



Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges

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ACCSC ACCREDITATION ALERT

To: ACCSC-Accredited Institutions and Other Interested Parties
From: Michale S. McComis, Ed.D., Executive Director
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Subject: Guidelines for Employment Classification

The Commission has been in discussion for some time regarding the definition of “employment” as it relates to ACCSC’s accreditation standards and has conducted research into the practices of other accrediting agencies and convened focus groups to discuss this topic. The reason for these efforts has been to ensure that the Commission clearly articulates and schools fully understand the expectation for what constitutes an employed graduate in a training related field and to set forth guidelines for issues such as verification, relatedness, self-employment, and career advancement.

Although the Commission acknowledges that it is at times a difficult task to track graduates and their employment status, the Commission believes that having guidelines for what constitutes employment attainment will enhance the opportunity for schools to use employment outcome measures as a tool for institutional assessment and improvement and for the Commission to use employment attainment as an indicator of program viability and quality. The Commission also believes that the guidelines for self-employment will help both schools and the Commission better understand student success in the employment marketplace and workforce preparation in programs geared heavily toward self-employment outcomes.

The result of the Commission’s efforts is the development of the *Guidelines for Employment Classification* included with this Accreditation Alert. These guidelines provide the Commission’s expectations for what constitutes an employed graduate and how a school justifies that classification. Of crucial importance is that the school is responsible for justifying, with documentation, every graduate classified as employed. For example, rather than setting an arbitrary number of days of employment required for that employment to be counted, the Commission’s guidelines stipulate that the period of time must be reasonable and the employment sustainable – meaning that the graduate had the opportunity to maintain the employment for more than a short period. If questions arise or trends emerge as to the length of time of employment, the school will have to justify the classification(s). Self-employment classification will need to be justified showing that the graduate has verified his/her self-employment and that the self-employment is valid through documentation such as a license or certificate authorizing such employment. There are also guidelines for what constitutes “related” and “career advancement.”

The Commission firmly believes that the new Guidelines for Employment Classification are an important addition to the ACCSC *Standards of Accreditation*. While the Commission understands that schools may not have the specific type of documentation set forth in the guidelines for information previously submitted, the Commission expects schools to use these Guidelines in earnest effectively immediately. The Guidelines for Employment Classification will be included in the *Standards of Accreditation* as an appendix at the time of the next revision (scheduled for July 1, 2011).

For additional information related to this *Accreditation Alert*, please contact Michale S. McComis, Ed.D., Executive Director, at 703.247.4520 or via e-mail at mccomis@accsc.org.

Guidelines for Employment Classification

The school must be able to justify the classification of each graduate as employed using the following guidelines:

1. The employment classification is appropriate and reasonable based on the educational objectives of the program.
2. The employment is for a reasonable period of time, is based on program objectives, and can be considered sustainable (e.g., not a single day of employment).
3. The employment is directly related to the program from which the individual graduated, aligns with a majority of the educational and training objectives of the program, and is a paid position.
4. The employment classification is verified by the school (and verifiable by third parties such as the Commission) as follows:
 - a. Regular Employment:
 - i. The school secures written documentation from the employer verifying the employment; or
 - ii. The school secures written documentation from the graduate verifying the employment; or
 - iii. In cases where a school can show diligent efforts have been made to secure such documentation without success, employment verification records that include a) the graduate's and employer's name and contact information, b) a signature of school staff attesting to verbal employment verification with the employer and the graduate, and c) the date(s) of verification are acceptable.
 - b. Self-Employment:
 - i. The self-employed graduate signs a statement – which includes the graduate's name and contact information – acknowledging that the self-employment is aligned with the individual's employment goals, is vocational, is based on the education and training received, and that the graduate is earning training related income; and
 - ii. The school secures some form of written documentation to demonstrate that the self-employment is valid such as a state license or certificate authorizing such employment.
 - c. Career Advancement:

Students that are already employed in a training related field at the time of graduation can be considered employed when completing the program of study as follows:

 - i. The school shows with written documentation from the employer or the graduate that the training allowed the graduate to maintain the employment position due to the training provided by the school; or
 - ii. The school shows with written documentation from the employer or the graduate that the training supported the graduate's ability to be eligible or qualified for advancement due to the training provided by the school.

In addition to these guidelines, the Commission expects that schools will regularly gather information from employers as a means to assess the preparedness of graduates for employment and make program modifications as may be necessary based on that feedback.