

# ACCSCCT Alert!

Information for  
our member schools

**To:** ACCSCT Accredited Institutions and Other Interested Parties  
**From:** Elise Scanlon, Executive Director  
**Date:** September 18, 2007  
**Subject:** Amendments to the *Standards of Accreditation*

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The Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges of Technology has reviewed its practices, policies, and standards and has issued guidance and revisions in the following areas:

- Electronic Submission Requirements
- Interpretative Guidance – Final Accreditation Decisions
- Conforming and Technical Revisions to the *Standards of Accreditation*

The full text of the Accreditation Alert and the revised *Standards of Accreditation* can be found on the Commission's website at: [www.accsct.org](http://www.accsct.org). Go to "Accreditation" and then "*Standards of Accreditation*" and "*Accreditation Alert*."

Accredited institutions and others maintaining a complete and up-to-date copy of the *Standards of Accreditation* should add this notice to their current standards book under the *Accreditation Alerts* tab. You may also download a revised set of the July 1, 2007 *Standards of Accreditation* that incorporates the conforming and technical revisions from the Commission's website at [www.accsct.org](http://www.accsct.org).

For additional information related to these approved revisions, please contact Michale S. McComis, Associate Executive Director, at (703) 247-4520 or via email at [mccomis@accsct.org](mailto:mccomis@accsct.org).

## Electronic Submission Requirements

### Rationale

The Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges of Technology continuously seeks ways to improve the efficiency of its procedures as a means to ensure the best allocation of its resources and the resources of its accredited institutions. To that end, ACCSCT's accreditation processes and procedures have become increasingly reliant upon technology as a means of achieving greater efficiency. A long-range goal of ACCSCT's Technology Plan has been to develop an Enterprise Content Management System in which technologies are fully utilized to capture, manage, store, preserve, and deliver content and documents related to accreditation processes. Over the past two years, the Commission has undertaken an electronic submission pilot project in which a small number of institutions volunteered to prepare and submit applications and responses to the Commission in electronic format using the ACCSCT Instructions for Electronic Submission. Based on the success of the pilot along with the 100% success rate for accredited institutions submitting the Online Annual Report, the Commission has found that receiving materials in an electronic format enhances its ability to:

- Reduce paper handling and manual processes;
- Reduce the requirement for paper storage;
- Afford faster access to information;
- Improve control over accreditation documents and processes;
- Streamline the time-consuming conversion of paper submissions to electronic format;
- Increase security over the accessibility of accreditation records; and
- Improve tracking and monitoring of accreditation processes, with the ability to modify the system to continuously improve efficiency.

The Commission has therefore determined that ACCSCT can transition to receiving all applications, forms, responses, and other documentation from institutions in electronic format. The Commission has established a timeline to phase in the submission of electronic documents incrementally over the next eighteen months. The purpose of this *Accreditation Alert* is to announce the timelines and procedures associated with this transition.

### Implementation Timeline

#### **Application for Accreditation:**

Beginning with the **October 2-3, 2007 Accreditation Workshop**, all institutions will be required to submit the Application for Renewal of Accreditation or the Application for Initial Accreditation and the Self Evaluation Report in accordance with the ACCSCT Instructions for Electronic Submission and in accordance with the timeframes announced at the workshop.

**Financial Statements:**

Financial statements for fiscal years ending on or after January 1, 2007 must be submitted in accordance with the ACCSCT Instructions for Electronic Submission and the Instructions for the Submission of Financial Statements and Financial Reporting. This includes institutions in initial accreditation applicant status.

**Response to On-Site Evaluation Report and Commission Action Letter:**

Institutions that are instructed to prepare a response to an On-Site Evaluation Report (e.g. Team Summary Report) or a response to a Commission Action Letter (e.g., Deferral, Show Cause Order, or Probation Order) scheduled for consideration at the May 2008 Commission Meeting or later must submit the response in accordance with the ACCSCT Instructions for Electronic Submission.

**Substantive and Nonsubstantive Change Applications and Reports:**

Beginning July 1, 2008, institutions submitting an application for a substantive change or a nonsubstantive change report must do so in accordance with the ACCSCT Instructions for Electronic Submission.

**Application for Appeal of a Commission Decision:**

Beginning July 1, 2008, institutions submitting an Application for Appeal of a Commission Decision must do so in accordance with the ACCSCT Instructions for Electronic Submission.

**Processing Fee Assessment:**

The Commission also authorized the assessment of a \$500 processing fee for institutions that submit paper materials after the dates provided above.

## Interpretative Guidance -- Final Accreditation Decisions

The Commission's *Rules of Process and Procedure* and the Code of Federal Regulations that govern accrediting agency recognition establish the manner in which the Commission's provides timely notice regarding a final decision to deny or withdraw accreditation. As such, *Section X (B)(5), Rules of Process and Procedures, Standards of Accreditation* state the following:

The Commission will provide written notice to a school of a final decision to deny or withdraw accreditation **within 30 days of the decision. A final decision to deny or withdraw accreditation is one reached after a school has exhausted the appeals process [emphasis added]** provided for under *Section VIII, Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation* or that becomes effective after a school has failed to avail itself of its appeal rights within the prescribed time frame.

In order to clarify *Section X (B)(5), Rules of Process and Procedures, Standards of Accreditation* and to reflect current practice regarding the notice of final accreditation decisions, the Commission provides the following interpretative guidance related to this rule, which will be incorporated into the *Standards of Accreditation* at the next reprint:

**"A final decision to deny or withdraw accreditation is one reached after a school has exhausted the appeals process"** means the date upon which the Sitting Appeals Panel approves the content of the letter expressing the decision of the panel to uphold the Commission's decision to deny or withdraw accreditation, which shall be no later than 60 days from the date of the appeal hearing.

**Conforming and Technical Revisions to the *Standards of Accreditation*  
*The Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation***

**Distance Education – Section IV (E)(6)(a)(v), Rules of Process and Procedures, Standards of Accreditation:**

*Section IV(E)(6)(a)(v), Rules of Process and Procedures, Standards of Accreditation* has been revised as follows to conform to the provisions set forth in the July 1, 2007 *Accreditation Alert* and the revisions set forth therein regarding the Commission’s distance education substantive standards.

Distance Education: The addition of distance education as a means of delivering program content requires prior approval through the filing of an Application for Distance Education Approval. Program content delivered via distance education is included within an institution’s scope of accreditation and is subject to the normal monitoring mechanisms available to the Commission. Once a school has received distance education approval, the addition of any new program content (with the exception of applied general education and general education courses) to be offered via distance education requires prior approval through the submission of the Application for Expanded Distance Education Approval. In addition, a significant alteration or departure in the method of distance education previously approved by the Commission requires the submission of a new Application for Distance Education Approval. It is the school’s responsibility to ensure that only appropriate program content is delivered through distance education methods. See *Section IX, Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation* for specific information regarding distance education.

**Institutional Eligibility Requirements – Section I (B)(2)(b) and Section I (B)(3), Rules of Process and Procedures, Standards of Accreditation:**

*Section I (B)(2)(b) and Section I (B)(3), Rules of Process and Procedures, Standards of Accreditation* have been deleted due to duplication. The provisions are found under *Section II (A), Rules of Process and Procedures, Standards of Accreditation*. *Section I (B)(4), Rules of Process and Procedures, Standards of Accreditation* has been renumbered to *Section I (B)(3)*.

Please incorporate this Accreditation Alert into your copy of the *Standards of Accreditation* dated July 1, 2007. Alternatively, you may download a revised set of the July 1, 2007 *Standards of Accreditation* that incorporates these conforming and technical revisions from the Commission’s website at [www.accsct.org](http://www.accsct.org).