from identifiable funds which have been provided for in the institution's operating budget.
2. The percentage of students receiving institutionally funded grants, as compared to the overall student population of the institution, is not inordinately high.
3. The total amount for institutionally funded grants is publicly and clearly identified prior to the beginning of the academic year or term.
4. Institutionally funded grants may be awarded on the basis of student need or standards describing similarly circumstanced students.
5. The amount of institutionally funded grants is not based solely on the difference between the tuition charged and the amount of federal or state financial aid received.
6. The tuition charged reasonably and closely represents the cost to the institution of the instruction provided and does not significantly vary in amount from similar or same instruction in another certificate or degree program.
7. The amount of tuition retained as nonrefundable by the institution from those students who drop out prior to the end of the academic term or period is proportionally allocated between the institutionally funded grants and the federal and state financial aid received by the student.
8. The type and amount of institutionally funded needs-based grants is determined by an independent selection or review panel.



## **APPENDIX F**      Guidelines for English as a Second Language Programs

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This appendix consolidates information regarding the Council's guidelines for institutions offering stand-alone ESL programs and/or ESL coursework as part of a Title IV-eligible program, and federal requirements for the awarding of financial aid.

The following information is intended to combine the highlights of the ACICS guidelines and federal regulations noted above and should assist institutions in understanding Council criteria for offering stand-alone ESL programs and the major differences between Council requirements and federal regulations for these ESL programs. Additionally, an overview of federal guidelines for ESL coursework offered within an eligible program is included.

### **SEPARATELY ELIGIBLE, STAND-ALONE ESL PROGRAMS**

#### **Council Requirements**

The guidelines for reporting information on separately-eligible ESL programs are the same as for all other programs. The institution must immediately notify ACICS when these programs are initiated, changed, or discontinued. An on-site evaluation with an appropriate subject specialist will be required when a new ESL program is initiated, and may be required when the program is changed.

The objective of stand-alone ESL programs is to enhance the English-language proficiency of individuals who have pre-existing vocational knowledge, training, or skills, but cannot use that knowledge, training, or skill because of their English-speaking deficiency. No vocational training is provided in a stand-alone ESL program.

In order to receive approval from ACICS to provide stand-alone ESL programs, the institution shall:

1. Adhere to the stated mission of the program when developing the curricula;
2. Administer, at entrance and exit, a nationally recognized exam of English comprehension (e.g., Test of English as a Foreign Language, Test of Spoken English.)
3. Provide documentation that all admitted students are enrolled in accordance with Section 3-1-303.
4. Verify or assess at entrance, with supporting documentation, that the enrolling student already has knowledge, training, or skills in a vocational field, unless the student is enrolled solely to obtain ESL competency unrelated to a vocation (also a Department of Education regulation.)
5. Describe the placement services, if any, to be offered to graduates of the ESL program. Institutions are not required to include these graduates in their placement statistics.
6. Employ degreed faculty who have prior experience in this field of instruction.
7. Involve faculty in professional organizations and workshops enabling them to meet the special needs of the ESL student.

#### **Department of Education Regulations**

The institution must provide information or documentation that the program:

1. Consists solely of ESL instruction.
2. Admits only undergraduate students who it determines need ESL to use already existing knowledge, training, or skills.

3. Meets the other program and institutional eligibility requirements including:
  - (a) that it leads to a degree or certificate,
  - (b) that it is at least a one-year program at a public or private nonprofit institution of higher education, or a six-month program at a postsecondary vocational institution or a proprietary institution of higher education,
  - (c) that it admits as regular students only persons who have a high school diploma or the recognized equivalent (GED) or who are beyond the age of compulsory school attendance in the state in which the institution is located and have the ability to benefit from the training offered,
  - (d) that it is legally organized by its state to offer the ESL certificate or degree program,
  - (e) that it is approved by the school's nationally recognized accrediting agency or association, or that it meets one of the statutory alternatives to accreditation, and
  - (f) if it is a credit-hour program, that it meets any applicable state and accrediting agency requirements governing the use of credit hours.

NOTE: ESL is an eligible program only for purposes of the Pell Grant Program.

## ESL COURSES AS PART OF AN ELIGIBLE PROGRAM

### Council Requirements

Conversion from clock to credit hour for the ESL courses must be appropriate and in compliance with Department of Education regulations for remedial coursework.

### Department of Education Regulations

ESL coursework required by a student when accepted into an existing, Title IV-eligible program must be considered remedial in nature for the purpose of calculating student financial aid. Note that remedial coursework is by regulation either noncredit or reduced credit, for purposes of the postsecondary program, although these noncredit or reduced academic credit hours are converted to the credit value of non-remedial courses for the purpose of calculating Title IV payments to students.

It is important to remember that a program of study must be Title IV-eligible excluding the remedial courses (i.e., for a 300 clock-hour Hospitality and Tourism program to be eligible for student loan programs, any remedial courses offered must be added to the 300 clock hours).

### Summary

ACICS members currently offering or planning to offer stand-alone ESL programs or ESL as remedial courses taken with an eligible program must be aware of and in compliance with all Council requirements and Department of Education regulations. In comparing the two, it is apparent that if an institution is not in compliance with the Department of Education, it will not be in compliance with ACICS because all of the Department's requirements are inherent to the *Accreditation Criteria*; ACICS is, however, more restrictive in several areas.

Be advised that compliance with Appendix F does not ensure that a program will be determined by the U.S. Department of Education to be eligible for Title IV participation. Should the institution desire Title IV funding for an ESL program, it should discuss program eligibility with the appropriate Department of Education regional office before applying for Council approval.

These guidelines are designed to inform institutions of the policies of the Council and to guide staff in disclosing information and providing materials to third parties regarding an institution's accreditation. Many policies are required by federal law and regulation.

The policies presented below are not intended to cover every situation, and the Council exercises considerable discretion in balancing the need for confidentiality in the accreditation process with the need to disclose information to the public, including students and student applicants, and to other interested third parties, including government agencies. The Council will provide information requested by the U.S. Department of Education that may bear on an institution's compliance with federal student financial aid requirements. Please refer to Title II, Chapter 3 for additional information.

1. The Council maintains and makes available to member institutions, appropriate governmental agencies, and the public complete information regarding its accreditation criteria, policies, and practices; the institutions that it currently accredits, including the dates when the institutions are scheduled to be reviewed for new grants of accreditation; and the names, educational backgrounds, and professional qualifications of its commissioners and senior administrative staff. This information is provided in written documents available from the Council office or on the Council's Web site. These documents include an annual directory of accredited institutions and an annual report, copies of which are forwarded automatically to the U.S. Department of Education, state regulatory agencies, and other recognized institutional accrediting agencies.
2. The Council will notify the U.S. Department of Education, state regulatory agencies, other accrediting agencies, other interested third parties, and the public of all Council actions that affect an institution's grant of accreditation, institutional closings, and of the voluntary withdrawal or expiration of accreditation within 30 days.

In the case of the public, however, the Council will provide written notice of the decisions listed below within 24 hours of its notice to the institution:

- (a) A final decision to place an institution on probation or equivalent status.
- (b) A final decision to deny, withdraw, suspend, revoke, or terminate the accreditation of an institution.

Deferral actions will include an explanation that the institution's application is pending and that additional information has been requested. Negative actions subject to appeal will be denoted with a statement that the action is subject to appeal and is not final unless the institution does not exercise its appeal rights or until the institution's appeal rights have been exhausted. The disclosure of Review Board decisions will be in accordance with the procedures described in Section 2-3-607. The Council retains the discretion and the responsibility to communicate other relevant accreditation information with appropriate agencies and regulatory bodies.

3. Within 60 days of a final negative action, the Council will also make available to the agencies above and the public upon request, a brief statement summarizing the reasons for the negative action determination and the official comments that the institution may wish to make with regard to the Council's decision, or evidence that the affected institution has been offered the opportunity to provide official comment.

4. The Council will inform the U.S. Department of Education of any institution which the Council believes fails to comply with Title IV law or regulations or is engaged in fraud and abuse. The institution will then be given an opportunity to evidence why it is in compliance with Title IV requirements.
5. The Council will notify the public through its Web site and other means, as appropriate, of the following:
  - (a) at least one year in advance of grant expirations, a listing of all institutions with current grants of accreditation due to expire; and
  - (b) as soon as practical, a listing of all institutions which have applied for initial grants of accreditation.

This notification will include guidance on how third parties may comment on these institutions' qualifications for accreditation.

6. The Secretary of Education's grant of recognition constitutes a "grant of authority" to the Secretary to conduct site visits (both to ACICS and to the institutions) and to gain access to agency records, personnel, and facilities on an announced and unannounced basis.
7. The Council automatically will submit an annual report to the Secretary of Education.
8. The Council will provide information regarding debarment actions on request.

**DISTANCE EDUCATION**

In addition to the general standards in Title III, Chapter 1, which apply to all institutions, and applicable standards in Chapters 2 through 6, the following standards apply specifically to distance education delivery methods. These principles and guidelines are designed to inform institutions of the policies of the Council and to guide institutional representatives when designing, implementing, and evaluating distance education forms of educational delivery.

**Institutional Readiness**

- (a) Institutions must notify and receive approval from ACICS prior to using distance education as a mode of delivery (See Sections 2-2-501 and 2-2-503(c)(d)).
- (b) Institutions must have a plan to implement distance education instruction. At a minimum, the plan should include the rationale, resources, course/program objectives, content, and student assessment. Institutions must integrate this plan into the Institutional Effectiveness Plan.
- (c) Institutions must designate a qualified individual to oversee the distance education activities. Additionally, institutions must assign faculty who possess the technical skills to teach in a distance education environment.
- (d) The delivery method must be appropriate for students and the curriculum.

**Admissions Requirements and Enrollment**

- (a) Institutions must identify the admission requirements of distance education courses/program/s and how it differs from, if applicable, the on-ground admission requirements.
- (b) If an on-line admissions test is required, it must be administered in a manner which verifies the student's identity. Institutions must make it clear in writing at the time of enrollment how the student's identity will be verified throughout the course and program, how the student's privacy will be protected, and if the student will be assessed any additional charges associated with the verification of student identity.
- (c) Institutions must clearly and appropriately state any requirements the students must possess or have access to in order to access this mode of delivery.
- (d) Institutions must provide an on-line orientation program to familiarize the student with the equipment, resources used in the distance education activities, and orient the student to the distance education learning process.

**Curriculum Content and Instruction and Delivery**

- (a) The syllabi must show that the distance education course(s) has/have the educational learning objectives and outcomes consistent with the program objectives and the credential awarded. (See Glossary definition of Syllabus.)
- (b) The course/program must demonstrate sufficient and appropriate interaction between faculty and students and among students (See Section 3-1-515(b)).
- (c) Institutions must demonstrate to the Council that the clock or credit hours required and awarded are appropriate for the degrees and credentials offered using a thoroughly developed rationale.

Credit award rationales for distance education delivery of courses or programs generally do not use the traditional lecture/laboratory/practicum formulas for credit calculations (See Section 3-1-515, Course and Program Measurement).

- (d) Curriculum must be administered in a way that maintains security of access.
- (e) Institutions must demonstrate that the student who registers for a distance education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives the academic credit. The verification method, at the option of the institution, may include a secure login and pass code, proctored examinations, and other appropriate student authentication or verification technology.

### **Faculty and Instructional Support**

- (a) The institution must employ academically and experientially credentialed faculty to oversee the instruction, evaluation, and grading requirements of the distance education course/program.
- (b) The faculty must possess the appropriate technical skills and be adequately trained to instruct in a distance education environment; faculty orientation must be provided.
- (c) The faculty must be supported with the appropriate educational resources and technology to instruct using this method of delivery. Students must also be provided with the appropriate technical and academic support to successfully complete the program/course using this form of instruction.
- (d) Institutions must provide evidence that there is an appropriate number of faculty for the student population involved. Institutions must be able to justify their student-teacher ratio(s).
- (e) The institution must have a faculty development plan on file that is appropriate for each individual. For further information, see Section 3-1-543.

### **Resources and Equipment**

- (a) The institution must demonstrate that it has adequate financial resources to support the form of delivery.
- (b) Instructional resources, equipment, library resources, and network connectivity, if applicable, must be readily available, accessible, and reliable.

### **Students and Student Services**

- (a) The institution must provide students with a knowledge base of technology utilization.
- (b) The institution must provide student services such as counseling, academic advising, guidance, financial aid, and employment assistance for students enrolled in distance education courses/programs.

### **Student Evaluation and Program Assessment**

- (a) Requirements for successful completion of distance education courses/programs must be similar to those of residential courses/programs.
- (b) Assessment of student performance and academic success should demonstrate outcomes for distance education courses/programs that are comparable to those of residential courses/programs. The assessment may include a synthesis of portfolios, group work, applied writing, pre- and post-testing, capstone courses, seminars, and on-line presentations (if applicable).

- (c) The institution must document that it conducts course/program evaluations, including assessment of student learning outcomes, student retention and placement, and student, graduate, faculty, and employer satisfaction (See section 3-1-111.)

#### **Publications**

- (a) The institution must fully disclose what form(s) of instruction it uses in its catalog and web site and, when appropriate, in its advertising and promotional material. The catalog disclosure must follow the requirements as described and outlined in Section 3-1-701 and Appendix C, number 22).

### **SELF-PACED INSTRUCTION**

In addition to the general standards in Title III, Chapter 1, which apply to all institutions, and applicable standards in Chapters 2 through 6, the following standards apply specifically to self-paced instruction delivery methods. These principles and guidelines are designed to inform institutions of the policies of the Council and to guide institutional representatives when designing, implementing, and evaluating self-paced instruction forms of educational delivery.

#### **Institutional Readiness**

1. Institutions must notify and receive approval from ACICS prior to using self-paced as a mode of delivery. (See Sections 2-2-501 and 2-2-503(c)(d).)
2. Institutions must shift from a teacher-centered to a learner-centered environment.
3. Institutions must employ faculty who possess the technical skills to teach in a self-paced environment.
4. The delivery method must be appropriate for students and the curriculum.

#### **Admissions Requirements and Enrollment**

Institutions must identify the admissions requirements of self-paced courses/programs.

#### **Curriculum Content and Instruction and Delivery**

1. The syllabi must show that the self-paced course(s) has/have the educational learning objectives and outcomes consistent with the program objectives and the credential awarded. (See Glossary definition of Syllabus.)
2. Institutions must demonstrate to the Council that the clock or credit hours required and awarded are appropriate for the degrees and credentials offered using a thoroughly developed rationale. Credit award rationales for self-paced delivery of courses or programs generally do not use the traditional lecture/laboratory/practicum formulas for credit calculations. (See Section 3-1-516, Course and Program Measurement.)
3. Institutions must demonstrate compliance with applicable federal and state regulations.

#### **Faculty and Instructional Support**

1. The institution must employ academically and experientially credentialed faculty to oversee the instruction, evaluation, and grading requirements of the self-paced course/program.
2. The faculty must be adequately trained to instruct in a self-paced environment.
3. The faculty must be supported with the appropriate education resources and technology to instruct using this method of delivery.

4. Institutions must provide evidence that there is an appropriate number of faculty for the student population involved.

### **Resources and Equipment**

Instructional resources and equipment must be readily available, accessible, and reliable.

### **Students and Student Services**

The institution must provide students with a knowledge based of technology utilization.

### **Student Evaluation and Program Assessment**

The institution must implement an assessment plan that measures attainment of core competencies for the course/program and measurable objectives for each course.

### **Publications**

The institution must fully disclose what form(s) of instruction it uses in its catalog and web site and, when appropriate, in its advertising and promotional material. The catalog disclosure must follow the requirements as described and outlined in Section 3-1-701 and Appendix C, number 22.

# **APPENDIX I**

## **Principles and Guidelines for International Partnership Agreements**

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In addition to the general standards in Section 2-2-508; Title III, Chapter 1, which apply to all institutions, and applicable standards in Chapters 2 through 7, the following standards apply specifically to institutions proposing to initiate an international partnership agreement with an entity outside the United States or its territories.

The programs and/or courses offered abroad must be consistent with the institution's educational mission and goals and must meet the same academic standards, educational effectiveness and student achievement.

These principles and guidelines are designed to inform institutions of the policies of the Council and to guide institutional representatives when designing, implementing, and evaluating an International Partnership Agreement (IPA).

The partnership agreement should include the following items and detail each entity's responsibility in the following areas:

### **ELEMENTS IN AN INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT**

- I. Duration and Jurisdiction
  - 1. Institutions must identify the start and end date of the agreement.
  - 2. The agreement must list the signatories/partners involved in the international partnership.
  - 3. The agreement must describe under which jurisdiction(s) the agreement will legally be bound, i.e. legal jurisdiction of ACICS institution.
- II. Administration of the International Partnership Activity
  - 1. Institutions must identify the individual with the overall responsibility for the activity.
  - 2. Institutions must identify the on-site administrator for the activity.

### **CURRICULUM CONTENT, INSTRUCTION, AND DELIVERY**

Institutions shall ensure the quality and rigor of courses/program offered through the international partnership agreement.

- III. Faculty and Instructional Support
  - 1. Institutions must employ academically and experientially credentialed faculty to oversee the instruction, evaluation, and grading requirements of the courses/ program.
  - 2. Institutions must have faculty credentials evaluated by a recognized service for evaluation of foreign credentials.
  - 3. The faculty must be supported with the appropriate education resources and technology.

#### IV. Admissions Procedures and Requirements

The institution must identify the admission requirements for enrolling in courses/programs abroad.

#### VI. Students and Student Services

##### 1. Advising and Counseling

(a) Institutions must provide academic advising and counseling services to students.

(b) Institutions must have procedures for adding and dropping courses.

##### 2. Financial Aid

If applicable, institutions shall detail the institution's procedure for awarding, disbursing, and counseling students on financial aid funds that will be used for overseas study.

##### 3. Transfer of Credit

Institutions must in compliance with Section 3-1-413 as it relates to transfer of credit.

##### 4. Student Orientation

The institution must provide pre-departure orientation and on-site orientation programs for students, if applicable.

##### 5. Grievance Procedure

A grievance policy and procedure must be included in the catalog and list name and address of ACICS, unless published in a student handbook.

##### 6. Student Records

The institution must provide a plan for storing student records and providing access to on-site administrator at the international location.

##### 7. Student Accommodations

Institutions should detail the plan for arranging student accommodations during the study abroad period, if applicable.

#### VII. Security

1. Institutions must describe how student, staff and faculty safety at the international education facility will be ensured.

2. Institutions must describe the plan to ensure security of students, staff and faculty in case of civil unrest or natural disaster in host country.

#### VIII. Financial Requirements

Institutions must be in compliance with Section 3-1-430 as it relates to financial aid, tuition and charges.

#### IX. Resources and Equipment

Instructional resources and equipment must be readily available, accessible, and reliable.

#### X. Student Evaluation and Program Assessment

The institution must implement an assessment plan that measures attainment of core competencies for courses/program and measurable objectives for each course.

#### XI. Publications

The institution must fully disclose what form(s) of instruction it uses in its catalog and Web site, and when appropriate, in its advertising and promotional material. The catalog disclosure must follow the requirements as described and outlined in Section 3-1-701 and Appendix C, number 22.

XII. Termination of Agreement and Teach-out Plan

Institutions must detail the plan for completion of program or courses should international partner fail to provide services.

XIII. International Site Facilities

Institutions must include a description of facilities at the international site and provide evidence that the facilities are in compliance with host country building code regulations.

Summary

ACICS members planning to enter into an international partnership agreement must be aware of and in compliance with all Council requirements and Department of Education regulations.



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