

## ACCSC ACCREDITATION ALERT

**To:** ACCSC-Accredited Institutions and Other Interested Parties  
**From:** Michale S. McComis, Ed.D., Executive Director  
**Date:** April 22, 2011  
**Subject:** Revisions and Additions to and Clarifications of the *Standards of Accreditation*

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The Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (“ACCSC” or “the Commission”) has made revisions and additions to the *Standards of Accreditation* in the following areas:

### **Chapter 1 - Rules of Process and Procedure:**

- *Section I (A), Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation – Definitions*
- *Section IV, Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation – Substantive Changes*
- *Section V (E&F), Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation – Notification Reports*

### **Chapter 2 - Substantive Standards:**

- *Section IV, Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation – Student Recruitment*
- *Section V, Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation – Admissions Policies and Practices*
- *Appendix I – Accreditation Fees*
- *Appendix V – Recruitment and Admissions Personnel Code of Conduct*
- *Appendix VI – Admissions Documentation*

ACCSC has clarified its policies in the following areas:

### **Chapter 1 - Rules of Process and Procedure:**

- *Section IV (D)(9), Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation – Effect of Substantive Changes*
- *Section VII (M)(2), Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation – Maximum Timeframes to Remedy Noncompliance and Good Cause*
- *Section X (E)(3), Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation – Information Sharing with Government Entities and Other Accrediting Agencies*
- *Section VII (C)(3)(j) & (D)(3-4), Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation – Consideration of Third-Party Information*

Please refer to this Accreditation Alert for the current revised policies, procedures, and substantive standards as set forth herein. The revisions to the *Rules of Process and Procedure, Appendix I – Accreditation Fees*, and the policy clarifications are effective as of April 22, 2011. The revisions to *Section IV and Section V, Substantive Standards* (including new *Appendix V & VI*) are effective July 1, 2011. The Commission will issue a fully revised *Standards of Accreditation* document available for download on 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 [mccomis@accsc.org](mailto:mccomis@accsc.org).

**Revisions and Additions to the Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation**  
**Section I (A), Rules of Process and Procedure – Definitions**  
**Section IV, Rules of Process and Procedure – Nonsubstantive and Substantive Changes**  
**Section V, Rules of Process and Procedure – Notification Reports**

**Effective April 22, 2011**

As proposed in the December 20, 2010 Call for Comment, ACCSC has made revisions in *Section I (A), IV, & V, Rules of Process and Procedure* to ensure consistency in the language regarding substantive change requirements and to allow for streamlined program approval processes. A summary of the revisions is as follows:

- The addition of a definition of “affiliated schools” into *Section I (A), Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*;
- The addition of a process whereby a group of affiliated schools may submit one Program Modification Report for multiple campuses;
- A clarification regarding the timeframes for substantive program modifications;
- The addition of a process whereby a group of affiliated schools may seek program approval once that program has been approved by ACCSC.
- A clarification and revision as to when on-site evaluations are required in conjunction with new programs;
- A clarification regarding the time limit for the approval of an inactive program; and
- A nomenclature change from “special reports” to “notification reports” and revisions to the scope of notification reporting requirements set forth in *Section V (E&F), Rules of Process and Procedure*.

The new language follows:

**I. DEFINITIONS, ACCREDITATION ELIGIBILITY AND PROCESS, AND GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

**A. Definitions**

For the purpose of the *Standards of Accreditation*, the following definitions apply:

13. The term “affiliated school(s)” means a main school and its branch campus(es) or a group of schools (i.e., main schools and/or branch campuses) under common ownership or the same corporate organizational structure.

(Renumber subsequent definitions)

**IV. NONSUBSTANTIVE AND SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES NOTIFICATION AND APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS**

**A. Changes Requiring Notification**

A school must notify the Commission of the following:

1. Any contractual affiliations with other schools or training providers in advance of such contracts taking effect (*see Section II (A)(8), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation*);
2. Material events or circumstances that could affect the school’s operations in accordance with *Section V (E), Rules of Process and Procedures, Standards of Accreditation*; and

3. Nonsubstantive and substantive changes in advance of such changes taking effect or being implemented in accordance with the provisions set forth in this section of the *Rules*.

## **B. Nonsubstantive Change Provisions**

2. Nonsubstantive Program Modifications
  - a. A program modification that results in less than a 25% change in the program's clock hours or credit hours or changes to the name of an approved program is considered to be nonsubstantive. The school must notify the Commission in writing of the change by filing the Program Modification Report for Nonsubstantive Changes, with all attachments, prior to the modification taking effect.
  - b. A modification of a program offered at more than one affiliated school that results in less than a 25% change in each program's clock hours or credit hours or changes to the name of an approved program is considered to be nonsubstantive. One of the schools where the nonsubstantive program modification is to be implemented must notify the Commission on behalf of all of the schools where the modification is to be implemented by filing one Program Modification Report for Nonsubstantive Changes–Affiliated Schools, with all attachments, prior to the modification taking effect. The Program Modification Report must list each affiliated school and provide the modification details of the program for each affiliated school.

## **E. Specific Substantive Change Provisions**

6. Program Approval, Additions, and Modifications
  - a. Substantive Change: New Programs or Changes Requiring Prior Commission Approval
    - i. Substantive Program Modifications: The alteration of a program or course that represents a significant modification in the objectives or content of an approved program is considered a substantive change and requires the filing of an Application for a Substantive Program Modification. As a general rule, this means a cumulative 25 percent increase or decrease, from the original date of program approval, the date of approval of a substantive modification to the program, or the most recent grant of accreditation, in the clock hours or credit hours of an existing program. \*\*\*\*<sup>1</sup>
    - ii. Related New Non-Degree Programs: The addition of a new program that is related to the approved programs offered by a school is considered a substantive change and requires prior approval through the filing of an Application for a New Related Non-Degree Program. \*\*\*\*
    - iii. Unrelated New Non-Degree Programs: The addition of a program that is unrelated to the approved programs offered by a school is considered a substantive change and requires prior approval through the filing of an Application for a New Unrelated Non-Degree Program. \*\*\*\*
    - iv. Degree Programs: The addition of a degree program is considered a substantive change and requires prior approval through the filing of the appropriate Application for Approval of a Degree Program.
    - v. Distance Education: The addition of distance education as a means of delivering program content is considered a substantive change and requires prior approval through the filing of an Application for Distance Education Approval. \*\*\*\*

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<sup>1</sup> \*\*\*\* Denotes that language immediately following remains unchanged.

- viii. Program Approval for Affiliated Schools: In instances where a school has received approval to offer a program (degree or non-degree) as described in i-iv above, that program approval may be extended to any other affiliated school provided that:
1. The affiliated school is not subject to a Show Cause or Probation Order or any other type of restriction that would otherwise prevent the addition of a new program; and
  2. The affiliated school has submitted the appropriate Application for the Addition of an Approved Program-Affiliated Schools and received Commission approval of that application.
- b. On-site Evaluation Requirements: An on-site evaluation will be required for new program approval as follows:
- i. The addition of an unrelated new non-degree program.
  - ii. The addition of a new degree program where: \*\*\*\*
  - iii. The addition of a related non-degree program when deemed necessary by the Commission.
  - iv. The addition of distance education program delivery where:
    1. The proposed program or course is the first distance education offering at the school;
    2. A school proposes to offer a new distance education program (degree or non-degree program) that is educationally unrelated to its current program offerings;
    3. A school proposes to offer a portion of a program by distance education through a consortium or partnership arrangement with an entity that is not an ACCSC-accredited institution; or
    4. A school proposes to offer a degree program by distance education that will have an on-site evaluation in accordance with established degree program requirements as described above.

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- f. Discontinuation: Where a program has not had any enrollments or graduates for one year, the Commission may, at its discretion, request additional supporting information from the school to determine whether it has maintained the capacity to offer the program. Any program that has had no enrollments during the last accreditation cycle will cease to be approved by the Commission.

## **V. ANNUAL REPORT AND OTHER REPORTING**

### **E. Notification Reports**

1. Each accredited school and each applicant for initial accreditation must notify ACCSC of any material event or circumstance that could affect the school's operations, policies, staff, curricula, reputation, approval status or authority to operate as a legal entity, or financial status. Such notification must be in writing, made within 10 calendar days of the event's occurrence, and is in addition to disclosures that are required in the applications for initial or renewal of accreditation or any substantive change report.
2. Material events or circumstances necessitating such notification include but are not limited to:
  - a. Filings of petitions for bankruptcy or reorganization;
  - b. Destruction of the school or a significant part of its facilities;

- c. Any limitation, sanction (e.g., probationary status), suspension, or revocation of a school's license or right to operate;
  - d. Cessation of teaching;
  - e. Any grant of accreditation by another accrediting agency or Show Cause Order, imposition of probationary status, or denial or withdrawal of accreditation by another accrediting agency;
  - f. Voluntary relinquishment of accreditation from another accrediting agency;
  - g. Investigations by state or federal authorities, beyond those required in the normal course, related to a school's licensure, approval to operate, or participation in federal programs;
  - h. Any criminal or civil action filed by a state (including state-supported legal assistance agencies) or federal authorities against the school, its officers, or employees;
  - i. Any action against the school to limit, suspend, or terminate student loan guarantees or participation in external programs by a guaranty agency or the U.S. Department of Education;
  - j. Any determination in accordance with requirements of the U.S. Department of Education that the school is not meeting its requirements;
  - k. The results of any lawsuit or investigation brought against the school, its officers, or employees that determine a violation of law or regulation;
  - l. Any determination in accordance with requirements of a state or other applicable regulatory agency that the school is not meeting applicable requirements or is in violation of any law;
  - m. Any action to suspend or revoke a school's or program's recognition with any agency that grants certification or licensure to its graduates; or
  - n. Any qualified or adverse statement or statement related to a school's status as a "going concern" included on an audited financial statement.
3. Notification reports will set forth the circumstances of any such material event fully and will have appended to them copies of any document or information received by the Commission that is relevant to the material event.
  4. Notification reports required by this section of the *Rules* will be supplemental to, and not in lieu of, any other report or filing that may be required by these *Rules*.

## **F. Review of Reports**

The Commission will take up and consider required reports and may, as appropriate, find the school in compliance with accreditation requirements and accept the report or take any of the actions the Commission deems necessary as authorized under *Section VII, Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*.

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**Revisions and Additions to Appendix I – Accreditation Fees**

**Effective April 22, 2011**

As required by the new processes available for the addition of new programs for affiliated schools and for the addition of baccalaureate degree concentrations, the Commission has added the following applications to *Appendix I, Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation*.<sup>2</sup> There is no increase in fees.

- Application for Approval of a Degree Program-Affiliated Schools
  - 1<sup>st</sup> School\_\_\_\_\_ \$1500
  - Each affiliated school\_\_\_\_\_ \$750
- Application for Clock Hour to Credit Hour Conversion-Affiliated Schools\_\_\_\_\_ \$500\*
- Application for a New Non-Degree Program
  - Related Program\_\_\_\_\_ \$500
- Application for a New Non-Degree Program
  - Unrelated Program\_\_\_\_\_ \$750
- Application for a New Non-Degree Program- Affiliated Schools
  - Related Program
    - 1<sup>st</sup> School\_\_\_\_\_ \$500
    - Each affiliated school\_\_\_\_\_ \$250
  - Unrelated Program
    - 1<sup>st</sup> School\_\_\_\_\_ \$750
    - Each affiliated school\_\_\_\_\_ \$375
- Application for a Substantive Program Modification-Affiliated Schools\_\_\_\_\_ \$500\*
- Application for a Substantive Program Modification-Addition of a Concentration\_\_\_\_\_ \$500.
- Program Modification Report for Non-Substantive Changes- Affiliated Schools\_\_\_\_\_ \$150\*

\*Each school/Each Program

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**Revisions and Additions to the Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation**  
**Section IV & V, & Appendix V and VI, Substantive Standards**

**Effective July 1, 2011**

In accordance with the work of the Commission’s Special Recruiting, Advertising, and Admissions Task Force, the Commission sanctioned a review of the ACCSC *Standards of Accreditation* as a means to determine whether improvements could be made and to clarify the Commission’s expectations in the areas of recruiting, admissions, and advertising. Subsequent to this review and seeking comments in the December 20, 2010 Call for Comment regarding proposed changes, the Commission has made revisions

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<sup>2</sup> The new applications will also be added to *Appendix II* in the July 1, 2011 reprint of the *Standards of Accreditation*.

to its recruitment, advertising, and admissions standards. The revisions are intended to achieve the following goals: to make more clear that (1) only ethical practices are used by institutions in the recruitment process, (2) students only receive accurate information that is not intended to mislead, (3) students are provided ample information to make fully informed admissions decisions, and (4) there is sufficient accountability for institutions and school personnel with regard to the first goal.

In several instances, the Commission has reorganized language in an effort to achieve greater clarity, such as with the requirement that a school's recruitment efforts must be designed to attract students who are qualified and likely to complete and benefit from the education and training and not simply to obtain enrollments and through the addition of a "Disclosures" section. In some instances, the Commission has made revisions to clarify the intent of the standard, such as in specifying that schools must ensure that students meet admissions requirements and must provide the student with a fully executed enrollment agreement prior to starting class. In other instances there is wholly new language, such as:

- A definition of "recruitment";
- The requirement for schools to have a code of conduct for personnel primarily responsible for recruitment and admissions processes and the addition of an Appendix providing, minimally, the elements that must be included in the school's code of conduct;
- The addition of a "Disclosures" section and a requirement for the public disclosure of employment rates as reported to the Commission;
- A requirement that prospective students be given an opportunity to review the catalog and enrollment agreement prior to enrollment; and
- The addition of an Appendix expressing the Commission's expectations regarding securing documentation demonstrating that the admissions requirements have been met as originally expressed in an Accreditation Alert on March 17, 2005.

The new language follows:

## **SECTION IV – STUDENT RECRUITMENT, ADVERTISING, AND DISCLOSURES**

### **STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

The purpose of this section is to require schools to describe themselves to prospective students fully and accurately and to follow practices that permit prospective students to make informed and considered enrollment decisions without undue pressure. The school's recruitment efforts must attract students who are qualified and likely to complete and benefit from the education and training provided by the school and not simply to obtain enrollments. Recruitment means engaging in activities or using promotional materials or presentations to attract and enroll students. These standards apply to school personnel primarily involved in any way in those activities.

#### **A. Recruitment**

Schools must observe ethical practices and procedures in the recruitment of students. Ethical practices and procedures include, at a minimum, the following:

1. A school's recruitment efforts focus on attracting students who are qualified and likely to complete and benefit from the education and training provided by the school and not simply obtaining enrollments.
2. A school's recruitment efforts describe the school to prospective students fully and accurately and follow practices that permit prospective students to make informed and considered enrollment decisions without undue pressure.

3. A school only uses its own employees to conduct student recruiting activities and is prohibited from engaging employment agencies to recruit prospective students. Schools under common ownership may employ a single recruiter.
4. A school is responsible to its students and prospective students for the actions and representations of its recruiters and representatives and, therefore, selects these individuals with the utmost care and provides adequate training and proper supervision. A school has and enforces an acceptable code of conduct for all school personnel whose primary responsibilities are to engage in recruiting and admissions functions prior to and during admission and matriculation. The school's code of conduct is in writing, includes, minimally, all elements set forth in *Appendix V, Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation*, is signed and dated by the individual employee, and a copy of which is maintained in the individual's personnel file.
5. A school's personnel are trained and qualified to engage in recruiting activities and may only use a title that accurately represents the individual's primary duties.
6. A school complies with applicable federal and state laws and regulations pertaining to student recruitment.
7. A school approves all promotional materials used by school personnel in advance and accepts full responsibility for the materials used.
8. A school has in place policies and procedures and takes reasonable steps to ensure that its personnel do not make false, exaggerated, or misleading statements about the school, its personnel, its training, its services, or its accredited status and to ensure that its personnel do not make explicit or implicit promises of employment or salary prospects to prospective students.
9. A school internally reviews and evaluates its recruiting policies and procedures and the performance of personnel involved in recruiting activities for compliance with accrediting standards and applicable law and regulation at least once annually, and maintains documentation of the review and evaluation. The Commission, at its discretion, may require a school to audit its recruiting activities for compliance with accreditation standards or applicable law and regulation using a qualified independent third-party that is approved by the Commission prior to the verification review being conducted.
10. A school shall not permit its personnel to engage in recruiting activities in settings where prospective students cannot reasonably be expected to make informed and considered enrollment decisions such as in or near welfare offices, unemployment lines, food stamp centers, homeless shelters, or other similar settings. A school may, however, engage in recruiting activities at employment opportunity centers operated under government auspices, provided that the school has permission to do so and that all other recruitment and admissions requirements are met.
11. A school shall not permit the payment of cash or other similar consideration to any prospective student as an inducement to enroll.
12. A school shall not permit its personnel whose primary responsibilities include recruiting and admissions activities to assist prospective students in completing application forms for financial aid.
13. A school shall not permit personnel whose primary responsibilities include recruiting and admissions activities to become involved in admission testing or admission decisions, including signing and accepting the enrollment agreement.
14. A school clearly identifies itself in all advertising, promotional materials, and contacts made with prospective students.
15. Cancellation Policies:



- a. Applicants who have not visited the school prior to enrollment will have the opportunity to withdraw without penalty within three business days following either the regularly scheduled orientation procedures or following a tour of the school facilities and inspection of equipment where training and services are provided.
  - b. All monies paid by an applicant must be refunded if requested within three days after signing an enrollment agreement and making an initial payment. An applicant requesting cancellation more than three days after signing an enrollment agreement and making an initial payment, but prior to entering the school, is entitled to a refund of all monies paid minus a registration fee of 15% of the contract price of the program, but in no event may the school retain more than \$150.
16. A school provides the applicant with a receipt for any money collected.
17. School personnel do not discredit other schools or influence any student to leave another school by: falsely imputing to another school dishonorable conduct, inability to perform contracts, or questionable credit standing; making other false representations; falsely disparaging the character, nature, quality, value, or scope of another school's program of instruction or services; or demeaning another school's students.

## **B. Advertising and Promotion**

Each school observes ethical practices and procedures in advertising and promotion that include, at a minimum, the following:

1. A school's advertising and promotional materials are truthful and accurate and avoid leaving any false, misleading, or exaggerated impressions with respect to the school, its location, its name, its personnel, its training, its services, and its accredited status.
2. A school's advertising and promotional materials clearly indicate that education, and not employment, is being offered. No overt or implied claim or guarantee of individual employment is made at any time and any references to employment or salary prospects must be accurate and sourced.
3. A school may use the term "University" in its name only when such use has been approved by the Commission and appropriate state authorities.
4. A school may not use the Employment or Help Wanted classifieds for any form of student recruitment.
5. A school may only use endorsements in school catalogs, literature, or advertising with the written consent of the authors, which is kept on file and subject to inspection. Any such endorsement is to be a bona fide expression of the author's opinions, strictly factual, and a portrayal of currently correct conditions or facts. Under no circumstances may currently enrolled students provide endorsements on behalf of a school.
6. School personnel, advertisements, and promotional materials may only provide information pertaining to potential salary that accurately portrays the normal range and starting salaries in the occupation for which training is provided. Salary information must also include the source of the information, which is valid.
7. A school may only use the term "accredited" if it indicates by what agency or organization it is accredited. Publication of accreditation must comply with the Advertising of Accredited Status form.

8. Advertising of financial aid and scholarships<sup>3</sup> includes an eligibility phrase (e.g., financial aid available for those who qualify).
9. A school may not describe in its catalog, advertise, or promote new programs, substantive changes, or degree programs prior to receiving written Commission approval.

### **C. Disclosures**

A school makes accurate disclosures to students as follows:

1. Catalog
  - a. A school publishes a catalog that accurately portrays the school; its educational programs, resources and facilities; and policies and procedures and that includes, at a minimum, all items listed on the ACCSC Catalog Checklist. (*See also Section I (D)(6), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation.*)
  - b. A school's catalog is designed and written in such a manner so as to convey an accurate, comprehensive, and dignified impression of the school. The catalog's narrative and any illustrations and photos pertain directly to the school and sources of illustrations and photos are clearly identified.
  - c. A school provides each applicant with a current and complete catalog and an opportunity to review the catalog prior to signing the enrollment agreement so that each potential student may make an informed decision relative to the school's educational programs, institutional policies, and procedures. A school may provide either a printed and bound copy of the catalog or a read-only format electronic copy that cannot be altered (e.g., portable document format (PDF), etc.). In either case, all versions of the catalog are identical and students that receive an electronic copy of the catalog are able to receive a printed and bound copy of the catalog upon request.
2. Enrollment Agreement
  - a. A school utilizes an enrollment agreement that includes, at a minimum, all required items listed on the ACCSC Enrollment Agreement Checklist and that clearly states the obligations of both the student and school. (*See also Section I (D)(6), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation.*)
  - b. A school executes an enrollment agreement for all enrolled students.
  - c. A school ensures that each applicant has an opportunity to review the enrollment agreement and is fully informed of the rights, responsibilities, and obligations of both the student and the school under the enrollment agreement before it is signed by the applicant.
  - d. A school furnishes a copy of the enrollment agreement to the applicant at the time the applicant signs. A school must furnish to the student prior to the student starting class a final copy of the enrollment agreement signed by both parties.
  - e. No enrollment agreement is binding until it has been signed by the student and accepted by the appropriate school official.
3. Graduate Employment

A school discloses, minimally, the graduate employment rate as last reported to the Commission. The public notice of a graduate employment rate is accurate, not intended to mislead, and includes the school's graduate population base and time frame upon which the rate is based.

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<sup>3</sup> As defined in *Section I (D)(2), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation.*

4. Accreditation and Approval
  - a. A school discloses its ACCSC institutional accreditation and the Commission's contact information (i.e., address, phone number, and website address).
  - b. In accordance with *Section VII (L)(8), Rules of Process and Procedures*, a school subject to a Probation Order must inform current and prospective students that the school has been placed on probation and that additional information regarding that action can be obtained from the Commission's website.
  - c. Where a program requires accreditation (institutional or programmatic) and/or approval by a third-party regulatory agency (e.g., state agency, licensing agency, oversight board, national certification entity, etc.), for the purpose of licensure, certification, or employment, a school discloses to students whether such accreditation and/or third-party recognition has been achieved and is in good standing.

## **SECTION V – ADMISSION POLICIES AND PRACTICES**

### **STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

The purpose of this section is to ensure that schools only admit those students who are capable of successfully completing the training offered. Admission decisions must be based on fair, effective, and consistently applied criteria that enable the school to make an informed judgment as to an applicant's ability to achieve the program's objectives.

#### **A. General Requirements**

1. A school develops admissions criteria that are designed to admit only those students who are reasonably capable of successfully completing and benefiting from the training offered.
2. A school publishes in its catalog and informs, prior to admission, each applicant for enrollment of the program's admission requirements, process, and procedures; the nature of the training and education provided; and the program's responsibilities and demands. (See also *Section IV (A), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation.*)
3. A school consistently and fairly applies its admission requirements.
4. Prior to enrollment a school:
  - a. Determines that an applicant meets the school's admissions requirements;
  - b. Secures documentation to demonstrate that each applicant meets all admission requirements;<sup>4</sup>
  - c. Documents that applicants rejected did not meet admissions requirements;
5. A school maintains documentation covering the last five years that demonstrates that admission requirements have been met or that explains the basis for any denial of admission.
6. A school determines that each applicant has no disabilities, physical or otherwise, that would prevent use of the knowledge or skill gained from the training offered for successful on-the-job performance after completion of the training.
7. No school denies admission or discriminates against students enrolled at the school on the basis of race, creed, color, sex, age, disability, or national origin. Schools must reasonably accommodate applicants and students with disabilities to the extent required by applicable law.

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<sup>4</sup> See also *Appendix VI, Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation.*

8. A school may not enroll or admit any person of compulsory school age or any person attending a school at the secondary level, unless the school has established through contact with properly responsible parties that pursuit of the training will not be detrimental to the student's regular school work.
9. The Commission, at its discretion, may require a school to conduct a study to document the effectiveness of its admission requirements for all students.

## **ACCSC STANDARDS OF ACCREDITATION**

### **APPENDIX V – RECRUITMENT AND ADMISSIONS**

### **PERSONNEL CODE OF CONDUCT**

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This appendix sets forth the items that, at a minimum, are to be included in the Code of Conduct required by *Section IV (A)(4), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation*. The school may choose the specific language to be used in its Code of Conduct so long as the language conforms to the spirit and intent of the items below. The school may also include other elements to the Code of Conduct as it deems appropriate. The Code of Conduct must be in writing and signed, minimally, by all school personnel whose primary duties include student recruitment and admissions functions.

1. Student recruitment, enrollment, and admissions duties will be conducted in an ethical and professional manner and in keeping with organizational policies and procedures as well as relevant accreditation requirements.
2. Student recruitment, enrollment, and admissions duties will be geared toward the enrollment of qualified applicants who are likely to complete and benefit from the training provided by the school and not geared toward enrolling students simply to obtain enrollments.
3. Student recruitment and admissions personnel will only provide truthful and accurate statements, descriptions, and explanations regarding the school and its personnel, training, facilities, equipment, services, and accredited status.
4. Student recruitment and admissions personnel will work to ensure that students are fully informed and able to make considered enrollment decisions without undue pressure.
5. Student recruitment and admissions personnel will only assist prospective students in the areas that fall within the purview of their position and will not assist prospective students in admissions testing or alter or falsify any enrollment documents or required test scores.
6. Student recruitment and admissions personnel will not make explicit or implicit promises of employment or exaggerated statements regarding employment or salary prospects to prospective students.
7. Student recruitment and admissions personnel will participate in relevant training provided by the school to enhance their skills as school representatives.
8. Student recruitment and admissions personnel will not assist prospective students in providing false or misleading information on any application.
9. Student recruitment and admissions personnel will not recruit prospective students in or near welfare offices, unemployment lines, food stamp centers, homeless shelters, or other circumstances or settings where such persons cannot reasonably be expected to make informed and considered enrollment decisions.
10. Student recruitment and admissions personnel will not discredit other schools or influence any student to leave another school by: falsely imputing to another school dishonorable conduct, inability to perform contracts, or questionable credit standing; making other false representations; falsely disparaging the character, nature, quality, value, or scope of another school's program of instruction or services; or demeaning another school's students.
11. Student recruitment and admissions personnel acknowledge having received a copy of the *ACCSC Standards of Accreditation* and having read the sections pertaining to recruitment, advertising, and admissions.

## ACCSC STANDARDS OF ACCREDITATION APPENDIX VI – ADMISSIONS DOCUMENTATION

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Originally Issued as an Accreditation Alert March 17, 2005<sup>5</sup>

*Section V (A)(4)(b), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation* requires that a school “secures documentation to demonstrate that each applicant meets all admission requirements.” Because of the importance of admissions requirements and the role those requirements play in allowing schools to make informed admissions decisions, the Commission believes that a school’s diligence in requiring documentation is a key component to institutional success. Therefore, the Commission does not consider a self-certification by a student that he or she has a high school diploma or equivalent to be “documentation” that the student has met this admissions requirement. The standard contemplates that a school will support its admissions decisions with independent documentation such as transcripts and copies of diplomas or other documentation of equivalency. Admissions documentation for students from foreign, non-English speaking countries is to be translated and certified to be at least equivalent to the credential required by the school in its admissions criteria (e.g., a U.S. high school diploma). In all cases, it is the responsibility of the school to determine whether the credential is appropriate and meets the school’s admissions criteria.

For those ACCSC-accredited institutions that require that an applicant must possess a high school diploma or its equivalent for admission, the Commission recognizes that in rare instances students may not be able to provide documentation required by a school’s admissions criteria due to issues beyond their control (e.g., loss of records due to fire or flood, inability to obtain records, home schooled students, etc.). In these rare cases, a school may use an admissions test in lieu of documentation of a high school diploma or its equivalent. Under these circumstances, the student must sign a statement attesting that he or she in fact obtained a high school diploma or its equivalent and state the reason(s) why documentation of the earned credential cannot be provided. The admissions test used under these circumstances must be reviewed by a qualified, independent, third party and certified as to the appropriateness of the instrument and required score levels (i.e., equivalent to a high school diploma). If a school chooses to use such a test for these unusual circumstances, this should be stated in the school’s admissions policies.

The Commission understands that other regulatory agencies may have different requirements. Please be advised that in instances where these differences exist, the more stringent requirements shall apply (*Section I (B)(1)(e)(iii), Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*).

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Renumber current *Appendix V* to *Appendix VII*

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<sup>5</sup> The March 17, 2005 Accreditation Alert remains in effect until July 1, 2011 when *Appendix VI* becomes effective.

**Policy Clarification: Section IV (D)(9), Rules of Process and Procedure,  
Standards of Accreditation – Effect of Substantive Changes**

**Effective April 22, 2011**

Federal regulation 34 CFR §602.22 requires that a recognized accrediting agency's substantive change policies must define when the substantive changes made or proposed by an institution are or would be sufficiently extensive to require the agency to conduct a new comprehensive evaluation of that institution.

*Section IV (D)(9), Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation* is ACCSC's provision pertaining to the effect of multiple substantive changes made to an institution and states the following:

Effect of Substantive Changes: Proposed changes to a school may be so substantial that the Commission may conclude that the school to which it granted accreditation has effectively closed and a new school is proposed to open. After affording the school the opportunity to provide information about the changes and whether sufficient continuity of the accredited school will be maintained, the Commission may act to require a total re-evaluation of the school or to withdraw the accreditation and require the school to re-apply for accreditation. The school may appeal a withdrawal action in accordance with the procedures set forth in these *Rules*.

In order to memorialize the Commission's good practice in the monitoring of the substantive change activity of its accredited institutions and to demonstrate better the Commission's compliance with the applicable federal regulation, the Commission is listing the substantive changes that would require a total re-evaluation under *Section IV (D)(9), Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*. These substantive changes include, but are not limited to:

- A significant change of mission sought within two years of a change of ownership and change of control;
- Any relocation coupled with a change of mission;
- A change of classification from a branch campus to a main school;
- Any change that results in the transition to a 100% distance education institution; or
- Other circumstances and the accumulation of changes where the Commission concludes that the school to which it granted accreditation has effectively ceased to operate under the conditions upon which that grant of accreditation was based.

The Commission intends to review this provision more fully as a means to incorporate this list into *Section IV (D)(9), Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*. In the meanwhile, this clarification is in effect as of the date of this *Accreditation Alert*.

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**Policy Clarification: Section VII (M)(2), Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation – Maximum Timeframes to Remedy Noncompliance and Good Cause**

**Effective April 22, 2011**

Section §602.20 of the federal regulations for recognized accrediting agencies and the ACCSC *Standards of Accreditation* both establish maximum timeframes within which an institution must achieve compliance with standards once the Commission makes a determination of non-compliance. There is also an allowance for those timeframes to be extended if “good cause” exists to warrant such an extension. The good cause allowance provides accreditors the flexibility to apply qualitative professional judgment when the rigid quantitative maximum timeframes have expired. The importance of the allowance of a good cause showing notwithstanding, the U.S. Department of Education has an expectation that accreditors will grant good cause extensions in exceptional cases and for a limited duration. The Commission agrees and its practice to date has been only to grant a good cause extension of the maximum timeframes when the school has shown during the period of review that significant progress has been made toward achieving compliance with the accreditation standard(s) in question and that extenuating circumstances exist such that only through the addition of time can a school demonstrate its compliance with the standard(s). Moreover, the Commission has granted good cause extensions for limited periods of time, generally, for a period not longer than two consecutive Commission meetings. Therefore, in order to codify its existing practice within its *Rules* and to demonstrate clearly to the U.S. Department of Education its compliance with the applicable federal regulation, the Commission has modified *Section VII (M)(2), Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation* to read as follows:

**VII. COMMISSION ACTIONS**

**M. Timelines to Remedy Noncompliance**

2. The school will be deemed to have demonstrated good cause if it has shown that during the period of review significant progress has been made toward achieving compliance with the accreditation standard(s) in question and meeting all requirements set forth by the Commission and when extenuating circumstances exist such that only through the provision of additional time can the school demonstrate its compliance with the standard(s). Generally, the Commission will limit the duration of the extended timeframe to demonstrate compliance to within the next two regularly scheduled Commission meetings.

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**Policy Clarification: Section X (3), Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation – Information Sharing with Government Entities and Other Accrediting Agencies**

**Effective April 22, 2011**

Federal regulation 34 CFR §602.24(d) requires that a recognized accrediting agency must have a policy that if an institution closes without a teach-out plan or agreement, the agency will work with the Department and the appropriate State agency, to the extent feasible, to assist students in finding reasonable opportunities to complete their education without additional charges.

ACCSC has been recognized by the U.S. Department of Education for its past efforts in this regard; however, federal regulation requires the Commission to have a written policy pertaining to this commitment. Accordingly, the Commission is memorializing its practices in the *Standards of*

Accreditation through the addition of *Section X (E)(3), Rules of Process and Procedures, Standards of Accreditation* as follows:

## **X. NOTIFICATION AND INFORMATION SHARING**

### **E. Information Sharing with Government Entities and Other Accrediting Agencies**

3. If an institution accredited by ACCSC closes without a teach-out plan or agreement, the Commission will work with the Department, the appropriate State agency, and other applicable accrediting agencies, to the extent feasible, to assist students in finding reasonable opportunities to complete their education without additional charges.

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**Policy Clarification: Section VII (C)(3)(j) & (D)(3-4), Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation – Commission Consideration of Third Party Information**

**Effective April 22, 2011**

Federal regulation 34 CFR §602.28(d) requires that an accrediting agency must take into account the actions of other accrediting agencies, specifically with respect to Show Cause Orders, Probation, and adverse actions. The Commission's *Rules* do provide for such instances under *Section VII (C-D), Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*. However, in order to ensure a broad consideration of the actions of accreditors, the Commission determined that its consideration should not be limited to only those accrediting agencies recognized by the U.S. Department of Education because there are several programmatic agencies that are legitimate organizations but that are not recognized by the Department. Therefore, the Commission has removed the word "recognized" from *Section VII (C)(3)(j)&(D)(3-4), Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*. The revised language follows:

## **VII. COMMISSION ACTIONS**

### **C. Basis for Decisions**

3. The Commission's decision relative to a school's application for accreditation (initial or renewal) will be based upon the Commission's review of the school's records, including all of the following that apply:
  - j. Actions by other accrediting agencies; and

### **D. Commission Consideration of Third Party Information**

3. In considering the appropriate action to take on a school or program, the Commission will take into account actions by other accrediting agencies that have denied accreditation or re-accreditation status to the school or program, have placed the school or program on probation, or have revoked the accreditation or re-accreditation status of the school or program.
4. If another accrediting agency places a school or the principal program offered by such school on probation or revokes the accreditation of the school or program, ACCSC will promptly review the accreditation status it has previously granted to that school to determine whether there is cause to change that status.