The Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (ACCSC)

STANDARDS OF ACCREDITATION

July 1, 2026

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ACCSC STANDARDS OF ACCREDITATION INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the *Standards of Accreditation*

The Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges ("ACCSC" or "the Commission")[1] reviews and accredits postsecondary institutions of higher education with a mission to ensure quality education that enhances student success in the workforce. To do this ACCSC:

- Establishes and maintains high educational standards that contribute to student success;
- Ensures that its standards are sufficiently rigorous such that ACCSC is a reliable authority regarding the quality of the education provided by its accredited schools;
- Evaluates each institution's compliance with the *Standards of Accreditation* and strives to ensure appropriate accountability for such compliance; and
- Encourages schools to adopt a framework for high-quality programs which includes not only technical and academic competencies, but also workforce competency – those skills necessary to succeed in any career and to continuously find, attract, and create opportunities for working and learning that are lifelong and lifewide.

In order to drive a high-quality accreditation process, ACCSC is committed to setting forth clear expectations in both its *Rules of Process and Procedure* as well as the *Substantive Standards* in the *Standards of Accreditation*.

Hallmarks of Quality

Accreditation serves as an indication of institutional quality by setting standards against which career schools and colleges can be assessed. As such, the *Standards of Accreditation* serve as hallmarks of quality and express ACCSC's expectations for schools to gain and maintain ACCSC accreditation. These Hallmarks of Quality expect that a school is committed to:

- Ensuring that students have access to qualified, experienced, and dedicated administrators who work to maintain fair operational policies and sufficient resources which contribute to the overall success of the institution in meeting its mission to serve students;
- Continually assessing itself and seeking opportunities for improvement;
- Offering programs that:
  - Have well designed and defined objectives,
  - Support the diverse needs of students,
  - Have sufficient learning resources directly relevant to occupational areas and include employer feedback, and
  - Prepare students for a diverse array of workplace challenges and opportunities and success in the workforce;
- Ensuring that courses are taught by well-qualified faculty with a mix of education and experience to support and drive student learning;
- Assisting prospective students in making well-informed enrollment decisions using best practices in student recruitment;

[1] The Accreditation Alliance of Career Schools and Colleges ("AACSC") does business as the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges ("ACCSC").

- Establishing admissions criteria that help to identify each prospective student's opportunity for success consistent with intended program outcomes;
- Offering services that support each student's opportunity for success; and
- Evaluating student learning and competency and seeking opportunities to improve its programs using student assessment and achievement results.

These Hallmarks of Quality establish the foundation upon which the accreditation standards are based and serve as guiding principles as the Commission conducts its work in service of ACCSC's mission.

Participation in the process of accreditation is voluntary on the part of the school. However, schools seeking to gain or maintain accreditation agree to support the accreditation process, adhere to the AACSC *Bylaws*, and to meet or exceed the *Standards of Accreditation* throughout the application and accreditation period. The burden rests with the school to establish that it is meeting its mission, the hallmarks of quality expressed above, and the specific *Rules* and *Standards* set forth in this document.

The *Standards of Accreditation* and the Accreditation Process

The *Standards of Accreditation* document describes the accreditation process and sets forth the base of essentials (i.e., standards of best practice) against which a school studies and evaluates itself. Each school determines its own educational objectives, keeping in mind, however, that such objectives must be appropriate for a postsecondary-educational institution and serve to support the success of students.[2] Ultimately, ACCSC evaluates a school based on the school's ability to accomplish its mission, achieve announced objectives, and demonstrate student success in accordance with the Commission's standards.

The standards and accreditation process emphasize educational quality by focusing on the value of both inputs and outcomes. What actually happens as a consequence of the teaching-learning processes in a school, and what is the evidence of these results? Given the stated purposes of the school and its documented outcomes, can the school be judged as committed to hallmarks of quality? Does the accreditation process help the school to evaluate and improve its student achievement outcomes and hence its quality? Such questions are the primary focus of the Commission as it conducts its work.

Necessarily, the Commission concerns itself with inputs (the kinds of students in the school and the recruiting, admission, and testing procedures that produce them); resources (instructors, equipment, library, etc.), and processes (how the school actually operates). All of these conditions are evaluated within the context of the school's stated mission and its demonstrated achievements. Two important outcomes that the Commission uses in its assessment process are student graduation rates and graduate employment rates. The Commission is concerned about employer satisfaction, student satisfaction, and student success over time. Accordingly, the Commission is concerned about outcomes related to specific skills, knowledge, competencies, and behaviors achieved by students as a direct result of participation in a training program. The Commission believes that both the inputs and the outcomes are essential factors in institutional and student success and as such expects that schools comply with both the input and outcome standards.

As a means to assess the quality and impact of a school's inputs and outcomes, a fundamental component of the accreditation process that the Commission relies upon is institutional self-evaluation. Self-evaluation is an assessment of the complete school, conducted by faculty and students, as well as by the school administration. The Commission expects that a school's self-evaluation process should involve the entire

[2] In addition, ACCSC endorses the concept of academic freedom that supports faculty members' privilege to function as scholars in the interpretation and application of theories and ideas within the context of an institution's mission, policies, and procedures.

school. The self-evaluation process provides an opportunity for the staff and faculty of the school, whether it is a small, highly specialized school or a large, departmentalized school, to examine itself and to draft findings and recommendations for its own action. Compliance with accrediting standards and improvements within a school should be due primarily to its internal efforts rather than due to an on-site evaluation by an outside team or Commission action. The Commission expects the process of self-evaluation to be a significant and ongoing experience. Schools should incorporate the self-evaluation process as a permanent part of the institution's operation.

In addition to a school's self-evaluation, the Commission employs its own fact-finding methods to determine a school's success in meeting its mission and compliance with accrediting standards. These methods include elements such as on-site evaluation team findings and observations, student input and feedback, interim monitoring, and information provided by third parties. Overall, the burden rests with the school to show that it is meeting its mission, serving students, and meeting all requirements of the *Standards of Accreditation* in order to obtain and maintain ACCSC accreditation.

Because the burden rests with the school to establish that it is meeting accrediting standards, a school must supply the Commission with complete, truthful, and accurate information and documentation showing the school's compliance with all accrediting standards if the school is to be granted and maintain accreditation. A high level of reliance is placed upon information, data, and statements provided to the Commission by a school. The integrity and honesty of a school are fundamental and critical to the process. A compromise of integrity is considered to be an extreme offense. If the Commission determines that a school has knowingly provided false or misleading information, the Commission will take any action that it believes is reasonable and appropriate including, but not limited to, denying any pending application or taking any accreditation action described in *Section VII, Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*. Accredited schools and schools seeking accreditation agree to support the accreditation process, adhere to the AACSC *Bylaws*, and must meet or exceed the *Standards of Accreditation* throughout the application and accreditation period.

All provisions of the *Standards of Accreditation* are effective as of July 1, 2026 with the exception of those areas that may be subsequently revised or added or as otherwise indicated. Revisions made to the *Standards of Accreditation* on or after July 1, 2015 are annotated in the ACCSC *Standards of Accreditation – Revision Catalog* available on the Commission's website.

ACCSC
STANDARDS OF ACCREDITATION

CHAPTER 1

RULES OF PROCESS AND PROCEDURE

ACCSC STANDARDS OF ACCREDITATION
RULES OF PROCESS AND PROCEDURE

SECTION I – DEFINITIONS, ACCREDITATION OBLIGATIONS, ELIGIBILITY AND PROCESS, AND GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

A. Definitions

For the purpose of the *Standards of Accreditation*, the following definitions apply:[1]

1. The term "Commission" refers to the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges composed as described in the *Bylaws* of the Accreditation Alliance of Career Schools and Colleges ("AACSC") and as set forth below:
    a. One or more Commissioners will be designated as follows:
        i. Administrative – An individual currently or formerly engaged in a significant manner in postsecondary programmatic or institutional administration for a school.
        ii. Academic – An individual currently or formerly engaged in a significant manner in postsecondary education, training, teaching, or research in a school setting.
        iii. Educator, Practitioner, and/or Employer – An individual currently or formerly engaged in the application of skills, teaching, or employment of individuals.
    b. The number of Public Commissioners (as defined in the AACSC *Bylaws*) shall be at least 15% but less than a majority of the total number of Commissioners.
2. The term "public member" used in the *Standards of Accreditation* means a person who:
    a. Has experience in industry, government, education (e.g., accreditation, postsecondary, public, private, adult or vocational/career-oriented), or in similar or allied fields;
    b. Is not an employee, member of the governing board, owner, shareholder, or consultant of an institution that is accredited by the Commission, has applied for accreditation by the Commission, or is affiliated with a School Commissioner or any institution or entity which is also affiliated with a School Commissioner;
    c. Is not a member of any trade association or membership organization related to, affiliated with, or associated with ACCSC;
    d. Is not a spouse, parent, child, or sibling of an individual identified in paragraph (b) or (c) of this definition; and
    e. Has been appointed to sit on the Standing Appeals Panel pursuant to *Section VIII (D)(2)(d), Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*.
3. The term "single-purpose institution" means an institution that offers a single program that leads to a singular and specific occupation.
4. The term "accredited school" means a school which has received a grant of accreditation from the Commission and as such is a Member of the Corporation and must comply with the *Standards of Accreditation*, the *Bylaws* of AACSC, and all other rules process and policies of ACCSC.
5. The term "*Standards of Accreditation*" refers to the document duly adopted by the Commission that contains the ACCSC *Rules of Process and Procedure, Substantive Standards*, *Appendices*, and applicable Accreditation Alerts.[2]

[1] This list of definitions is not intended to be all inclusive and some terms are defined within the applicable sections of the *Standards of Accreditation*.
[2] The *Standards of Accreditation* are available on the ACCSC web site at www.accsc.org.

6. The term "standards" refers to all accreditation requirements, rules, policies, substantive standards, and appendices promulgated by the Commission and contained in the *Standards of Accreditation* document.
7. The terms "adverse accreditation decision" and "adverse action" refer to an action that can be appealed under these *Rules.* Adverse actions are denial of an application for initial accreditation, withdrawal of accreditation, and denial of a substantive change application.
8. A "final adverse accreditation decision" is one reached after a school has exhausted the appeals process provided for under *Section VIII, Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation* or that becomes effective after a school has opted not to avail itself of its appeal rights within the prescribed time frame.
9. The term "consortium or partnership agreement" means any instance where a portion of an ACCSC-accredited school's approved programs is provided by or at another entity (accredited or unaccredited) or where another entity provides the facilities for the school to offer a portion of an approved program off-site in a program-appropriate setting whereby approval as a satellite location separate facility under these standards is not required.
10. Whenever the term "clock hour" is used, the equivalent in credit hours may be substituted.
11. Any reference to "day" means a calendar day. If a time period measured in days ends on a Saturday, Sunday, a national holiday, or a day that the Commission's office is closed the official end of the time period will be moved to the next business day.
12. The term "family" encompasses parents, siblings, spouses, and children.
13. The term "continuous operation" means a school operating without cessation – with the exception of regularly scheduled breaks, vacation periods, or an approved change of location – providing education and training to students in accordance with its primary educational objective(s), and with continuous licensure by the state granting approval to do so. For initial applicant schools, such continuous operation must be immediately preceding and contiguous to the submission of the Application for Initial Accreditation. For accredited schools, such continuous operation must be ongoing.
14. The term "licensed" means that the school holds a valid license to operate a school from appropriate authorities (e.g., local, state, or federal). In jurisdictions where no license is issued, the school must submit verification as to time in operation from the government agency with jurisdiction over the school.
15. Any requirement for "notice" or "notification" means the requirement of a specific letter or the submission of the applicable report to the Executive Director of ACCSC informing the Commission of the specific change or situation for which notice is required under these *Rules*. Incorporation of the information into an unrelated application, Annual Report, or other communication does not constitute "notice."
16. The term "recognized accrediting agency" means an accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education in accordance with federal regulations or a foreign equivalent.
17. The term "school" refers to a postsecondary institution with trade, occupational, or career-oriented educational objectives that systematically provides education for students in a structured teaching and learning environment through in-person residential training, distance education methodologies, or a combination of both. Each school will have a single, permanent ACCSC reference number.

18. For those institutions participating in Title IV, Higher Education Act federal student financial aid programs, the following federal definitions are adopted and applied:

    a. A branch campus is approved by the U.S. Secretary of Education as a branch campus and is an independent separate physical facility that is geographically separate from the main campus of the institution and within the same ownership structure of the institution, and that also is permanent in nature; offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized education credential; has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization; and has its own budgetary and hiring authority.

    b. An additional location is a physical facility that is geographically separate from the main campus of the institution and within the same ownership structure of the institution, at which the institution offers at least 50% of an educational program. An additional location participates in the Title IV, Higher Education Act programs only through the certification of the main campus. Additionally, a federal, state, or local penitentiary, prison, jail, reformatory, work farm, juvenile justice facility, or other similar correctional institution is considered to be an additional location even if a student receives instruction primarily through distance education at that location.

19. 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.

20. The term "sign(ed/ing/ature)" means agreeing to, attesting to, acknowledging, accepting, or certifying a document/process/action in a physical or electronic form/format. Any use of electronic signatures must be enforceable, reliable, and used in accordance with applicable state and federal requirements.

21. The term "state" refers to the governmental entity responsible for the licensure or authorization for the school to operate within that jurisdiction, to include applicable federal agencies.

22. The term "United States" or "U.S." means, in addition to the 50 states, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. The term "international" refers to any place outside the United States.

B. Purpose and Scope

1. Purpose: The Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (ACCSC) reviews and accredits schools of higher education that offer programs in career-oriented areas of study. A primary purpose of the Commission is to establish and maintain high educational standards and ethical practices among its accredited schools and to assess a school's compliance with those standards. Accreditation is also a means of assisting career schools and colleges to improve by requiring self-evaluation and institutional assessment and improvement activities.

2. Authority: Pursuant Section 1.02 of the *Bylaws*, the Commission has the right to promulgate, after notice to and comment from the members of the Corporation, the *Standards of Accreditation*. The Commission also has the right to adopt and apply processes and procedures for accreditation. This authority is expressed in the establishment of the *Rules of Process and Procedures* and the *Substantive Standards* as well as corresponding forms, applications, reports, time frames, submission requirements, and fees associated with the requirements established herein.

3. Scope: ACCSC accredits postsecondary, non-degree-granting institutions and degree-granting institutions, including those granting associate, baccalaureate, and master's degrees that are

predominantly organized to educate students in career-oriented areas of study to include institutions that offer distance education. ACCSC is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education to accredit these same institutions.

a. All programs offered by a school that fall within the Commission's scope must be approved by the Commission as within the school's scope of institutional accreditation through the application for accreditation process and substantive change program approval process.

b. In order for a program to be included in the institution's accreditation, it must be within the Commission's scope of accreditation and properly reported to and approved by the Commission.

c. The Commission will consider continuing education courses and avocational courses for inclusion in a school's scope of institutional accreditation provided that those courses are related[3] to the school's approved career-oriented vocational programs and meet other established requirements set forth by applicable regulatory agencies and the *Standards of Accreditation*.

d. Programs Outside of the Commission's Scope: The Commission may consider a program that falls outside of ACCSC's scope and may recognize that program as within the scope of the school's institutional accreditation provided that:

   i. The school has received specialty or programmatic accreditation for the program or

   ii. The program has some other equivalent certification or approval that is sufficiently comprehensive to assure the Commission that the program to be offered meets the standards and competencies established in that field of study.

e. If a conflict exists between another accrediting or certification agency and ACCSC requirements, the more stringent requirement will take precedence. All other ACCSC standards and requirements would apply to the school and the programs approved by ACCSC.

4. Limitations of Scope: The Commission does not profess to have within its capability, and does not define as its purpose, the evaluation of any school that may seek accreditation. Rather, a school must fall within the Commission's scope and meet the requirements of these *Rules* before it may apply for consideration. Accordingly, the Commission may decline to consider for accreditation otherwise eligible schools if it determines that the programs offered by an applicant school fall outside the Commission's primary scope and competence or there is a lack of standards necessary for meaningful review.

5. Voluntary Process: Participation in the process of accreditation is voluntary on the part of the school. By applying for and receiving accreditation, a school accepts the obligation to demonstrate continuous compliance with the *Standards of Accreditation*.

6. Accreditation Fees and Obligations:

   a. ACCSC is a non-profit corporation organized under the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Fees paid by applicant and accredited schools support the work of ACCSC. By applying for and receiving accreditation, a school accepts the responsibility to pay all required fees and meet all obligations as set forth in the *Standards of Accreditation* and the AACSC *Bylaws*.

[3] The Commission will consider GED preparation courses for approval as well as ESL courses that meet the requirements of *Section II (D)(2), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation*.

b. ACCSC is under no obligation to consider any application for accreditation it receives. The Commission establishes eligibility criteria it deems appropriate and may choose not to consider an application for accreditation for any reason.

C. Educational Objectives

1. The school's primary educational objective must be to prepare students for entrance or advancement in one or more occupations requiring technical or career-oriented competencies and skills. Educational objectives must be career oriented and provide graduates with the necessary competencies, skills, and level of education for employment or advancement in their fields of study.
2. A school may have secondary educational objectives other than those described above (e.g., a GED preparation course, refresher training course, avocational courses, continuing education courses, etc.). The inclusion of courses with secondary educational objectives as within the school's institutional scope of accreditation is at the option of the institution.
3. A school may enter into consortium or partnership agreements where a portion of a program is offered by or at an entity other than the ACCSC-accredited institution in accordance with these *Rules* and *Substantive Standards*.
4. A school may enter into contractual arrangements with business, industry, or government agencies for group training purposes.
5. Regardless of any consortium/partnership agreement or contractual arrangement, only programs or courses that have been recognized or approved in accordance with accrediting requirements may be represented as being within the scope of the school's institutional accreditation.

D. Institutional Eligibility Requirements

1. A main school must be a freestanding institution that is a legally established public or private entity (e.g., as a corporation, partnership, sole proprietorship, publicly owned, etc.) and reported as such to the appropriate, necessary, and applicable state and federal agencies and other accrediting agencies. A main school may establish separate facilities (i.e., branch or satellite location) in accordance with *Section VIII, Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation*.
2. A school must describe itself and be recognized consistently by each accrediting agency, state agency, and federal agency with regard to identity (i.e., school name, campus classification, and address), purpose, governance, programs, credentials awarded, personnel, finances, and constituents served, and must keep each agency apprised of any change in its status.
3. A school must be in compliance with all applicable federal, state, and local government requirements. In cases where accrediting standards and federal or state government requirements differ, the more stringent will apply. If conflicts exist between federal or state requirements and accrediting standards, the federal or state requirements will take precedence.
4. In addition to the above requirements, in order for a school to be eligible to apply for, receive, or maintain ACCSC accreditation, a school must demonstrate that it meets the following criteria:
   a. The school and its programs must fall within the Commission's Scope and meet Educational Objectives as stated in these *Rules*.
   b. The school must have all necessary authorizations from the state(s) in which it operates and be in compliance with all applicable local, state, and federal requirements. Schools under investigation or sanction by a local, state, or federal agency may be deemed ineligible to apply for initial accreditation with ACCSC.

c. At the time of initial application, the school may not be subject to a pending or final action (including appeals) taken by a state agency or another accrediting agency to suspend, deny, or withdraw/revoke approval/accreditation within the preceding 12-month period or subject to a Warning, Probation, or Show Cause Order.[4]

d. At the time of application, the school must demonstrate continuous operation[5] for the preceding two consecutive years and must demonstrate an ability to operate continuously thereafter.

e. At the time of initial application, the school must have graduated at least one class of students from the longest program(s) offered during the two-year period preceding its application for accreditation. Prior to a grant of initial accreditation, the school must be able to provide student achievement outcomes for its programs.

f. At the time of initial application, the school must be financially sound with sufficient resources for its proper operation and discharge of its obligations to students. The school must demonstrate two years of operating history through the submission of financial statements that are prepared in accordance with the Instructions for the Preparation and Submission of Financial Statements and Related Information and that show that the school has met the financial tests for initial applicants included in those instructions.

g. The school must offer, at a minimum, at least one program that is 300 clock hours or longer in length.

h. Within the six months prior to submitting an application for accreditation, the school's full-time on-site director or appropriate management team representative (see *Section I (A)(1)(a), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation*) must attend an ACCSC Accreditation Workshop.

i. The school's application for accreditation (initial or renewal) must be materially complete.

E. Summary of the Accreditation Process

Steps in the process of achieving accredited status are as follows:

1. Pre-application: The Pre-Workshop Application for Initial Applicant Schools is required for institutions seeking initial accreditation from ACCSC. The Pre-Workshop Application must be accepted in writing by ACCSC before any representative(s) of a school seeking accreditation from ACCSC is eligible to register for the mandatory Accreditation Workshop.

2. Accreditation Workshop: The full-time, on-site director or appropriate management team representative (see *Section I (A)(1)(a), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation*) of the school must attend an accreditation workshop prior to the submission of the application for accreditation (initial or renewal). If the designated workshop attendee ceases to be employed by the school during the accreditation process (initial or renewal), then the Commission will determine the appropriate steps and timing to require the new/replacement employee to attend an Accreditation Workshop as is practicable.

3. Application: The school must submit a complete application form and fee for each facility to be considered for Commission review.

4. Self-Evaluation Report: The school must complete and provide the Commission with a Self-

[4] For schools formerly accredited by ACCSC that have had accreditation withdrawn, the waiting period to submit an application for accreditation is nine months.
[5] See *Section I (A), Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation* for the definition of continuous operation.

Evaluation Report, which is an assessment of the school's effectiveness in achieving its announced educational objectives and compliance with accreditation standards.

5. Orientation Evaluation (initial applicant schools only): A school receives an Orientation Evaluation as described in *Section II, Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*.
6. On-site Evaluation: A team of experienced professionals evaluates the school on-site to verify the information contained within the Self-Evaluation Report, to seek additional information and to develop an understanding of how well the school meets its educational objectives and the *Standards of Accreditation*.
7. On-Site Evaluation Report: Each member of the on-site evaluation team contributes to the preparation of a factual report of the school's compliance with accreditation standards.
8. Response to the On-Site Evaluation Report: The school has an opportunity to file a response with supporting documentation to the on-site evaluation team's findings cited in the On-Site Evaluation Report. The school is given at least 30 days from the date of the On-Site Evaluation Report to submit a response unless the Commission determines that a different time frame is warranted.
9. Team Leader Comments and Response: The school's response, if any, may be forwarded to the Team Leader who participated in the on-site evaluation for review and comment. If the Team Leader has additional comments, the school is provided with an opportunity to respond to those comments and to submit additional material to be considered by the Commission.
10. Commission Review: The Commission reviews the application for accreditation (initial or renewal), the Self-Evaluation Report, the On-Site Evaluation Report, the school's response, Team Leader comments and the school's response if any, and any additional information collected about the school, which may include reports from government and private agencies.
11. Commission Action: The Commission will take one of the actions described in *Section VII, Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*.
12. Appeal: If the Commission denies or withdraws accreditation, the school may appeal (see *Section VIII, Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*).

F. Obligations of the Institution in Applying for Accreditation

By applying for initial or renewal of accreditation, a school accepts and agrees to the terms set forth in the ACCSC Application for Accreditation and accepts and agrees that the responsibility rests with the school to demonstrate continuous eligibility for accreditation and compliance with accrediting standards and requirements as set forth in the *Standards of Accreditation*.

G. Obligations of the Institution to Maintain Eligibility for Accreditation

1. By applying for and/or receiving accreditation, a school accepts the obligation to demonstrate continuous compliance with the *Standards of Accreditation*. While the Commission employs its own fact-finding methods to determine a school's compliance with accrediting standards, such as an on-site evaluation team's findings, interim monitoring, and review of information provided by third parties, the burden rests with the school to establish that it is meeting the standards. Moreover, the Commission's deliberations and decisions are made on the basis of the written record of an accreditation review. Schools do not have the right to appear before the Commission. Accordingly, a school must supply the Commission with complete, truthful, and accurate information and documentation showing the school's compliance with all accrediting standards if the school is to be granted and maintain accreditation.

2. In order for a school to maintain its eligibility for accreditation, it must:
   a. Comply on a continuous basis with accreditation standards and requirements;
   b. Maintain continuous operation[6] as a school providing education and training to students in accordance with its primary educational objectives and maintain its ability to meet its obligations to students on an ongoing basis;
   c. Fulfill all process, response, directive, reporting, and substantive change requirements;
   d. Maintain all necessary authorizations from the state(s) in which it operates and maintain compliance with all applicable local, state, and federal requirements; and
   e. Pay all sustaining fees, processing fees (including late fees), and on-site evaluation fees as required and on a timely basis.
3. Failure by a school to maintain continued compliance with all ACCSC standards and requirements will lead to the Commission taking appropriate action as described in *Section VII, Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*.
4. Schools may not use accreditation status, reports, or materials in a false or misleading manner. If this occurs, the Commission will require the school to correct the false or misleading information and make public such information that it deems necessary to correct any false or misleading impression created by the school.

H. General Instructions – Submission of Documents to the Commission

1. All submissions and notifications to the Commission must be organized and prepared in accordance with any specific instructions issued by the Commission and with the following specifications. All submissions and notifications must be:
   a. Typewritten, clear, and legible (photocopies must be legible and photographs must be digital originals or clear copies);
   b. Organized and submitted as required by the ACCSC Instructions for Electronic Submission (e.g., prepared using required software, inclusion of navigational bookmarks and hyperlinks, etc.);
   c. Identified with the school's ACCSC reference number and accompanied by a certification statement attesting to the accuracy of the information; and
   d. Uploaded to ACCSC's Electronic Record Management System—submissions and notifications sent via e-mail and not uploaded will not be considered to have met submission or notification requirements.
2. Instructions for completing applications and reports are included on the forms for each process. A school may, upon request, receive special or additional instructions from the ACCSC staff either by telephone, letter, e-mail, or in person at the ACCSC office.
3. ACCSC requires that all documentation be submitted in English or accompanied by an appropriate English translation.
4. All information submitted for Commission consideration must be submitted within required time frames, include fees as required, and be certified as true and correct by the highest ranking official at the school.

[6] See *Section I (A), Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation* for the definition of continuous operation.

5. Late fees will apply to all applications, reports, and responses that have a specific deadline. A late processing fee will be assessed and due the day following the due date of a report, application, or response. A late fee may be reduced if the school has requested an extension prior to the due date and that extension has been granted. A list of schools that have not paid fees in accordance with established requirements will be reported to the Commission at each regularly scheduled meeting and may constitute reason for the Commission to take an action set forth in *Section VII* of these *Rules,* including denial or withdrawal of accreditation.

I. Application Withdrawal

1. A school may withdraw an application it has submitted to ACCSC before the Commission considers it.
2. The withdrawal request must be in writing and sent by a traceable means to the Executive Director of ACCSC.
3. Fees associated with the withdrawn application will not be refunded except the fee for an on-site evaluation that did not occur. Expenses incurred by the Commission as a result of the cancellation of a scheduled on-site evaluation will be borne by the school.

J. Required Reports, Applications, and Fees

1. Required reports and applications must be submitted to the Commission in the manner and within the time frame prescribed in these *Rules* or as prescribed by the Commission.
2. Required processing fees must accompany all reports and applications.
3. Annual sustaining fees must be paid in a timely manner prescribed by the Commission and in accordance with the AACSC *Bylaws*.
4. Failure to provide reports and fees to the Commission may result in an action taken by the Commission consistent with *Section VII* of these *Rules*, including denial or withdrawal of accreditation.

K. Requests for Information

1. The Commission may, at any time, request a school to produce information and documentation that the Commission deems pertinent and relevant. Failure to produce such documentation in the manner and within the time frame established by the Commission may result in action being taken by the Commission, consistent with *Section VII* of these *Rules*, including denial or withdrawal of accreditation.
2. A request for information from the Commission by a school or other entity with standing to make such a request must submit the request in writing by the appropriate official with authority to make the request.

SECTION II – APPLICATION FOR ACCREDITATION AND SELF-EVALUATION

A. Applications for Accreditation

1. Application for Initial Accreditation[1]

   a. The application forms for initial accreditation may be obtained from the ACCSC website.

   b. A school must complete the Pre-Workshop Application for Initial Applicant Schools and receive acceptance in writing from ACCSC before any representative(s) of a school seeking accreditation from ACCSC is eligible to register for the mandatory Accreditation Workshop.

   c. Once the Pre-Workshop Application for Initial Applicant Schools is accepted, the full-time on-site director or appropriate management team representative (see *Section I (A)(1)(a), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation*) must attend an ACCSC Accreditation Workshop prior to the submission of the Application for Initial Accreditation.

   d. The Application for Initial Accreditation is to be submitted to the ACCSC office within six months after workshop attendance. The application must include:

      i. The completed application form;

      ii. All required attachments; and

      iii. The application fee.

   e. The Commission is under no obligation to consider or accept for processing any application for initial accreditation it receives. The Commission establishes eligibility criteria it deems appropriate and may choose not to consider or accept for processing an application for initial accreditation for any reason to include, but not limited to, prior or pending legal actions and investigation(s) by a law enforcement or administrative body; prior or pending administrative actions by an oversight entity; prior accreditation actions and any adverse accreditation decision; a lack of financial soundness; or the background of a school's owner(s), governors, board members, or administrators.

   f. An Application for Initial Accreditation will be accepted for processing only when it is deemed complete and demonstrates that the school meets ACCSC's eligibility criteria and scope requirements set forth therein.

   g. Should a school submit an Application for Initial Accreditation that is incomplete or does not minimally establish that it meets the ACCSC eligibility criteria, the school will be given an opportunity to submit additional information in support of its application (see application expiration below).

   h. Initial applicant schools are expected to comply with the *Standards of Accreditation* as of the date that the school's Application for Initial Accreditation is accepted. Upon acceptance, the school will be instructed on the next steps in the accreditation process, which include, but are not limited to, the submission of revised/updated application materials and a Self-Evaluation Report and undergoing an on-site evaluation.

   i. Orientation Evaluation:

[1] Unaccredited schools or schools accredited by another agency seeking ACCSC accreditation.

i. Unaccredited applicants: For schools seeking ACCSC initial accreditation, an ACCSC staff member will conduct an Orientation Evaluation after the submission of the Application for Initial Accreditation-Part II and the Self-Evaluation Report.

ii. Accredited applicants: For schools accredited by another recognized accrediting agency seeking ACCSC initial accreditation, the Orientation Evaluation is only required when the Commission determines that the school's application for accreditation and Self-Evaluation Report demonstrates that this evaluation is warranted or upon request of the school.

iii. In any instance, the Commission may require an additional Orientation Evaluation if the school's revised application and Self-Evaluation Report submitted after the initial Orientation Evaluation fails to demonstrate that the school is prepared to advance to the next phase of the initial accreditation process.

iv. The required fee for any Orientation Evaluation is borne by the school.

j. An Application for Initial Accreditation will be considered expired when:

i. After being given an opportunity to correct deficiencies, the application cannot be accepted within six months of submission because it is deemed incomplete or fails to minimally establish that the school meets the ACCSC eligibility criteria;

ii. The Self-Evaluation Report is not submitted within six months from the date that the application is accepted;

iii. The school is not ready to receive an Orientation Evaluation within 12 months from the date that the school's application is accepted; or

iv. The school is not ready to receive a full-team on-site evaluation within 24 months from the date that the school's application is accepted.

The expiration of an application is not appealable and there will be no refund of the application fee once an application has expired.

k. The Commission may request and review information pertaining to a school's eligibility for ACCSC accreditation or compliance with accrediting standards at any time during the initial application process and may take any action it deems appropriate in accordance with these *Rules*.

l. For any program included in the Application for Initial Accreditation that is not operational and has no enrollment at the time of the Initial Accreditation On-Site Evaluation, the Commission will not include that program in the school's scope of institutional accreditation unless the school demonstrates that special circumstances exist to otherwise do so.

2. Application for Renewal of Accreditation

a. ACCSC will send sufficient advance notice of required attendance at an ACCSC Accreditation Workshop prior to the expiration of a school's accreditation.

b. The full-time on-site director or appropriate management team representative (see *Section I (A)(1)(a), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation*) must attend an ACCSC Accreditation Workshop prior to the submission of the Application for Renewal of Accreditation.

c. The completed application is due to the ACCSC office within 45 days of attendance at the workshop and must include:

i. The completed application form;

ii. All required attachments; and

iii. The application fee.

d. An Application for Renewal of Accreditation will be accepted only when it is deemed complete and demonstrates compliance with the ACCSC eligibility criteria and scope requirements.

e. If a school submits an Application for Renewal of Accreditation that does not minimally establish that it meets the Commission's eligibility criteria and scope requirements, then the school will be given an opportunity to submit additional information in support of its application.

f. If the resubmitted Application for Renewal of Accreditation cannot be accepted, the Commission will take appropriate action, which may include withdrawal of the school's accreditation. A school whose accreditation is withdrawn in the application process may appeal in accordance with *Section VIII, Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*.

B. Self-Evaluation

1. The Commission's self-evaluation process (i.e., the Self-Evaluation Report) provides an assessment of the entire school, conducted by faculty and students, as well as by the school administration. The self-evaluation process should involve the entire school and provide an opportunity for the staff and faculty of the school, whether it is a small, highly specialized school or a large, departmentalized school, to examine itself and to draft findings and recommendations for its own action. Improvements within a school should be due primarily to its internal efforts rather than to an on-site evaluation by an outside team.
2. The process of self-evaluation is a required element of the accreditation process and is expected to be a significant and ongoing experience. The Commission has an expectation that each school will incorporate the self-evaluation process as a permanent part of its operations.
3. Schools must submit a Self-Evaluation Report to ACCSC in accordance with the time frames established by the process or as directed by the Commission in minimally the following instances:
   a. Initial accreditation;
   b. Renewal of accreditation;
   c. Total re-evaluation of accreditation; and
   d. Change of classification from a branch campus to a main campus.
4. The Commission may require the submission of a Self-Evaluation Report at any time as deemed necessary.
5. Initial and renewal applicants for accreditation may request consultation from the Commission's staff with respect to completion of the Self-Evaluation Report at any time.

SECTION III – THE ON-SITE EVALUATION

A. On-Site Evaluation Requirements

1. The Commission conducts on-site evaluations of applicant and accredited schools as necessary to assist in its determination of compliance with ACCSC standards and requirements.
2. The on-site evaluation is conducted in accordance with the procedures established by the Commission.
3. In all cases, the school is responsible for the costs for on-site evaluations.
4. An on-site evaluation is a required element of the following processes:
    a. Application for accreditation (initial or renewal);
    b. Substantive changes as described in *Section IV, Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*; and
    c. An on-site evaluation may be required on an announced or unannounced basis as necessary to assist in the determination of compliance with ACCSC standards and requirements and in conjunction with any process described in these *Rules*.

B. Categories of On-Site Evaluation

1. Initial Accreditation or Renewal of Accreditation On-Site Evaluation: This is an announced on-site evaluation that is conducted by a full team of evaluators. This category of evaluation is carried out as part of the processes outlined in these *Rules*.
2. Substantive Change On-Site Evaluation: This is an announced on-site evaluation that is carried out as part of the processes outlined in *Section IV, Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation.*
3. Commission-Directed On-Site Evaluation: At the direction of the Commission or the Executive Committee, a special evaluation or fact-finding, announced or unannounced, on-site evaluation to determine prior and continuing compliance will be conducted.
4. Regular Unannounced On-Site Evaluation: The Commission conducts Regular Unannounced On-Site Evaluations to a limited number of its accredited institutions on an annual basis as a means to monitor compliance with accrediting standards.

C. On-Site Evaluation: Scope and Purpose

1. The purpose of an on-site evaluation is to verify data in the school's reports, applications, responses, and any other information submitted to the Commission; seek additional information; and, in general, develop an understanding and perform an assessment of how well the school meets its objectives and the *Standards of Accreditation*.
2. For an on-site evaluation, the school is evaluated according to all available information, such as but not limited to:
    a. Documentation included in the school's reports, applications, responses, and any other information submitted to the Commission required for the specific on-site evaluation;
    b. Information provided by the school to demonstrate compliance with accreditation standards;

c. Interviews and surveys of the administration, instructors, other school employees, students, graduates, and employers of graduates;

d. Observations of classes, management, and administration of the school; and

e. Documentation of the student achievement data reported to the Commission.

3. For a Regular Unannounced On-Site Evaluation, the school's ongoing compliance with the *Standards of Accreditation* is evaluated. Generally, a Regular Unannounced On-Site Evaluation will cover areas such as facilities; student surveys; file reviews; interviews with key personnel; verification of Annual Report data; and a review of the school's catalog, enrollment agreement, and current advertising. If the Commission has received any complaint regarding a school, the area(s) covered by the complaint(s) could be included in the scope of the review as well. The scope of the Regular Unannounced On-Site Evaluation may be expanded as questions or findings regarding the school's compliance with accrediting standards arise.

D. On-Site Evaluators

1. ACCSC compiles and maintains a list of qualified on-site evaluators and, to the extent practicable, will match their qualifications with the schools they evaluate. Each team will include an ACCSC staff member and may include evaluators from the following categories as determined by the Commission (represented constituency group):

   a. Team Leader/Management Specialist (administration);

   b. Education Specialist (academics);

   c. Occupation Specialist/Subject Matter Specialist (education/practice/workforce); and

   d. Distance Education Specialist (academics).

2. An ACCSC staff member will accompany the team during all on-site evaluations to ensure consistency, provide technical assistance and interpretative guidance on accreditation standards and rules, and serve as the liaison between the on-site evaluation team and the Commission.

3. The Team Leader is responsible for the completion of the on-site evaluation in accordance with the Commission's process and procedures and ensures that each team member performs the assigned functions.

4. Team members must comply with the ACCSC Evaluator Code of Conduct and other requirements as stated in the Commission's policies. Evaluators who fail to comply may be removed from the list.

E. Function of On-Site Evaluators

1. The on-site evaluation provides an opportunity for discussion among the evaluator(s) and school officials, faculty, staff, students, and other relevant individuals, including members of the school's program advisory committee(s). Evaluation team members do not recommend action to the Commission; this function is reserved to the Commission.

2. Team members volunteer as experienced professionals, not as representatives of their institutions or businesses.

3. In the case of an on-site evaluation conducted in relation to an application for accreditation (initial or renewal) or substantive change applications, the function of the evaluators is to evaluate independently and to verify: the information submitted by the school, the school's success in

meeting announced objectives and demonstrating successful student achievement, and the school's compliance with the *Standards of Accreditation*.

4. In the case of an on-site evaluation conducted in relation to an application for a substantive change, in addition to the areas described above, the team will also evaluate any adverse effect the substantive change may have/has had on the capacity of the school to meet the *Standards of Accreditation*.
5. For Commission Directed On-Site Evaluations or other cases, the function of the evaluators will be to review the school's ongoing compliance with accreditation standards and requirements and as specifically directed by the Commission.
6. The on-site evaluation team has an expectation of privacy and as such a school must provide a dedicated space that allows the team to conduct its review and deliberations in private.

F. On-Site Evaluations: Notice of Team Members to School

1. Upon appointment of the on-site evaluation team, except in the case of unannounced on-site evaluations, the school will be promptly notified of the names of the prospective team members. A school may not request a specific individual to serve as a member of the team.
2. If any conflicts of the types prohibited by the ACCSC Evaluator Code of Conduct exist, the school's representative must make this known to the Commission. All notices of this nature must be submitted to the Executive Director of ACCSC and must state clearly the reasons the school believes that a conflict of interest exists.
3. If the school has other grounds to believe that a member of the team presents a conflict of interest, does not meet the qualifications for an on-site evaluator, or that other good cause exists, it may request that ACCSC replaces that team member. All notices of this nature must be submitted to the Executive Director and must state clearly the school's reasons.
4. If the Executive Director of ACCSC determines that good cause exists for replacing the team member, the team member will be replaced.
5. Except in the case of unannounced on-site evaluations (regular or Commission-directed), written confirmation will be sent to the school once team members have been approved.

G. Observers

1. A person with direct interest in the licensure or accreditation of ACCSC-accredited schools will be permitted to accompany an on-site evaluation team as an observer. Such observers will have no role in the on-site evaluation process. The Commission will not be responsible for the cost of attendance for such observers.
2. ACCSC Commissioners, staff, and team members will be permitted to accompany an on-site evaluation team as an observer for training purposes. Such observers may have a role in the on-site evaluation process. The Commission will be responsible for the cost of attendance for ACCSC Commissioner, staff, and team member observers.

H. On-Site Evaluations: Date and Postponement or Cancellation

1. Except in the case of unannounced on-site evaluations, the date(s) of the on-site evaluation will be scheduled in consultation between ACCSC and the school such that the designated representatives responsible for the school's day-to-day operations and accreditation can be present at the school during the on-site evaluation.

2. A team on-site evaluation takes as much time as is required to ensure completeness of the review of the school.
3. A request for the postponement or cancellation of an approved on-site evaluation date must be made in writing to the Executive Director of ACCSC within a reasonable time prior to the scheduled on-site evaluation date and must describe in detail the facts and circumstances that necessitate the postponement or cancellation. Such requests will be granted only in extraordinary circumstances and for good cause shown. Expenses to the Commission as a result of a postponement or cancellation will be borne by the school.
4. In the unusual event that a member of the on-site evaluation is unable to join the team or needs to leave early, ACCSC and the school have the option of postponing the on-site evaluation, using a substitute evaluator, or having the partial team conduct its portion of the evaluation. In this latter case, the remaining portion of the evaluation will be conducted by the absent team member(s) as soon as practicable. The accreditation status of the school does not change pending the rescheduling of all or part of the on-site evaluation. Any additional costs attributable to use of a substitute or postponement of all or part of the on-site evaluation will be borne by the Commission.

I. On-Site Evaluation Summary Review

At the conclusion of an on-site evaluation, whenever practicable, the team may at its discretion hold an On-site Evaluation Summary Review meeting with the school's director, manager, and any other staff the school's director wishes to have present. During this meeting, the team will present a summary of its preliminary report in relation to the school's compliance with accreditation standards.

J. The On-Site Evaluation Report

1. The On-Site Evaluation Report is a factual report and summary of the on-site evaluation team's findings as to the school's compliance with accrediting standards. Each member of the on-site evaluation team contributes to the On-Site Evaluation Report for those phases of the on-site evaluation for which the member is responsible. The On-Site Evaluation Report represents the combined findings of the team.
2. In all cases, the On-Site Evaluation Report specifies the date of the on-site evaluation, reason for the on-site evaluation, location of the school, programs offered by the school and the number of clock hours or credits in each program included within the scope of the school's accreditation, and any finding where the on-site evaluation team could not verify compliance with an accrediting standard.
3. The on-site evaluation team provides a specific reference to the applicable standard and cites evidence that led to the on-site evaluation team's conclusion for any finding where the team could not verify compliance with an accrediting standard. The On-Site Evaluation Report may include additional findings, recommendations for improvement, requests for information, and other inquiries.

K. Response to the On-Site Evaluation Report

1. The On-Site Evaluation Report is sent to the school within a reasonable time frame after the on-site evaluation.
2. The school has an opportunity to respond to the On-Site Evaluation Report and to submit any information and documentation that the school may wish to place before the Commission in order to demonstrate compliance with accreditation standards. The school is given at least 30 days from

the date of the On-Site Evaluation Report to submit a response unless the Commission determines that a different time frame is warranted. If no response to the On-Site Evaluation Report is received from the school, the On-Site Evaluation Report is forwarded to the Commission without response.

3. If a Team Leader participated in the on-site evaluation, then the school's response may be forwarded to the Team Leader for review and comment.
4. The Commission provides the school with a copy of the Team Leader's comments, if applicable, and is given a further opportunity to provide a response and additional comments or information for review by the Commission.

SECTION IV – NON-SUBSTANTIVE AND SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE NOTIFICATION AND APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

A. Changes Requiring Notification

A school must notify the Commission of the following:

1. Any consortium, partnership, or contractual agreements with other schools or training providers in advance of such agreements 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 Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*;
3. The voluntary discontinuation of any previously approved program or voluntary closure of any previously approved separate facility; and
4. Non-substantive and substantive changes in advance of such changes taking effect or being implemented in accordance with the provisions set forth in these *Rules*.

B. Non-Substantive Changes

1. Facility Expansion: Main Schools and branch campuses may expand facilities into either contiguous space or non-contiguous space. Satellite locations may only expand into contiguous space under this non-substantive change provision. A facility expansion must ensure ready access to all resources and services for students (e.g., advising, testing, learning resources, financial aid, placement assistance, etc.). The Commission considers any expansion into space that is more than one mile away to be a separate facility. This requires the filing of the appropriate separate facility application in accordance with the requirements set forth in these *Rules*.
    a. Facility Expansion Report: Schools seeking the approval of the expansion of a facility must notify the Commission at least 30 days prior to the expansion by submitting a Facility Expansion Report with appropriate supporting documentation. The Commission will notify the school in writing of the approval of the facility expansion.
    b. Substantive Change: The expansion of a facility that results in a substantive change as set forth in these *Rules* (e.g., the addition of a new unrelated program or a change of mission or objectives) also requires the filing of a substantive change application and may require an on-site evaluation.
2. Non-Substantive 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 non-substantive. The school must notify the Commission in writing of the change by filing the Program Modification Report for Non-Substantive 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 non-substantive. One of the schools where the non-substantive 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 Non-Substantive 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.

3. Continuing Education Courses and Avocational Courses: Schools may apply for courses with continuing education and avocational educational objectives to be included in the school's scope of institutional accreditation. This requires the filing of the Application for Continuing Education and Avocational Courses in accordance with the requirements set forth in that application.

C. Substantive Changes

1. A school must apply to the Commission for and receive prior approval of any proposed substantive change described below. The Commission's review of the application seeks to determine whether the substantive change adversely affects the capacity of the school to continue to meet the *Standards of Accreditation*. Failure to apply for and obtain Commission approval prior to implementing a substantive change may result in withdrawal of accreditation or other action described in *Section VII, Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*.
2. The Commission considers the following to be substantive changes to an educational institution:
   a. Level I – Staff Level Approval:
      i. A change of name (with the exception of the use of "University");
      ii. A change of location (25 miles or less);
      iii. The addition of a new non-degree program;
      iv. The addition of a new degree program that does not represent a change in academic level;
      v. A change in the academic measurement of an educational program from clock hours to credit hours, credit hours to clock hours, type of academic year, or time-based / non-time-based methods (e.g., calendar-based to competency-based or vice-versa, etc.);
      vi. A substantial change in the number of clock hours or credit hours required for the successful completion of a program;
      vii. A significant departure in the method of delivery of the school's programs, including the addition of distance education modalities;
      viii. An expansion of distance education modalities;
      ix. The addition of a distance education facility that does not provide training;
      x. A transfer of a minority interest or a transfer of ownership interest within an immediate family;[1]
      xi. A request to add a branch campus (eligibility level review[2]) or to realign branch campus designations;
      xii. A consortium and/or partnership agreement with another school/entity (accredited or unaccredited) for the delivery of less than 50% of the total clock or credit hours of a program; and
      xiii. An Institutional Teach-Out Agreement (unless the agreement establishes a permanent separate facility).

[1] Please refer to change of control/ownership exclusions as described in these *Rules.*
[2] The approval of a branch campus within the scope of a main's school's accreditation is a level II substantive change.

b. Level II – Commission Level Approval:

i. A change of mission or educational objectives;

ii. A change of control, a change in legal status, or a change in the form of control (with the exception of a transfer of ownership interest within an immediate family—see Level I substantive changes above);

iii. The acquisition of any other institution or any program or location of another institution;

iv. A relocation (a change of location greater than 25 miles);

v. The use of the term "University" in the school's name;

vi. An addition of a new degree program that represents a change in academic level at the institution – non-degree to degree, occupational to academic, or a higher credential;

vii. An Application for a Master's Degree;

viii. An addition of a branch campus or other separate facility;

ix. An Institutional Teach-Out Agreement that establishes a permanent separate facility; and

x. A consortium/partnership agreement with another school/entity (accredited or unaccredited) for the delivery of 50% or more of the total clock or credit hours of a program.

D. Substantive Change Review and Approval Process

1. Applications: Schools must submit the appropriate substantive change application in accordance with the applicable filing requirements before undertaking any substantive change. (See *Section VII (K, L, & M), Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation* for substantive change application restrictions for schools operating under a Warning, Probation, or Show Cause Order).

2. Application Content: The school must provide sufficient information to allow an assessment of its capacity to undertake the proposed substantive change.

3. Review Process: A proposed substantive change generally will be reviewed within 30-60 days of the Commission's receipt of an appropriate application. Upon completion of this review, the school will be notified that the substantive change is approved, that additional information is required, or that the proposed change requires further consideration by the Commission. Once the substantive change has been approved, the school will receive written notification of the approval. The date of the Commission's correspondence will serve as the effective date of the approval.

4. Expiration Date: An application that requires additional information to complete the review and approval process will expire 90 days from the initial date that the school is notified of any deficiency in the application.

5. Effect of an Incomplete Application: If an application is materially incomplete such that it cannot be processed, the school will be informed of the reasons and the application will be returned to the school.

6. Scope of Review: The Commission may utilize a range of resources in evaluating proposed substantive changes to include ACCSC staff, Commissioners, and subject matter or other specialists.

7. Capacity On-site Evaluations: At the Commission's discretion, an on-site evaluation may be directed to determine a school's capacity to undertake the proposed substantive change and to

maintain compliance with accrediting standards. Upon review of the on-site evaluation report and the school's response to that report, the Commission will decide whether to include the proposed substantive change within the school's scope of accreditation.

8. Reevaluation: At its discretion, the Commission may approve a substantive change subject to the school undergoing a total accreditation reevaluation.

9. Effect of Substantive Changes: Changes to a school may be so substantial that the Commission may conclude that the school must undergo a total re-evaluation[3] in order to ensure the sufficient continuity of the accredited school and that the school maintains continuous compliance with accrediting standards. Such substantive changes include, but are not limited to:

   a. A significant change of mission or educational objectives sought within two years of a change of ownership and change of control;

   b. Any relocation coupled with a change of mission or educational objectives;

   c. A change of classification from a branch campus to a main school;

   d. Any change that results in the transition to a 100% distance education institution; or

   e. The accumulation of changes or other circumstances and where the Commission concludes that the school to which it granted accreditation has effectively ceased to operate under the conditions upon which the Commission based the grant of accreditation.

   The Commission reserves the right to take any appropriate action as set forth in *Section VII* of these *Rules* with regard to such changes.

E. Substantive Change Application Requirements

1. Change of Mission or Educational Objectives

   The Commission encourages schools to review continuously their institutional mission and educational objectives and to modify these as necessary for the effective delivery of the school's educational program. When a school seeks to change its mission or educational objectives substantively, that school must be able to demonstrate its ability to support the proposed change. A substantive change of mission or educational objectives may occur when the cumulative effect of other substantive changes (e.g., change of ownership, change of name, change of location, the addition of new programs or credentials, etc.) alters the original mission or educational objectives of the school. A school seeking to change its mission or educational objectives substantively must receive approval in accordance with the substantive change provisions and through the filing of an Application for a Change of Mission or Educational Objectives. A substantive change of mission or educational objectives will be approved only if it is determined that there is a substantial likelihood that the change will result in continuous compliance with accrediting standards and will ultimately bring about positive results for the school's student population and not detract from the education provided at the school.

2. Change of Control and Change of Ownership[4]

   Control is the ultimate ability to direct or cause the direction of the actions of a school. A change of control of an accredited school requires approval of a transfer of accreditation to the new controlling entity prior to the consummation of the change of control.

[3] A total re-evaluation means undergoing the complete initial or renewal of accreditation process as described in these *Rules*.
[4] See the Application for a Change of Control-Part I and the Modification of Ownership Report for specific requirements and examples.

In such a case, the Commission reviews a proposed transfer of accreditation to determine whether there is a substantial likelihood that the school will remain in compliance with accrediting standards after the change of control. If the school fails to obtain the Commission's approval prior to the change of control, the accreditation of the school will not transfer. Consummation of a change of control without the Commission's prior approval will result in withdrawal of the accreditation of the school effective as of the date of the change of control. Appropriate state and federal agencies will be notified.

a. General Definition of Change of Control: Any transaction, combination of transactions, or change in governance that would result in a new individual, group, or entity having ultimate control of an accredited school as defined above.

b. Examples of Transactions Considered to Be a Change of Ownership and Control: The examples listed below are illustrative only. Even if a transaction is not described in this list of examples, it will be considered a change of control requiring prior Commission approval if it meets the general definition of a change of control stated above.

   i. A change of ownership that results in a new individual, group, or entity owning the majority interest in the ownership entity (e.g., a corporation).

   ii. The sale or transfer of a majority of the school's assets.

   iii. The sale or assignment of the controlling interest of the voting stock of a corporation that owns the school or that controls the school through one or more subsidiaries, whether to persons who have not previously owned such stock or between existing stockholders.

   iv. The merger or consolidation of the school with one or more other schools or the merger or consolidation of the corporation that owns or controls the school with one or more other corporations.

   v. An independent corporation owning a school that becomes a subsidiary of another corporation with different ownership.

   vi. A conversion of the school's ownership to or from a for-profit from or to a non-profit corporation or a conversion to or from a private ownership entity from or to a public ownership entity.

   vii. Changes to public companies and non-profit organizations as set forth below.

   viii. The assignment of the controlling interest of the school to a new party/entity that would result through a bankruptcy, receivership, or similar proceeding.

   ix. Exercising a right to acquire control (through ownership or otherwise) through any agreement, option, warrant, or other means.

c. Change of Control through Ownership: A proposed transfer of accreditation as a result of a change of ownership and control will be approved only if it is determined that the proposed new owners, governing entity (e.g., Board of Directors), and managers have records of integrity and the capability to own and operate a school in accordance with the *Standards of Accreditation*, that the financial structure of the school will remain sound with sufficient resources for the operation of the school and discharge of obligations to students, and that the school will otherwise remain in continuous compliance with accrediting standards.

d. Change of Control for Public Companies: The Commission recognizes that defining control of companies with stock that is publicly traded in securities markets and registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) may involve additional considerations. Thus,

while the general definition of a change of control still applies, in applying that definition to public companies that control accredited schools, the Commission will also consider a change of control to occur if a person or other entity:

i. Acquires 25% or more of the voting stock of the corporation and has the ability to exercise control over its management and operations;

ii. Holds more than 25% of the voting stock and sells stock such that the person or other entity then holds less than 25% and loses the ability to exercise control over management and operations; or

iii. Is considered to have acquired or lost control under the securities laws.

Ability to exercise control for public companies: A person will be considered to have the ability to exercise control over management and operations if the person is a member of the board of directors, has the ability to elect or designate members of the board, or is a member of senior management. In addition to the notification requirements explained below, public companies must promptly notify the Commission of filings with the SEC that report significant acquisitions of their stock.

e. Change of Control for Non-profit Organizations: Control of a non-profit organization rests with its members if it is a membership organization and the members have the right to elect the board of directors. Control of a non-profit organization rests with the board of directors if it is not a membership organization.

i. In addition to the application of the general definition and the examples listed in *Section IV (E)(2)(a-b), Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation* above, a non-profit organization will be considered to have a change of control if fundamental changes are made to its governance structure or if more than two-thirds of its board changes within a 12-month period.

ii. The Commission will not approve a change of control transaction which would allow for an individual/entity/group (owner or manager) that would have a financial interest[5] in the non-profit organization to be a board member, have a Board seat, or be a member of the non-profit corporation.

f. Change/Modification in Ownership Not Resulting in a Change of Control:

i. A change in ownership that results in a less than 10% change but does not result in a change of control requires the submission of written notification to the Commission at least 10 days prior to the transaction.

ii. A change in ownership that results in a 10% or greater change but does not result in a change of control requires the submission of a Modification of Ownership Report at least 30 days prior to the transaction.

iii. A transaction whereby the ownership entity/ies changes but the same party/ies who had the ability to control the actions of the school (i.e., majority ownership interest) retain/s that ability after the transaction does not constitute a change of control but does require the submission of a Modification of Ownership Report at least 30 days prior to the transaction.

[5] Financial interest in this context means instances when an individual could receive financial benefit or harm from the school's operations (e.g., an individual to whom the school owes debt, an individual that has a business or contractual relationship with the school, etc.). Financial interest in this context does not refer to a board member fulfilling fiduciary duties and responsibilities on behalf of the non-profit organization.

g. Change of Control Application Exclusions: The following are not considered changes of control that require approval through the filing of a change of control application.

   i. A transfer of ownership or control within an immediate family:[6] Intra-family transactions require the submission of a Modification of Ownership Report at least thirty (30) days prior to the transaction. Through the submission of this report, the school must describe with supporting documentation how the new owner is qualified to operate an accredited postsecondary educational institution. Based upon a review of this report, the Commission, at its discretion, may take or direct action that it believes necessary, proper, and fair to ensure the school's ongoing compliance. The Commission is not obligated to approve the change of ownership if the change does not demonstrate ongoing compliance with *Section I (A)(1), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation*.

   ii. A transfer of ownership or control within an immediate family due to death: An intra-family transaction due to the death of an owner requires the submission of a Modification of Ownership Report within thirty (30) days after the death of the previous owner(s). Through the submission of this report, the school must describe with supporting documentation how the new owner is qualified to operate an accredited postsecondary educational institution. Based upon a review of this report, the Commission, at its discretion, may take or direct action that it believes necessary, proper, and fair to ensure the school's ongoing compliance. The Commission is not obligated to approve the change of ownership or control if the change does not demonstrate ongoing compliance with *Section I (A)(1), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation*. If the Commission opts to not approve the change of ownership, the penalty for failing to receive advance approval of the change of ownership or control set forth below shall not apply, however, the school will be required to demonstrate compliance with *Section I (A)(1), Substantive Standards, Standards*.

   iii. Unexercised or inchoate options, warrants, and other rights to acquire ownership/ controlling interests are generally not considered in determining current ownership/control. However, should any such option or right to acquire control—through ownership, interest, or otherwise—be exercised the school must file a change of control application and receive advance approval in accordance with these *Rules*.

   iv. A change in the members of the board of directors of a public company through the regular exercise of stockholders' franchise except as set forth in the definition of a Change of Control for Public Companies above.

   v. A change in the membership of the board of directors or governing board of a non-profit corporation through the regular exercise of the bylaws of that corporation and normal expiration of board member terms except as set forth in the definition of a Change of Control for Non-profit Organizations above.

h. Acquisitions: If an ACCSC-accredited school acquires any other institution or any program or location of another institution, then the school must obtain approval to do so by filing the Application for an Acquisition. An Application for a Change of Control or a Modification of Ownership Report may also be required, depending on the circumstances of the acquisition.

i. Application for a Change of Control-Part I, Notification and Filing Requirements:

[6] Members of the immediate family for this purpose of this section are parents, spouses, siblings, and children of the existing or previous owner(s).

i. Notification: A minimum of 45 days before the change is proposed to take place, a school seeking to change ownership must submit an Application for a Change of Control-Part I and all required attachments.

ii. Application Content: The Application for a Change of Control-Part I must provide sufficient information to allow an assessment of the school's projected financial resources and position and the management and administrative capacity under the proposed new controlling individual, group, or entity and explain the financing of the proposed transaction. The application must demonstrate, among other things, that the background and qualifications of the proposed owners, board members, and managers and the available resources and financial position will positively contribute to the school's ability to meet accrediting standards in an ongoing manner post change of control.

j. Commission Action on an Application for a Change of Control-Part I: Upon review of the Application for a Change of Control-Part I, the Commission may take one of the following actions:

i. Approve the transfer of accreditation;

ii. Defer the matter for further consideration;

iii. Deny the transfer of accreditation; or

iv. Take any other action deemed appropriate pursuant to these *Rules*.

k. Failure to Obtain Advance Approval:

i. Failure to obtain approval of the transfer of accreditation in advance of the change of control will result in the withdrawal of the school's accreditation and removal of the school from the list of ACCSC-accredited schools as of the date that the change of control occurred.

ii. The Commission may not exercise this provision should the failure to obtain advance approval be the result of the death of a controlling party. Should such a death occur, the new controlling party will be required to submit an Application for a Change of Control or a Modification of Ownership Report as applicable within 30 days of the change of control. The Commission is not obligated to approve the change of control if the change does not demonstrate ongoing compliance with accrediting standards.

l. Failure to Obtain Approval from another Regulatory Agency: If a school fails to secure or is denied approval of a change of control/ownership from another oversight regulatory agency (e.g., a state or federal agency) after ACCSC has approved the change, the Commission will reconsider its approval action and may void that action and revert its approval back to the original control structure or take some other appropriate action.

m. Change of Ownership Approval Expiration: The approval of a change of control expires if the transaction is not completed within 90 days from the date disclosed in the Application for a Change of Control-Part I. Once expired, a school must submit a new Application for a Change of Control-Part I, to include the application processing fee.

n. Appeals: A denial of a transfer of accreditation, or a withdrawal of accreditation because of an unapproved change of control, may be appealed in accordance with the procedures set forth in *Section VIII, Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*.

o. Confidentiality: All information supplied to the Commission by a school and its prospective owners as part of the change-of-control review process will be treated as confidential in

accordance with accrediting standards. Accordingly, confidentiality or non-disclosure agreements between the parties to a proposed change of control will not excuse noncompliance with the Commission's advance approval requirements for changes of control.

p. Application for a Change of Control-Part II, Notification and Filing Requirements:

   i. Schools that receive Commission approval for the proposed transfer of accreditation must file an Application for a Change of Control-Part II within 45 days after the consummation of the change of control.

   ii. On-Site Evaluation: An on-site evaluation of the school will be conducted within six months of the date that the control change occurred. The on-site evaluation will be undertaken by, at a minimum, an ACCSC Team Leader and ACCSC staff member. An on-site evaluation report will be prepared and provided to the school for a response.

q. Commission Actions Following the On-Site Evaluation: Upon review of the Change of Control On-site Evaluation Report and the school's response to the report, the Commission will take one of the following actions:

   i. Continue the school's accreditation under the new control structure;

   ii. Defer the matter for further consideration;

   iii. Take any other action that it deems appropriate; or

   iv. If a school fails to demonstrate that it is operating in compliance with accrediting standards under the new control structure, the Commission may vote to remove the school from the list of ACCSC-accredited schools or take other appropriate action in accordance with these *Rules*.

r. Total Re-Evaluation: In all cases, when the length of time remaining in the school's term of accreditation post transaction is greater than 24 months, the Commission will require the school and any separate facilities to undergo a total re-evaluation, unless the school can show good cause as to why a total re-evaluation is unwarranted. A total re-evaluation of the school will require the school's director to attend the next scheduled Accreditation Workshop, the submission of an Application for Renewal of Accreditation and Self-Evaluation Report, the submission of all required fees, and a full-team on-site evaluation as prescribed by *Section III, Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation.*

s. Restrictions:

   i. A school may not apply for a change of control when the proposed new owner is currently in a separate change of control/ownership process with ACCSC unless the school and proposed new owner can demonstrate that good cause exists to allow a new change of control/ownership application in advance of the completion of the pending process (i.e., acceptance of the Change of Control On-Site Evaluation Report).

   ii. A school that undergoes a change of control may not relocate beyond 25 miles within a two-year period from the date that the change of control occurred.

   iii. A school that relocates beyond 25 miles may not apply for a change of control for a period of two years from the date that the Commission approved the relocation.

   iv. A main school may not apply for a change of mission or educational objectives or for accreditation of a branch campus within one year following the Commission's recognition of a transfer of accreditation resulting from the change of control, unless the main school

can show good cause why it should be allowed to apply for such a substantive change in a shorter time frame.

v. A school that is subject to a Warning, Probation, or Show Cause Order may only seek the Commission's approval for the transfer of accreditation that would result from a change of control by showing good cause exists to allow for the change. In order to have the change of control application considered, the school and the proposed new owner must demonstrate that the proposed change of control would substantially resolve the issues cited in the Warning, Probation, or Show Cause Order. If the Commission determines that such a showing has been made and permits the change of control and transfer of accreditation, the school will still be required to respond to the pending Warning, Probation, or Show Cause Order and must demonstrate that the school has come into compliance with accrediting standards such that the Warning, Probation, or Show Cause Order can be lifted.

3. School Name

   a. Change of Name:

      i. A school must notify the Commission of its intent to change its name at least 30 days prior to the change taking place by filing an Application for a Change of Name-Part I. The school is not authorized to use the new name until it has received approval from the Commission to do so.

      ii. The school must file an Application for Change of Name-Part II within 30 days after the school receives the state license showing the new name.

   b. A school seeking to use the term "University" in its name must submit the Application for Use of "University" in School Name and may only use University in its name once it has been approved by the appropriate state authorities and upon approval by the Commission.[7]

      i. A school must file the Application for Use of "University" in School Name-Part I at least 45 days prior to the intended use. The school is not authorized to use the term University in its name until it has received approval from the Commission to do so.

      ii. A school must file the Application for Use of "University" in School Name-Part II within 30 days after the school receives the state license showing the new name.

4. Change of Location and Relocation

   a. Definitions:

      i. A change of location occurs when an institution moves its facility from one location to another that is 25 miles or less from the former location.

      ii. A relocation occurs when an institution moves its facility from one location to another that is more than 25 miles from the former location.

   b. Requirements for Changes of Location and Relocations:

      i. A school seeking to relocate must have been accredited under current ownership for a minimum of two years (see *Section IV (E)(2)(s)(ii-iii), Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*).

[7] An initial applicant with the term University in its name will be required to demonstrate compliance with the Commission's standards for such use, including approval by the appropriate state authorities, as part of the initial accreditation process.

ii. A school must move substantially all of its operations, including programs, administration, staff, faculty, and equipment. A school that does not move equipment must demonstrate that equivalent or improved equipment will be available at the new location.

iii. A school must demonstrate in the applications that educational delivery will not be interrupted and that all students at the current location will complete their training, either at the new location or through alternative accommodation(s).

iv. A school should schedule its move to minimize any interruption to the education and training provided to students.

c. Approval Process:

i. The school must apply to the Commission at least 60 days prior to its intended move date by filing an Application for a Change of Location-Part I. The school is not authorized to change location or relocate until the application has been approved by the Commission regardless of when the application is submitted to the Commission office.

ii. Change of Location: Change of location applications will be reviewed and acknowledged by Commission staff. A school that is granted approval to change location will be required to undergo an on-site evaluation by Commission staff within six months of the move to ensure that the school has remained in continuous compliance with accrediting standards and that educational delivery and student services have not been interrupted.

iii. Relocation: A proposed relocation must be approved by the full Commission before the relocation occurs. A school that is granted approval to relocate will be required to receive an on-site evaluation team (Team Leader and ACCSC staff member) within 90 days of the relocation to ensure that the school has remained in continuous compliance with accrediting standards and that educational delivery and student services have not been interrupted.

iv. Within 30 days following the move, the school is required to submit an Application for a Change of Location-Part II.

d. Commission Actions on Change of Location and Relocations:

i. At its discretion, the Commission may require the school, as a condition of approval, to undergo a complete accreditation re-evaluation, including attendance at an Accreditation Workshop, submission of an Application for Renewal of Accreditation and Self-Evaluation Report, and receipt of an on-site evaluation team.

ii. Failure to obtain approval of a change of location or relocation in advance of the move may result in the removal of the school from the list of ACCSC-accredited schools as of the date of the relocation.

iii. A school that is denied approval of a proposed change of location or relocation or whose accreditation is withdrawn for failure to request approval of the change of location or relocation in advance, may appeal the decision of the Commission in accordance with the procedures set forth in *Section VIII, Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*.

e. Restrictions: A change of ownership and transfer of accreditation will not be approved by the Commission within two years of a relocation.

5. Separate Facilities

a. Branch Campus

i. Branch Campus Eligibility:

1. A main school must have sufficient financial and managerial resources to operate every branch campus for which an application is submitted to and approved by the Commission.

2. A main school must have been accredited as such for one year before it may seek accreditation for a branch campus, unless the main school can show good cause why it should be allowed to apply for a branch campus in a shorter time frame. A branch campus need not have a history of prior operation in order to seek accreditation as a separate facility, except as described in number 3 immediately below.

3. A branch campus seeking initial accreditation as part of the main school's Application for Initial Accreditation must meet all criteria for eligibility as stated in these *Rules*. If, however, the main school and branch campus are institutionally accredited by a U.S. Department of Education-recognized accrediting agency at the time that an application is submitted to ACCSC, then the requirement for two years of operational history will not apply to the branch campus. A branch campus of a main school seeking initial accreditation must go through the entire accreditation process with the main school, submitting its own Application for Initial Accreditation and Self-Evaluation Report.

4. A main school may apply for accreditation of only one branch campus within any 12-month period, unless the main school can demonstrate that it is otherwise eligible to apply for a branch campus, is currently in compliance with accrediting standards, can demonstrate past success in operating separate facilities, and can show good cause why it should be allowed to apply for a branch campus in a shorter time frame.

5. A main school may not apply for accreditation of a branch campus within one year following the Commission's recognition of a transfer of accreditation resulting from the change of control, unless the main school can show good cause why it should be allowed to apply for a branch campus in a shorter time frame.

6. A main school subject to a Warning, Probation, or Show Cause Order may not apply for accreditation or approval of a branch campus.

7. A main school subject to Reporting for issues related to financial soundness, student achievement, or adequacy of management must show good cause why it should be allowed to apply for a branch campus in advance of submitting an Application for a Branch Campus.

ii. Branch Campus Application: A main school seeking to establish a branch campus must submit an Application for a Branch Campus-Part I and an Application for a Branch Campus-Part II with all required and supporting documentation. Initial approval of a branch campus within the scope of the accreditation of a main school will be granted only after all required information is submitted and the main school has appropriately demonstrated its ability to establish a branch campus. The main school will receive formal notification of the approval or denial of a branch campus application. A decision to deny approval of a branch campus may be appealed in accordance with *Section VIII, Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*.

iii. Branch Campus On-site Evaluation: A main school and the branch campus that is granted initial approval of accreditation will be required to undergo an on-site evaluation by, at a minimum, an ACCSC Team Leader and an ACCSC staff member within six months of the start of the first class at the branch campus separate facility.

iv. Alternative Branch Campus Application Process: The Commission reserves the right to require an on-site evaluation of the main school, the proposed branch campus, or both prior to the grant of initial recognition of accreditation. The on-site evaluation team will consist of, at a minimum, an ACCSC Team Leader and an ACCSC staff member. A main school and branch campus that are required to undergo an on-site evaluation prior to the initial grant of accreditation will not be required to undergo another on-site evaluation by an ACCSC Team Leader and an ACCSC staff member within six months of the start of the first class at the branch campus separate facility as described above.

v. Commission Consideration of Branch Campus Applications: If the Commission has directed a pre-approval on-site evaluation as described in these *Rules*, the Commission will consider the main school's applications, the On-Site Evaluation Reports, the school's responses, and all other information properly before it, and vote to grant or deny accreditation to the branch campus. The Commission's decision will be reported to the main school in writing and to the appropriate state and federal agencies if accreditation is granted. The denial of a branch campus application may be appealed as set forth in *Section VIII, Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*.

vi. Duration of Initial Grant of Accreditation: The initial grant of accreditation to the branch campus will be for no longer than two years in duration from the date of initial recognition.

vii. Branch Campus Approval Expiration: The approval of a branch campus expires if the branch campus is not operational within 12 months after the date of Commission approval of the Application for a Branch Campus-Part I. Once expired, a school must submit a new Application for a Branch Campus-Part I, to include the application processing fee.

viii. Branch Campus Program Approval:

1. Programs approved within the scope of the main school's accreditation will be approved within the scope of the branch campus's accreditation upon initial accreditation. Only those programs operating at the branch campus at the time of the first renewal of accreditation on-site evaluation will have continued approval as part of the branch campus's scope of accreditation.

2. Any program additions or modifications made by the branch campus subsequent to the grant of initial accreditation, regardless of the main school's program approvals, requires the submission of the applicable substantive change application.

3. A branch campus may offer programs different from those offered at the main school provided that the branch campus has obtained prior Commission approval, through the filing of the applicable substantive change application.

4. A substantive change application may be submitted in conjunction with an Application for a Branch Campus-Part II.

ix. Renewal of Accreditation Process for a Branch Campus: A branch campus must undergo renewal of accreditation as described in *Section II & Section III, Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*. The Commission may take any of the actions set forth in *Section VII, Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*. The Commission may also take action or issue directives that affect the accreditation of the main school.

x. Change of Ownership of a Branch Campus: In the event that a branch campus is sold and/or transferred independently of the main facility, the accreditation of such branch campus is terminated as of the date of the sale or transfer. An application for accreditation may be

submitted to the Commission should accreditation be terminated under such circumstances. The application must be consistent with the requirements for an initial applicant or branch campus of another accredited main school.

xi. Change of Classification: An accredited branch campus may apply to the Commission for accreditation as a main school by submitting an application for accreditation as a main school. To be eligible, the branch campus must:

1. Have been accredited by the Commission for two consecutive years and must have graduated students from the longest program it offers;
2. Not be subject to a Warning, Probation, or Show Cause Order;
3. Show good cause and receive approval from the Commission in advance of applying for accreditation as a main school if subject to Reporting for issues related to financial soundness, student achievement, or adequacy of management; and
4. Otherwise, demonstrate compliance with accrediting standards and requirements applicable to main school status.

xii. Realignment of a Branch Campus(es): An accredited main school seeking to realign one or more currently approved branch campuses under that accredited main school must submit an Application for a Branch Realignment-Part I and an Application for a Branch Realignment-Part II with all required and supporting documentation. Approval of the realigned branch campus(es) within the scope of the accreditation of a main school will be granted only after all required information is submitted and the main school under which the branches are realigning with has appropriately demonstrated its ability to manage the branch campuses in compliance with accrediting standards. Any branch campus may not be realigned more than once in a 24-month period.

xiii. Publication: Branch campuses are listed separately in Commission publications of accredited schools.

xiv. Sustaining Fees: Dues for a branch campus are computed separately and on the same basis as for a main school.

b. Satellite Location:

i. Satellite Location Eligibility

1. A main school or branch campus may seek recognition of a satellite location at any time, in accordance with established requirements and/or restrictions.
2. A main school or branch campus subject to a Warning, Probation, or Show Cause Order may not apply for recognition of a satellite location.
3. A main school or branch campus subject to Reporting for issues related to financial soundness, student achievement, or adequacy of management must show good cause why it should be allowed to apply for a satellite location in advance of submitting an Application for a Satellite Location.
4. A main school or branch campus may apply for and receive recognition of only one satellite location within any 12-month period unless the school can demonstrate that it is otherwise eligible to apply for a satellite location, is currently in compliance with accrediting standards, can demonstrate past success in operating separate facilities, and can show good cause why it should be allowed to apply for a satellite location in a shorter time frame.

ii. Satellite Location Approval Process

1. Application: A main school or branch campus seeking to have a satellite location included within its accredited status must file an Application for a Satellite Location. The Commission will only approve an Application for a Satellite Location after all required information is submitted and the main school or branch campus has appropriately demonstrated its ability to establish and manage a satellite location. The main school or branch campus will receive formal notification of the approval or denial of an Application for a Satellite Location. A decision to deny approval to a satellite location may be appealed in accordance with *Section VIII, Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*.

2. On-site evaluation: Upon approval, an on-site evaluation team consisting of, at a minimum, an ACCSC Team Leader and an ACCSC staff member will visit the satellite location within six months of the start of the first class at the satellite location. The team will prepare an On-Site Evaluation Report, which the main school or branch campus will receive and to which it will be given an opportunity to respond. The Commission may take any of the actions set forth in *Section VII, Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*.

iii. Change of Ownership of a Satellite Location: In the event that a satellite location is sold and/or transferred independently of the main or branch campus facility, the Commission's recognition of such satellite location is terminated as of the date of the sale or transfer.

iv. Change of Location of a Satellite Location: A main school or branch campus seeking to change the location of its satellite must complete the applicable change of location applications as set forth in *Section IV, Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*, and receive an on-site evaluation in accordance with accrediting procedures.

v. Change of Classification of a Satellite Location: A satellite location may apply to the Commission for accreditation as a branch campus provided that the satellite location meets all requirements of a branch campus. In doing so, the main school must submit the Application for a Branch Campus-Part I and Part II and follow all other applicable policies and procedures required for the establishment of a branch campus as set forth in these *Rules*. A satellite location may not change its classification directly to that of a main school.

vi. Satellite Approval Expiration: The approval of a satellite location expires if the satellite is not operational within 12 months after the date of Commission approval of the Application for a Satellite. Once expired, a school must submit a new Application for a Satellite, to include the application processing fee.

c. Distance Education Facility:

i. Distance Education Facility Eligibility

1. A main school or branch campus may seek recognition of a distance education facility, in accordance with established requirements and/or restrictions.

2. A main school or branch campus subject to a Warning, Probation, or Show Cause Order may not apply for recognition of a distance education facility.

3. A main school or branch campus subject to Reporting for issues related to financial soundness, student achievement, or adequacy of management must show good cause why it should be allowed to apply for a distance education facility in advance of submitting an Application for a Distance Education Facility.

ii. Distance Education Facility Approval Process

1. Application: A main school or branch campus seeking to have a distance education facility included within its accredited status must file an Application for a Distance Education Facility. The Commission will only approve an Application for a Distance Education Facility after all required information is submitted and the main school or branch campus has appropriately demonstrated its ability to establish and manage a distance education facility. The main school or branch campus will receive formal notification of the approval or denial of an Application for a Distance Education Facility. A decision to deny approval to a distance education facility may be appealed in accordance with *Section VIII, Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*.

2. On-site evaluation: Upon approval, an on-site evaluation team consisting of, at a minimum, an on-site evaluator with distance education experience and an ACCSC staff member will visit the distance education facility. The team will prepare an On-Site Evaluation Report, which the main school or branch campus will receive and to which it will be given an opportunity to respond. The Commission may take any of the actions set forth in *Section VII, Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*.

iii. Distance Education Facility Approval Expiration: The approval of a distance education facility expires if the distance education facility is not operational within 12 months after the date of Commission approval of the Application for a Distance Education Facility. Once expired, a school must submit a new Application for a Distance Education Facility, to include the application processing fee.

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. As a general rule, this means a cumulative 25% 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. The Commission may determine that other alterations represent a significant modification in the objectives or content of an approved program, considering those to be a substantive change.

1. A substantive program modification as described in (i.) above requires the filing of an Application for a Substantive Program Modification in accordance with established instructions.

2. Substantive Program Modification Approval for Affiliated Schools: Affiliated schools may apply for a substantive modification of a program offered at more than one affiliated school simultaneously. One of the schools where the substantive program modification is to be implemented must apply to the Commission on behalf of all of the schools where the modification is to be implemented by filing one Application for a Substantive Program Modification-Affiliated Schools. An affiliated school subject to a Warning, Probation**,** Show Cause Order, or any other type of restriction that would otherwise prevent approval of the substantive modification may not be included in the application.

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 Non-Degree Program. The new program will be recognized as within the scope of the school's institutional accreditation as of the date that the Commission approves the new 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 Non-Degree Program. The new program will be recognized as within the scope of the school's institutional accreditation as of the date that the Commission approves the new 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:

1. 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 Initial 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 the Expansion of 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 the Expansion of 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.

2. In instances where the operations of an approved distance education program or course of study is in a facility separate from the main school or branch with distance education approval, then that distance education facility requires prior approval through the submission of an Application for Approval of a Distance Education Facility.[8]

vi. Consortium/Partnership Agreements: In any instance where a portion of an approved program is delivered by or at an entity other than the ACCSC-accredited institution via any consortium/partnership agreement, the school must submit the Application for a Consortium/Partnership Agreement or the Application for a Distance Education Consortium/Partnership Agreement as applicable. An on-site evaluation may be required in conjunction with the approval of a consortium/partnership application based upon the scope of the agreement.

vii. Clock Hour to Credit Hour Conversion: A school must submit the Application for Clock Hour to Credit Hour Conversion with all supporting documents for approval by the Commission prior to awarding credit hours in any program.

[8] A school will be exempt from obtaining distance education facility approval if the distance education facility is within a reasonable, commutable distance from the main school or branch with distance education approval.

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 ii-iv above, that program approval may be extended to an affiliated school provided that:

1. The affiliated school is not subject to a Warning, Probation**,** Show Cause Order, or any other type of restriction that would otherwise prevent the approval of a new program; and
2. The affiliated school has submitted the appropriate affiliated-school application in accordance with established instructions and has 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:

1. A non-degree-granting school has received approval to add a degree program;
2. A degree-granting school has received approval for a degree program in a program area unrelated to previously approved degree offerings;
3. An associate degree-granting school has received approval to add its first baccalaureate degree program; or
4. A school has received approval to add a master's degree program.

iii. The addition of a related non-degree or 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 agreement with an entity that is not accredited by a recognized accrediting agency; 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.

v. The addition of a consortium/partnership agreement with an entity that is not accredited by a recognized accrediting agency to engage in the delivery of a portion of a school's program.

c. Exceptions to On-Site Evaluation Requirement – Distance Education Programs:

i. An on-site evaluation for a new program generally will not be required when a proposed distance education program or course is related to the school's already approved residential or distance education programs or courses and an on-site evaluation to review the same or similar distance education delivery method has already occurred to the school's currently approved residential or distance education programs or courses.

ii. The Commission may review distance education programs or courses without an on-site evaluation (e.g., auditing the educational delivery at a distance as deemed appropriate).

d. Notice to School: The Commission will provide written notice to schools upon approval of a new program or program modification.

e. Advertising New Programs: A school may describe in its catalog, advertise, enroll students in, or award credentials for new or substantively changed programs (degree or non-degree programs) only after receiving prior Commission approval.

f. Cessation of Approval:

i. If a school does not enroll and start students in a newly approved program or implement a newly approved distance education modality within 24 months of the initial program or initial distance education approval date, the new program or distance education modality will cease to be approved.

ii. When a previously operational program has not had any enrollments or graduates for 24 months, 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 (this includes approval to offer programs/courses via distance education). Based upon its review of this information, if the school has not demonstrated that it has maintained the capacity to offer the program the Commission may cease to approve the program. If the Commission ceases to approve the program, the school must submit the applicable application in order to reinstate the approval.

iii. The Commission will cease to approve any program that has had no enrollments during the school's last accreditation cycle (this includes approval to offer programs/courses via distance education). The school must submit the applicable application in order to reinstate the approval.

g. Contractual Agreements: Schools may enter into contractual agreements with business, industry, or government agencies for group training purposes. The school may represent these training programs as within the Commission's scope of accreditation only if the programs have been recognized or approved in accordance with accrediting requirements.

F. Teach-Out Plans and Agreements

1. The Commission will require a school to submit a complete ACCSC Institutional Teach-Out Plan Approval Form when:

a. The Commission determines that a school may lack sufficient financial resources for the proper operation of the school and discharge of obligations to students;

b. A school's independent auditor expresses doubt about the school's ability to operate as a going concern or indicates an adverse opinion or a finding of material weakness related to financial stability;

c. The Commission receives notice from the U.S. Department of Education that a school is participating in any Title IV, Higher Education Act student federal financial aid program under a provisional program participation agreement and the U.S. Secretary of Education has required a teach-out plan as a condition of participation;

d. The Commission takes action to place a school on Probation; or

e. The Commission otherwise determines that the submission of a Teach-Out Plan is appropriate.

2. The Commission will require a school to submit a complete ACCSC Institutional Teach-Out Plan Approval Form and if practicable a Teach-Out Agreement with another accredited institution when:
   a. A school intends to cease operations (i.e., close), intends to cease operations of a branch campus, or when the U.S. Department of Education considers a school or facility/location to be closed;
   b. The Commission takes action to withdraw a school's accreditation;
   c. The Commission receives notice from the U.S. Department of Education that it has initiated an emergency action against an institution, or an action to limit, suspend, or terminate an institution's participation in any Title IV, Higher Education Act federal student financial aid program;
   d. The Commission receives notice from the U.S. Department of Education that it has placed a school participating in any Title IV, Higher Education Act federal student financial aid program on the reimbursement payment method or the heightened cash monitoring payment method requiring the U.S. Department of Education's review of the institution's supporting documentation pursuant to federal regulations;
   e. The Commission receives notice from a state licensing or authorizing agency that a school's license or legal authorization to operate may be or has been withdrawn/revoked; or
   f. The Commission otherwise determines that the submission of a Teach-Out Plan and/or Teach-Out agreement is appropriate.
3. The Commission will require a school to submit a complete ACCSC Programmatic Teach-Out Plan Approval Form upon the occurrence of any of the following events:
   a. When a school voluntarily discontinues a program;
   b. When the Commission receives notice from a state licensing or authorizing agency that a school's license or legal authorization to offer a program will be or has been withdrawn/revoked; or
   c. When the Commission takes an action to suspend or revoke the approval of a program.
4. The Commission will only approve teach-out plans and agreements that meet the requirements of the ACCSC Institutional Teach-Out Plan Approval Form and ACCSC Teach-Out Agreement Approval Form.
5. If the Commission requires a school to submit a Teach-Out Plan or Teach-Out Agreement or if a school voluntarily establishes a Teach-Out Plan or Teach-Out Agreement, then the school must submit for approval all information required by the appropriate ACCSC Teach-Out Plan/Agreement Approval Form (institutional or programmatic) as well as any other information the Commission may deem necessary. The Commission must approve a Teach-Out Plan/Agreement prior to implementation.
6. A main school that intends to teach out the program(s) for another institution that intends to close may propose to establish a branch campus at that location in conjunction with an approved Teach-Out Agreement. In this instance, the main school must submit an Application for a Branch Campus-Part I and Part II, with all attachments, and follow all substantive and procedural requirements as outlined in these *Rules* and in *Section VIII, Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation*. Upon receipt of these materials, the Commission will give expedited consideration to the proposal in accordance with accrediting procedures.

SECTION V – ANNUAL REPORTING AND REQUIRED NOTIFICATIONS

A. General Requirements

1. The Commission requires regular reports such as the Annual Report and annual financial statements amongst others and may place a school on Reporting in conjunction with any process included in the *Standards of Accreditation*.
2. The Commission has the authority to establish the frequency, format, and content of required reports. A school may provide additional data that serves to amplify and strengthen the school's report; however, the Commission will not accept any submission by a school that does not conform to the required format.
3. The highest-ranking official at the school must certify all reports as true and correct. The Commission reserves the right to verify the information contained in reports.
4. A change in the school's Director or Chief Executive Officer must be communicated to the Commission in writing within 10 calendar days of the change.
5. Failure to provide timely, complete, and accurate reporting may constitute grounds for denial or withdrawal of accreditation and removal of a school from the accredited list.

B. Annual Report

1. Each year, the Commission requires the submission of an Annual Report by each school holding accreditation status as of June 30 of any given year. The Annual Report and all accompanying documentation must be completed by the school and submitted to ACCSC in accordance with established formats and timelines.
2. The Commission requires verification of certain data reported in the Annual Report in accordance with the Guidelines for Independent Third-Party Employment Verification.
3. Failure to submit a complete Annual Report by the due date may result in late fees being assessed and any Commission action outlined in *Section VII, Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*, including withdrawal of the school's accreditation.
4. The Commission will verify information provided on the Annual Reports using various methods to include, but not be limited to:
    a. Verification during on-site evaluations and
    b. Verification of a random sample of reports each year.
5. The Commission reviews each Annual Report and will notify the school in writing if that report raises questions about the continued compliance of the school with ACCSC standards or requirements. The notice will specify the questions raised by the Annual Report and will specify a response deadline. The school must respond to the analysis in writing. The school's response will be reviewed by the ACCSC staff and may be considered by the Commission in order to determine compliance with accreditation standards. Concerns also may be raised in on-site evaluation reports or during review by the Commission. In such cases, the school will be given an opportunity to respond in writing.

6. The Commission establishes and publishes the benchmark graduation and employment rates from information submitted in the Annual Reports of accredited schools.[1]
7. Schools that report a graduation or employment rate in the Annual Report that is below the established benchmarks may be required to implement a plan for improvement and submit periodic progress reports in accordance with these *Rules*. See *Section VII (B), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation*.
8. The Commission monitors institutional enrollment growth through the data submitted in a school's Annual Report. When the Commission determines that an institution has undergone significant enrollment growth, the Commission may require the submission of additional information.
9. Schools are required to provide to the Commission, on an annual basis, tuition, fees, and length for each recognized program.

C. Annual Financial Statements

1. Each accredited school must submit financial statements annually in accordance with established and prescribed timelines and the ACCSC Instructions for the Preparation and Submission of Financial Statements and Related Information.
2. A school submitting an Application for Initial Accreditation must provide audited financial statements for the two most recent fiscal year-ends as part of that application and then annually thereafter. The financial statements must be submitted in accordance with established and prescribed timelines and the ACCSC Instructions for the Preparation and Submission of Financial Statements and Related Information.
3. Financial statements must be received in the ACCSC office no later than the prescribed due date. Failure to submit complete and properly prepared financial statements by the due date may result in late fees being assessed and any Commission action outlined in *Section VII, Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*, including withdrawal of the school's accreditation.
4. Financial statements are reviewed by the Commission annually, when performing accreditation reviews (e.g., applications for initial or renewal of accreditation, Warning/Probation/Reporting as applicable, change of ownership and control, etc.) and as otherwise necessary to determine a school's financial stability and compliance with accreditation requirements. At its discretion, the Commission may require an audited financial statement at any time.

D. Reporting

1. The Commission may order a school to submit a report on its compliance with accreditation requirements during the course of routine accreditation reviews or at any time the Commission believes that monitoring of compliance with an accreditation requirement is warranted.
2. The Commission will provide notice to the school that will describe the type of report, reporting period and deadline for submission. The notice may be in the form of an ACCSC Reporting Enclosure to a letter notifying the school of a Commission action.
3. Failure to submit a report on or before the due date may result in late fees being assessed and any action outlined in *Section VII, Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation,* including withdrawal of the school's accreditation.

[1] See *Appendix VI* for the Commission's current established benchmark rates for student achievement.

E. Notification Reports

1. Each accredited school and each applicant for initial accreditation must notify ACCSC of any material event or circumstance that will or 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, reorganization, receivership, or similar;
   b. Destruction of the school or a significant part of its facilities;
   c. Any limitation, sanction (e.g., Warning, Probation, Show Cause Order, etc.), suspension, or withdrawal/revocation of a school's license or right to operate or program approvals;
   d. A decision to cease operations, close, or propose a teach-out of students (must include an ACCSC Institutional Teach-Out Plan);
   e. Any grant of accreditation by another accrediting agency or any issued Warning, Show Cause Order, imposition of Probationary status, or denial or withdrawal/revocation of accreditation by another accrediting agency;
   f. Voluntary withdrawal/relinquishment of accreditation from ACCSC or another accrediting agency;
   g. Investigations or open actions by state or federal authorities, beyond those required in the normal course, related to a school's licensure, approval to operate, program approval(s), or participation in federal programs (e.g., open complaints, issuance of a Civil Investigative Demand or subpoena by a state or federal agency);
   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 by the U.S. Department of Education to limit, suspend, or terminate the school's participation in student federal financial aid programs; to provisionally certify the school for participation in student federal financial aid programs; or to place the school on any form of financial monitoring (e.g., Heightened Cash Monitoring);
   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, regulation, or accreditation requirements or standards;
   l. Any determination in accordance with requirements of a state, federal, or other applicable regulatory agency that the school is not meeting applicable requirements or is in violation of any law or regulation;
   m. Any action to limit, suspend, or withdraw/revoke a school's or program's approval or recognition with any agency that grants certification or licensure to its graduates;
   n. Any qualified or adverse statement or statement related to a school's status as a "going concern" included in an audited financial statement; or

o. All sales or assignments of ownership interests of 10% or more, changes in the chief executive officer of the company or organization that owns or controls the school, and changes to the board of directors other than in the normal course of term completion.

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*. Likewise, other reports or filings cannot be used to fulfill the notification reports required by this section of the *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*.

SECTION VI – COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

A. Complaints against Applicant and Accredited Schools

1. Purpose of Complaint Procedure

   a. Any school that has been accepted into the initial accreditation process or is accredited by ACCSC is expected to have a complaint policy and process for the purposes of responding to, addressing, and redressing as appropriate complaints made by an eligible party (See *Section VI (A)(2), Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*).

   b. The Commission will review in a timely manner any complaint that sets forth information or allegations that reasonably suggest that a school may not be in compliance with ACCSC standards or requirements.

   c. Where issues of educational quality or compliance with ACCSC standards or requirements are not central to the complaint, the Commission will refer the complaint and/or the complainant to the appropriate federal or state agency or private entity with jurisdiction over the subject matter of the complaint or special expertise and authority in the matter and at the Commission's discretion provide a copy to the school.

   d. The Commission reviews complaints to assess a school's (applicant for accreditation or accredited) compliance with accrediting standards. The Commission does not mediate on behalf of individuals and will not intervene in cases of disciplinary action or dismissal or review decisions in such matters as admission, grades, graduation, fees, and similar cases though a school may need to address such issues in the course of the complaint process in order to demonstrate compliance with accrediting standards.

2. Parties Who May File a Complaint

   A complaint may be filed by any party who has good reason to believe that an accredited school or an initial applicant school is not in compliance with ACCSC standards or requirements, including but not limited to students and former students of a school, prospective students, governmental agencies, members of the public, and other accredited schools.

3. Filing and Content of a Complaint[1]

   a. All complaints considered by the Commission must be received in writing.

   b. In order for a complaint to be processed, the complaint should contain:

      i. The basis for any allegation of noncompliance with ACCSC standards or requirements;

      ii. All relevant names and dates and a brief description of the actions forming the basis of the complaint;

      iii. Copies of any documents or materials that support the allegations, when available; and

      iv. A release from the complainant(s) authorizing the Commission to forward a copy of the complaint, including the identification of the complainant(s), to the school.[2]

[1] See also the ACCSC Complaint Review Process Form.

[2] This can be achieved by filing the ACCSC Complaint Form which is available on the ACCSC web site or by request from the ACCSC office. If a release/Complaint Form is not provided, the Commission will review the complaint but, at its discretion, may not be able to process the complaint in accordance with this section of the *Rules*.

4. Processing a Complaint

   a. The Commission will acknowledge the receipt of a complaint filed in accordance with these *Rules* to the complainant in writing within ten (10) days.

   b. The Commission will conduct an initial review of the complaint to determine whether the complaint sets forth information or allegations that reasonably suggest that a school may not be in compliance with ACCSC standards or requirements.

      i. If additional information or clarification is required, the Commission will send a request to the complainant. If the requested information is not received within 30 days, the complaint may be considered abandoned and not investigated by ACCSC.

      ii. If the Commission determines after the initial review of the complaint that the information or allegations do not reasonably suggest that a school may not be in compliance with ACCSC standards or requirements, the complaint may be considered closed and not investigated by ACCSC. The Commission, at its discretion, may provide a copy of the complaint to the school.

      iii. If the Commission determines after the initial review[3] of the complaint that the information or allegations reasonably suggest that a school may not be in compliance with ACCSC standards or requirements and otherwise meets the requirements of these *Rules*:

         1. The Commission will forward the complaint to the school named in the complaint and will summarize the allegations, identify the ACCSC standards or requirements that the school allegedly violated, and allow the school an opportunity to respond.[4]

         2. In the event that there is a pending on-site evaluation at the school, the on-site evaluation team and the school may be made aware of the complaint at any stage in this process.

         3. In all instances, the Commission will take the school's response to the complaint into consideration prior to rendering a decision.

   c. The Commission will send all complaints received to the applicable state or federal regulatory agency(ies) and may send the complaint to the U.S. Department of Education in accordance with *Section X (C)(6), Rules of Process and Procedures, Standards of Accreditation*.

   d. Whenever a complaint indicates that the school may be in violation of accrediting standards or requirements, the matter may be forwarded to the Commission for independent consideration or for consideration in conjunction with any other accreditation matter pending before the Commission. A complaint that alleges a substantial violation of accrediting standards and/or other requirements may be given expedited review.

   e. The Commission may, at any time, request additional information from the complainant or the school that is deemed to be necessary for the resolution of the complaint. A reasonable time limit for replying to such requests may be imposed and the Commission may not consider information that is not submitted in a timely fashion.

[3] This may occur in conjunction with processes described in *Section III* of these *Rules*.

[4] The school's response to the complaint should set forth all defenses that the school intends to assert and should include documentation or other supporting materials that the school deems necessary to demonstrate compliance with accrediting standards.

5. Taking Action on a Complaint

   a. If the Commission concludes after reviewing the school's response that the allegations establish noncompliance with ACCSC standards or requirements, the Commission can take any action set forth under *Section VII, Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*.

   b. If the Commission concludes after reviewing the school's response that the allegations do not establish noncompliance with ACCSC standards or requirements, the Commission will consider the matter of the complaint closed.

   c. The issues raised by a complaint that have been closed by the Commission will not be subject to further review or reconsideration unless subsequent complaints against the school raise new issues or suggest a pattern of noncompliance with ACCSC standards or requirements not evident from the consideration of the previously closed complaint.

   d. The Commission will inform complainants periodically of the status of pending complaints as well as the final resolution by the Commission. The Commission will send a letter describing the Commission's conclusion to the complainant and to the school. The Commission maintains a record of each complaint in the school's file at the Commission's office in accordance with established record-keeping policies.

6. Reporting of Complaint Activity to the Commission: At each Commission meeting, the Commission receives a report containing the number of complaints received since the previous Commission meeting, the status of these complaints, and a breakdown of the types of complaints received.

7. Information from the United States Department of Education or Other Government Entities

   a. The Commission will review all information about an ACCSC-accredited school received from the U.S. Department of Education or other government agency and where that information suggests any possible area of noncompliance with accreditation standards or requirements, the Commission will initiate a process in conformity with these *Rules*.

   b. Information received from the U.S. Department of Education or other government agency indicating a school's failure to comply with its Title IV responsibilities or any possible area of noncompliance with accreditation standards or requirements will follow the complaint procedure set forth in these *Rules*.

B. Complaints Against ACCSC Evaluators

If the Commission receives a formal written complaint from a school regarding an on-site evaluator, the evaluator will be notified and given a copy of the complaint. The evaluator will be given an opportunity to respond to the complaint; however, a response is optional. The complaint and any response will be reviewed by the Commission to determine the ongoing eligibility of the on-site evaluator to participate in the Commission's evaluation process. The on-site evaluator will be notified of any resulting decision relative to continued eligibility.

C. Complaints Against ACCSC, Commissioners, or Staff Members

1. If the Commission receives a formal written complaint from a school regarding the conduct of an ACCSC Commissioner or a staff member, the Commissioner or staff member will be notified and given a copy of the complaint. The Commissioner or staff member will be given an opportunity to respond to the complaint; however, a response is optional. The complaint and any response will be

reviewed by the Commission, in the absence of the individual against whom the complaint was lodged, to determine what, if any, action is appropriate or required.

2. If the Commission receives a formal written complaint alleging that the Commission acted improperly or in violation of the *Rules of Process and Procedure*, the Commission will review the complaint in a timely, fair, and equitable manner and will apply unbiased judgment and take follow-up action as appropriate based on the results of the review. This process, however, is not an appeal process and may not be used to request the Commission to reconsider a prior Commission action or to reinstate a school's accreditation (see *Section VIII, Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation* regarding the appeal of a Commission decision).

SECTION VII – COMMISSION ACTIONS

A. Authority

1. The full Commission: All actions.
2. The Executive Committee: Limited pursuant to *Section 1.09.a, AACSC Bylaws, Standards of Accreditation*.
3. The Executive Director of ACCSC: As authorized by the Commission to provide approval of substantive change applications under *Section IV, Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*.

B. Effective Date of Commission Decision

The general rule is that the effective date of a Commission decision is the date on the letter notifying the school of that decision. The effective date may be some other date for the following types of reasons:

1. A school seeking initial accreditation that is accredited with stipulations will not be added to the list of ACCSC-accredited schools until all stipulations have been met and all fees have been remitted. The effective date of accreditation will be the date on the notice from ACCSC that the school has met the stipulations and paid all required fees.
2. A decision to renew accreditation will be effective as of the date of the letter notifying the school of the action; however, the term of accreditation will be effective as of the date cited in that letter and generally will continue from the end of the previous term of accreditation.
3. A school seeking renewal of accreditation that is accredited with stipulations will not be considered to have its accreditation renewed until all stipulations have been met and all fees have been remitted. Once all stipulations have been met, the date of accreditation will be effective going forward from the end of the school's previous term of accreditation.
4. Commission decisions denying or withdrawing accreditation that are capable of being appealed but are not appealed will become effective 10 days after the school receives notification of the denial or withdrawal, except in the case of closures where the effective date will generally be the date of the closure.
5. Failure to obtain approval of the transfer of accreditation in advance of the change of ownership will result in the removal of the school from the list of ACCSC-accredited schools as of the date that the change of ownership occurred.
6. A school that is faithfully engaged in the renewal of accreditation process and is meeting all of the requirements of that process continues to be accredited if the school's term of accreditation has exceeded the period of time last granted by the Commission. A school's accreditation ceases when the Commission has taken a final action to withdraw the school's accreditation or when a school voluntarily withdraws its accreditation or closes.
7. Other dates as established elsewhere in these *Rules* and as circumstances dictate, the Commission may establish different effective dates except that the effective date of the Commission's decision will not predate either (i) an earlier denial of accreditation to the school, or (ii) acceptance of a school in the initial accreditation process.

C. Basis for Decisions

1. The Commission monitors schools throughout the period of accreditation to ensure continued compliance with accrediting standards and requirements. This monitoring forms the basis of

Commission decisions and is conducted through analysis of applications for accreditation, self-evaluation reports, annual reports, substantive change applications and reports, financial reports, complaints, information from government agencies and other third parties, interim on-site evaluations, and other sources.

2. The Commission meets regularly to review the materials of each school on the agenda. It is concerned with the totality of each school and views each school in accordance with all of the available information gathered through the accreditation process and other authoritative data contained in the school's file. The integrity, record, and ability of the school to meet its stated objectives and to meet the standards and criteria established by the Commission provide the foundations for the Commission's judgment. Strengths are considered along with deficiencies and weaknesses. Above all, the Commission seeks to ascertain to what degree the school meets its objectives in terms of the students and their achievement.
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:
    a. Application for accreditation (initial or renewal);
    b. Self-Evaluation Report;
    c. On-Site Evaluation Report;
    d. The school's response to the On-Site Evaluation Report;
    e. Any comments from the on-site evaluation team relative to the school's response to the On-Site Evaluation Report (as applicable);
    f. The school's response to on-site evaluator comments;
    g. Information contained in the Annual Report, financial statements, progress reports or any other information contained in the school's historical record with the Commission;
    h. Any additional information collected about the school, which may include such items as reports from government, private agencies, and third parties;
    i. Complaints;
    j. Actions by other accrediting agencies; and
    k. Any other materials determined by the Commission to be relevant and trustworthy including comments from interested parties.
4. To expedite work, the Commission Chair may appoint standing and ad hoc review and advisory committees to ensure complete and thorough consideration of every application. These committees analyze the reports and all information brought before them and recommend to the Commission the type of action that, in their judgment, is warranted. The Commission is responsible for making all decisions to grant or deny accreditation.
5. The Commission notifies the institution of a decision in writing, including any identified deficiencies of compliance.
6. The Commission will not consider petitions for reconsideration and only those actions set forth in *Section VIII* of these *Rules* are subject to appeal.

D. Commission Consideration of Third-Party Information

1. The Commission provides notice of the schools to be reviewed for initial or renewal of accreditation at each meeting and encourages interested parties to submit written comments pertaining to such review. The Commission may also establish policies for providing notice of the schools to be reviewed for other reasons. Interested parties will have 30 days to submit such comments unless a longer comment period is specified by the Commission. The Commission will not be required to consider comments received after the published comment deadline.
2. The Commission will review and may take appropriate action as allowed under these *Rules* when it is aware of publicly available information (e.g., media, advertising, etc.) that appears to show or allege non-compliance with accreditation standards.
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 withdrawn/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 withdraws/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, including actions set forth in these *Rules*.
5. The Commission will review and take appropriate action as allowed under these *Rules* regarding the accreditation status of any school for which the Commission has received information from an appropriate state or federal agency or another accrediting agency that the school is subject to, but not limited to, any of the following actions:
    a. State Agency
        i. An action by a state agency potentially leading to the suspension, denial, withdrawal/revocation, or termination of the school's legal authority to provide postsecondary education;
        ii. An action by a state agency to suspend, deny, withdraw/revoke, or terminate the school's legal authority to provide postsecondary education;
        iii. An action by a state agency potentially leading to the suspension, denial, withdrawal/revocation, or termination of the school's eligibility to participate in any state student financial aid program;
        iv. An investigation or legal action by a state agency with regard to a school's adherence to state law or regulation; or
        v. A finding by a state agency or legal authority that the school violated state regulation or law.
    b. Federal Agency:
        i. An action by a federal agency potentially leading to the suspension, denial, withdrawal/revocation, or termination of the school's eligibility to participate in any federal student financial aid program;
        ii. An action by a federal agency to suspend, deny, withdraw/revoke, or terminate the school's legal authority to provide postsecondary education;

iii. An investigation or legal action by a federal agency with respect to a school's adherence to federal law or regulation; or

iv. A finding by a federal agency or legal authority that the school violated federal regulation or law.

c. Accrediting Agency:

i. An action by an accrediting agency that could potentially lead to the suspension, denial, withdrawal/revocation, or termination of accreditation (e.g., Warning, Probation, Show Cause Order, etc.) or

ii. An action by an accrediting agency to suspend, deny, or withdraw/revoke accreditation.

6. A Warning will be issued to a school in accordance with *Section VII (K)(2), Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*.

7. Commission Action Notwithstanding Third Party Action: If the Commission grants initial accreditation or re-accreditation to a school notwithstanding a pending or final action taken by a state agency or another recognized accrediting agency to suspend, deny, or withdraw/revoke approval/accreditation (to include appeals) or a Probation or equivalent status, the Commission will provide the U.S. Secretary of Education, within 30 days of that action, a thorough explanation, consistent with the Commission's accreditation standards, regarding why the previous action by the recognized accrediting agency or state does not preclude the Commission's action.

8. Whenever information from third parties is included in the record, the school will have an opportunity to respond before any decision becomes final.

E. Consideration of Applications and Other Matters

1. Applications will be considered by the Commission at its regularly scheduled meetings, which are held at least four times per year. Generally, in order for information related to the accreditation process to be included in the record considered by the Commission, the information must be received at least 30 days before the start of the meeting of the Commission. Any document received within 30 days prior to the start of the meeting will be considered only at the discretion of the Commission.

2. The Commission, at its discretion, may refuse to consider an application, if after notice, the school fails to respond to an on-site evaluation report or other request for information made in conjunction with an application for accreditation (initial or renewal) or an application for a substantive change. A failure to respond is subject to the actions set forth in these *Rules*.

3. The Commission may, at its discretion, consolidate two or more actions involving the same school or affiliated schools that are pending before the Commission.

F. Deferral of Action

1. The Commission may defer any action on an application for accreditation (initial or renewal), substantive change, or other reviews or matters if additional information is required for the school to demonstrate compliance with the *Standards of Accreditation* or other accreditation requirements. Generally, in reaching a decision to defer action, the Commission will consider factors such as:

a. The extent to which the school can provide sufficient additional information within a short period of time;

b. Whether there is insufficient information about the school and/or the issues in question require clarification; or

c. Whether the information necessary for the Commission to render a decision is lacking but should otherwise be available.

2. The Commission may not defer for a period longer than 12 months in total. If a school has not resolved the area(s) in question within the established timeframe, then the Commission will take further action as deemed appropriate.

G. Accreditation

1. The Commission will not grant initial or renewal of accreditation if the Commission knows, or has reasonable cause to know, at the time of its review the institution is the subject of:

   a. A pending or final action brought by a state agency to suspend, revoke, withdraw, or terminate the institution's legal authority to provide postsecondary education in the state;

   b. A decision by a recognized accrediting agency to deny the institution accreditation or preaccreditation;

   c. A pending or final action brought by a recognized accrediting agency to suspend, revoke, withdraw, or terminate the institution's accreditation or preaccreditation; or

   d. Probation or an equivalent status imposed by a recognized accrediting agency or state or federal regulatory oversight entity.

2. Initial Accreditation:

   a. Applicants for initial accreditation that are found to be in compliance with accreditation standards and requirements of the Commission will be granted accreditation status. The term of accreditation for schools seeking an initial grant of accreditation is three years, but may be less at the discretion of the Commission.

   b. In exceptional cases based upon criteria determined by the Commission (e.g., no findings of non-compliance with accrediting standards through the initial accreditation process, exceptional student achievement outcomes, amongst other criteria), the Commission may grant an initial applicant school up to a four-year term of accreditation.

   c. In cases where the school is institutionally accredited by an agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and in good standing at the time of initial application:

      i. The Commission may grant such a school up to a five-year term based on the school's demonstrated ability to maintain continuous compliance with ACCSC's accrediting standards and

      ii. In exceptional cases based upon criteria determined by the Commission (e.g., no findings of non-compliance with accrediting standards through the initial accreditation process, exceptional student achievement outcomes, amongst other criteria), the Commission may grant such a school up to a six-year term of accreditation.

3. Renewal of Accreditation:

   a. Applicants for renewal of accreditation that are found to be in compliance with accreditation standards and requirements will be granted renewal of accreditation. The term of accreditation for schools seeking renewal of accreditation is five years, but may be less at the discretion of the Commission.

b. In exceptional cases based upon criteria determined by the Commission (e.g., no findings of non-compliance with accrediting standards through the renewal of accreditation process, exceptional student achievement outcomes, amongst other criteria), the Commission may grant a school up to a six-year term of accreditation.

4. When the record before the Commission shows that a school's additional attention should be directed to certain aspects of its programs or administration, the Commission may provide recommendations for institutional enhancement. Such recommendations are contained in an ACCSC Institutional Enhancement Enclosure and do not indicate present noncompliance with accreditation requirements.

5. Upon accreditation, a tentative time will be set for a complete reexamination. At the Commission's discretion, schools may at any time be required to submit a new Self-Evaluation Report or other reports, or receive an on-site evaluation. Earlier, complete, or partial reexamination or fact-finding on-site evaluations may be required by the Commission whenever a school's compliance with accrediting requirements is in question or doubt.

H. Stipulations

1. The Commission may require a school to submit a response to one or more stipulations that the school must meet prior to a Commission action becoming effective. Stipulations are generally those items that can be satisfied within a relatively short period of time.

2. The Commission may delegate to the Commission's staff the determination as to whether a school has complied with a stipulation. In those instances when the staff cannot determine whether a school has met a stipulation or has reason to believe that a school has not complied with a stipulation, the matter will be referred to the Commission for decision.

3. All stipulations must be met before a Commission decision to grant initial or renewal of accreditation becomes effective.

I. Heightened Monitoring

1. The Commission may require a detailed review of a school's Annual Report, accreditation applications, or other information as directed for submission when monitoring of ongoing compliance is deemed necessary in conjunction with any accrediting process, procedure, or substantive standard included in the *Standards of Accreditation* (e.g., financial, student achievement outcomes, significant growth, etc.). Heightened Monitoring is not considered Reporting and accordingly the restrictions applied to a school subject to Reporting do not apply to schools subject to Heightened Monitoring.

2. A school subject to Heightened Monitoring must submit all information as requested and must do so conforming to format requirements and covering exact time frames as directed by the Commission. The school may provide additional information or data that serve to amplify and strengthen the school's report.

3. The Commission will not accept any submission by a school of information that does not conform to the required format.

4. The Commission reserves the right to verify the information submitted by the school.

J. Reporting

1. The Commission may place a school on Reporting when monitoring of ongoing compliance is deemed necessary in conjunction with any accrediting process, procedure, or substantive standard

included in the *Standards of Accreditation* (e.g., adequacy of management, financial, refund, student satisfaction, student achievement outcomes, etc.).[1]

2. A school subject to Reporting must do so conforming to format requirements and covering exact time frames as directed by the Commission. The school may provide additional data that serves to amplify and strengthen the school's report.
3. The Commission will not accept any Reporting submission by a school that does not conform to the required format.
4. The Commission reserves the right to verify the information contained in the Report.
5. A school subject to Reporting for issues related to financial soundness, student achievement, or adequacy of management must show good cause why it should be allowed to apply for a separate facility in advance of submitting a separate facility application.

K. Warning

1. In cases where the Commission has concerns regarding a school's compliance with one or more accreditation standards or other requirements, the Commission may issue a Warning to the school. At its discretion, the Commission may place a school on Warning without first taking any other action listed in these *Rules*.
2. A Warning will be issued upon any of the following:
   a. The suspension, withdrawal/revocation, or involuntary termination of a school's accreditation from another accrediting body;
   b. The suspension or the withdrawal, revocation, or involuntary termination of a school's license or authority to operate from a state oversight agency that is subject to appeal; or
   c. The filing for bankruptcy or receivership; or
   d. A delinquency in the submission of a required response, notification, directive, report, fee, etc. in accordance with established deadlines and policies.
3. The Warning will be in writing and will:
   a. State the reasons why the Commission issued the Warning;
   b. Identify the standard(s) and/or accreditation requirement(s) at issue; and
   c. Advise the school of its obligations operating under the Warning and the deadline for response.
4. Upon review of the school's response to the Warning or any progress report or additional requirements placed on a school in relation to the Warning, the Commission may:
   a. Remove the Warning if the school's response gives evidence that such removal is warranted;
   b. Continue the Warning;
   c. Take any other action set forth under *Section VII*, *Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*; or
   d. In certain limited circumstances, delegate the authority to vacate a Warning to the Executive Director of ACCSC when established conditions have been met by the school.

[1] See also *Section V* of these *Rules*.

5. The Commission may require a school to submit Commission-directed reports and receive on-site evaluation teams in conjunction with a Warning.
6. Within a timeframe set forth in the Warning notification, the Commission may require the school to:
   a. Inform current and prospective students in writing that the school has been placed/continued on Warning and provide such notice on the school's website;
   b. Provide a summary that accurately describes the reasons for the Warning; and
   c. Provide the uniform resource locator (URL) where the Commission's summary of the Warning can be obtained from the Commission website.
7. The Commission will not consider substantive changes, a change of location/relocation, or additions (i.e., separate facilities, new programs) to a school or its separate facilities while the school is under a Warning. However, a school that is subject to a Warning may seek the Commission's approval for the transfer of accreditation that would result from a change of ownership as described in *Section IV (E)(2), Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*.

L. Probation

1. In cases where the Commission has made a determination that a school is out of compliance with one or more accreditation standards or other requirements, the Commission will place a school on Probation.
2. At its discretion, the Commission may place a school on Probation without first taking any other action listed in these *Rules*.
3. The Commission may require a school to submit Commission-directed reports and receive on-site evaluation teams in conjunction with Probation. Failure to demonstrate compliance with accrediting standards or other accrediting requirements by the end of the probationary period may result in the school being removed from the accredited list.
4. The Probation will be in writing and will:
   a. State the reasons why the Commission issued the Probation;
   b. Identify the standard(s) and/or other accreditation requirement(s) at issue; and
   c. Advise the school of its obligations under the Probation and the deadline for response.
5. Upon review of the school's response to the Probation or any progress report or additional requirements placed on a school in relation to the Probation, the Commission may:
   a. Remove the Probation if the school's response gives evidence that such removal is warranted or if the response shows that the school complies with accreditation standards and requirements;
   b. Continue the Probation; or
   c. Take any other action set forth under *Section VII*, *Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*.
6. The Commission will not consider substantive changes, a change of location/relocation, or additions (i.e., separate facilities, new programs) to a school or its separate facilities while the school is on Probation. However, a school that is subject to Probation may seek the Commission's

approval for the transfer of accreditation that would result from a change of ownership as described in *Section IV (E)(2)*, *Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*.

7. Within seven days of receipt of the Probation notification and for the duration of that action, a school must:
   a. Inform current and prospective students in writing that the school has been placed/continued on Probation and provide such notice on the school's website;
   b. Provide a summary that accurately describes the reasons for the Probation; and
   c. Provide the uniform resource locator (URL) where that action can be obtained from the Commission's website.

M. Show Cause Order

1. When the Commission has determined a school to be out of compliance and that the severity of the issues warrant immediate heightened attention, the Commission will direct the school to show cause as to why the school's accreditation should not be withdrawn ("Show Cause Order"). A school subject to a Show Cause Order will be required to demonstrate corrective action within the time period set by the Commission.
2. At its discretion, the Commission may place a school on a Show Cause Order without first taking any other action listed in these *Rules*.
3. The Commission may require a school to submit Commission-directed reports and/or receive on-site evaluation teams in conjunction with the Show Cause Order.
4. The Show Cause Order will be in writing and will:
   a. State the reasons why the Commission issued the Show Cause Order;
   b. Identify the standard(s) and/or other accreditation requirement(s) at issue; and
   c. Advise the school of its obligations under the Show Cause Order and the deadline for response.
5. Upon review of the school's response to the Show Cause Order or any progress report or additional requirements placed on a school in relation to the Show Cause Order, the Commission may:
   a. Remove the Show Cause Order if the school's response gives evidence that such removal is warranted or if the response shows that the school complies with accreditation standards and requirements or
   b. Take any other action set forth under *Section VII, Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*.
6. The Commission will not consider substantive changes, a change of location/relocation, or additions (i.e., separate facilities, new programs) to a school or its separate facilities while the school is on a Show Cause Order. However, a school that is subject to a Show Cause Order may seek the Commission's approval for the transfer of accreditation that would result from a change of ownership as described in *Section IV (E)(2), Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*.
7. Within seven days of receipt of the Show Cause Order notification and for the duration of that action, a school must:
   a. Inform current and prospective students in writing that the school has been placed/continued on a Show Cause Order and provide such notice on the school's website;

b. Provide a summary that accurately describes the reasons for the Show Cause Order; and

c. Provide the uniform resource locator (URL) where that action can be obtained from the Commission's website.

N. Time Frame to Remedy Noncompliance

1. When the Commission has found an area in which a school is out of compliance with accreditation standards or requirements, the Commission will provide the institution with a written timeline as set forth in the Commission's notification for coming into compliance that is reasonable based on the nature of the finding(s), the current period of review, the school's stated mission, and the educational objectives of the institution.

2. The maximum allotted time frame, together with the time for the Commission's decision, will not exceed the lesser of 150% of the length of the longest program offered at the school or three years unless there is good cause to extend the maximum time frame for achieving compliance. The Commission is not required to allow the maximum time frame to remedy noncompliance in all instances and will establish shorter time frames as deemed appropriate, including taking immediate adverse action.

3. Generally, in order for the Commission to find that good cause exists to extend the maximum time frame, the school must show that:

   a. During the period of review, significant progress has been made toward achieving compliance with the accreditation standard(s) in question;

   b. The school is otherwise meeting requirements set forth by the Commission; and

   c. Extenuating circumstances exist such that only through the provision of additional time can the school demonstrate its compliance with the standard(s) cited.

   The Commission of its own accord may also extend the maximum time frame in limited and exceptional circumstances if the circumstances are beyond the institution's control (e.g., a natural disaster or other catastrophic event significantly impacting an institution's or program's operations). Under no circumstances shall the Commission be required to extend the maximum time frame to achieve compliance.

4. If the school does not bring itself into compliance within the period specified by the Commission, the Commission will take adverse action.

O. Denial of Accreditation

1. An adverse accreditation decision to deny accreditation is applicable to schools applying for initial accreditation. Following the due process required by these *Rules*, the Commission may deny a grant of initial accreditation to an initial applicant when the Commission determines from the record that the school does not meet the requirements specified in the *Standards of Accreditation* and that such an action is warranted.

2. The Commission's decision to deny an initial grant of accreditation will be delivered to the school in writing and the school will have an opportunity to appeal the Commission's decision in accordance with *Section VIII, Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*.

3. A school subject to an initiated or final decision to deny accreditation must within seven days of receipt inform current and prospective students in writing of that action and indicate where information regarding that action can be obtained from the Commission's website.

4. The school may reapply no sooner than nine months from the date on which the decision to deny accreditation became effective.

P. Denial of a Substantive Change Application

1. Following the due process required by these *Rules*, the Commission may deny a substantive change application when the Commission determines from the record that the school has not demonstrated sufficient capacity to undertake the change and to meet accrediting standards in all required areas directly or indirectly affected by the change.
2. The Commission's adverse accreditation decision to deny a substantive change will be delivered to the school in writing and the school will have an opportunity to appeal the Commission's decision in accordance with *Section VIII, Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*.
3. The Commission may, at its discretion, deny a substantive change application without first taking any other action listed in these *Rules*.
4. If the school elects not to appeal the Commission's decision, then the adverse accreditation decision is final.
5. Student Notification Requirements:
    a. Upon receipt of notification from the Commission of a decision to deny a substantive change, the school must within seven days inform all students enrolled in the school and those seeking admission of the accreditation decision and indicate where that action can be obtained from the Commission's website.
    b. If the school chooses to appeal the accreditation decision, then the school must inform current and prospective students of the appeal during the appeal process.
    c. Once a decision to deny a substantive change is final, then the school must within seven days inform current and prospective students that the denial of a substantive change action is final.

Q. Withdrawal of Accreditation

1. Following the due process required by these *Rules*, the Commission may take an adverse accreditation action to withdraw the accreditation of a school any time a school fails to demonstrate compliance with one or more accreditation standards or other requirements and for any of the reasons, or combination thereof, described below.
    a. Failure to continue to meet the eligibility requirements for accreditation set forth in *Section I, Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*.
    b. Failure to demonstrate compliance with an accrediting standard or other accreditation requirement set forth in the *Standards of Accreditation*.
    c. Failure to attend an accreditation workshop for reaccreditation or file an Application for Renewal of Accreditation or Self-Evaluation Report.
    d. Failure to file and have approved a substantive change application as set forth in *Section IV*, *Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation* in advance of the change.
    e. Failure to cooperate in a required on-site evaluation of the school conducted on an announced or unannounced basis.
    f. Failure to notify the Commission in a timely manner of any material change in the school's ownership, the way in which the school conducts its business, or the circumstances in which it

operates pursuant to *Section IV & V*, *Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*.

g. Failure to pay any required fees within the time frame established by the Commission.

h. Failure to submit a required response or to comply with a Commission order or directive.

2. The Commission may, at its discretion, withdraw a school's accreditation and remove the school from the list of ACCSC-accredited schools without first taking any other action listed in these *Rules*.

3. The Commission's decision to withdraw accreditation will be delivered to the school in writing, the school will have an opportunity to appeal the Commission's decision in accordance with *Section VIII, Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*, and the Commission will require the school to submit a complete ACCSC Institutional Teach-Out Plan Approval Form.

4. If the school elects not to appeal the Commission's decision, then the adverse accreditation decision is final. In exceptional circumstances, the Commission may maintain the institution's accreditation until the institution has had reasonable time to complete a teach-out plan.

5. Student Notification Requirements:

   a. Upon receipt of notification from the Commission of a decision to withdraw accreditation, the school must within seven days inform all students enrolled in the school and those seeking admission of the withdrawal of accreditation decision and indicate where that action can be obtained from the Commission's website.

   b. If the school chooses to appeal a withdrawal of accreditation decision, then the school must inform current and prospective students of the appeal and that the school is on Probation during the appeal process.

   c. Once a decision to withdraw accreditation is final, then the school must within seven days inform current and prospective students that the withdrawal of accreditation action is final. A school must delete all references to and claims of ACCSC accreditation from the school's website, catalog, enrollment agreement, advertising, and promotional materials immediately after withdrawal of accreditation.

6. The Commission will consider the school to have had its accreditation withdrawn as of the date that the school closes in instances where a school closes without:

   a. Completing the education for all enrolled students prior to the closure;

   b. Having an approved teach-out plan (to include a teach-out agreement(s) as may be required) that the school adheres to prior to closure; or

   c. Having made formal arrangements for all students to complete their education elsewhere through transfer credit, articulation, or as part of a teach-out agreement prior to closure.

7. The school may reapply no sooner than nine months from the date on which the withdrawal of accreditation became effective.

R. Voluntary Withdrawal or Closure

1. Voluntary Withdrawal

   a. A school that is currently accredited may voluntarily withdraw from the Commission's list of accredited schools at any time. A school that is seeking initial accreditation may voluntarily

withdraw an Application for Initial Accreditation, without prejudice, at any time prior to the Commission's final review of the school's application.

b. A school that intends to voluntarily withdraw its ACCSC accreditation must submit a written notice specifying the date upon which the voluntary withdrawal is to be effective.

2. School Closure: A school that intends to close must submit:

   a. A written notice specifying the date of anticipated closure, evidence that the school has informed all other applicable regulatory and oversight agencies and entities (e.g., state, federal, and other accrediting agencies) and

   b. A complete ACCSC Institutional Teach-Out Plan Approval Form.

3. Upon notification to the Commission of a voluntary withdrawal of accreditation or closure, the Commission shall acknowledge the effective date of the withdrawal of accreditation and the school must:

   a. Immediately inform all students enrolled in the school and those seeking admission of the effective date of the closure or withdrawal of accreditation and

   b. Delete all references to and claims of ACCSC accreditation from catalogs, advertising, and promotional materials immediately and in no event later than 30 days after the effective date of the closure or withdrawal of accreditation.

4. The Commission will consider the school to have had its accreditation withdrawn as of the date that the school closes in instances where a school closes without:

   a. Completing the education for all enrolled students prior to the closure;

   b. Having an approved teach-out plan (to include a teach-out agreement(s) as may be required) that the school adheres to prior to closure; or

   c. Having made formal arrangements for all students to complete their education elsewhere through transfer credit, articulation, or as part of a teach-out agreement prior to closure.

S. Other Actions to Monitor Ongoing Compliance

In order to ensure that each school accredited by ACCSC achieves and maintains compliance with ACCSC standards, procedures, policies, directives, and requirements, the Commission may, in addition to the actions listed elsewhere in these *Rules* and in the *Standards of Accreditation*, take any actions that it believes are necessary, proper, and fair, including but not limited to the following types of actions:

1. Direct a school to send an appropriate representative to an Accreditation Workshop.
2. Order an on-site evaluation, announced or unannounced, by a full or partial team. The cost of such on-site evaluations will be borne by the school unless the Commission determines otherwise.
3. Restrict the submission of substantive change applications.
4. Shorten the period of accreditation previously granted to the school and require the school to undergo early renewal of accreditation.
5. Establish a cap/limit on or direct the cessation of new enrollment in one or more programs.
6. Suspend approval of any program or the approval of degree-granting or distance education status and require the school to demonstrate compliance with accreditation requirements within a

specified time frame. If the school cannot demonstrate compliance with accreditation requirements, the Commission may take additional action as described in number 7 below.

7. Rescind the approval of any program or the approval of degree-granting or distance education status and require a teach-out plan, which may also include the requirement of a teach-out agreement with another qualified institution as deemed appropriate by the Commission, for all enrolled students.

SECTION VIII – APPEAL OF A COMMISSION DECISION

A. Coverage of Appeals

The appeal procedure specified in this section of the *Rules* is the exclusive remedy for a school that believes that an adverse accreditation decision by the Commission is unwarranted pursuant to the terms set forth in this section of the *Rules*.

1. Only adverse accreditation decisions made by the Commission are subject to appeal. Adverse accreditation decisions are:
   a. A decision to deny a substantive change application;
   b. A decision to deny an application for initial accreditation; and
   c. A decision to withdraw accreditation.
2. An accredited school remains accredited, operating under a Probation, until the final disposition of the appeal. The Commission will follow its public notification requirements in accordance with the provisions set forth in these *Rules*.
3. The Commission will not consider petitions for reinstatement or petitions for reconsideration.

B. Grounds for Appeal and Standard of Review

1. A school affected by an adverse accreditation action taken by the Commission may appeal that decision if it has reason to believe the Commission's decision was arbitrary, capricious, or in substantial disregard of the criteria or procedures of the Commission, or not supported by evidence in the record on which the Commission took action.
2. On appeal, the school has the burden of proof to show that the Commission's adverse accreditation action met one or more of the above conditions and the Sitting Appeals Panel may only amend or remand an adverse accreditation action if such a showing is made.
3. The Appeals Panel will only consider information that was before the Commission at the time that the adverse action was taken, except as allowed for under *Section VIII (C)(2)(c), Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*.
4. The record on an appeal will include, as applicable, the: Letter of Intent to Appeal a Commission Decision; Application for Appeal of a Commission Decision and the Grounds for Appeal; any On-Site Evaluation Report(s); Commission action letter(s); school response(s); and applications, reports, and other documents relevant to the adverse accreditation action and the appeal.
5. The school must pay in full the appeal fee and all other fees due to the Commission in order to have standing to appeal a Commission decision.

C. Appeal Procedures

1. Letter of Intent to Appeal: To initiate an appeal process the school must submit a Letter of Intent to Appeal accompanied by the required appeal fee, within 10 days of receipt of the Commission's official notice of the adverse accreditation decision.
2. Application for Appeal of a Commission Decision and Grounds for Appeal: Within 30 days of receipt of the Commission's official notice of the adverse accreditation decision, the school must submit the Application for Appeal of a Commission Decision and Grounds for Appeal in accordance with the requirements set forth therein.

a. The school must set forth in the Grounds for Appeal its case relative to its belief that the Commission's decision was arbitrary, capricious, or otherwise in substantial disregard of the criteria or procedures of the Commission, or not supported by substantial evidence in the record on which the Commission took action. The written Grounds for Appeal must respond to each basis included in the letter reporting the Commission's decision and the Grounds for Appeal must be prepared and presented in accordance with the Commission's established process and requirements.

b. Only evidence previously submitted to the Commission may be included in a submission to the Appeals Panel, except as allowed for under *Section VIII (C)(2)(c), Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*. The Grounds for Appeal may not include information or documentation that was not in the record at the time that the Commission took the adverse action. The Grounds for Appeal must include a reference to where information and documentation can be found in the record at the time that the Commission took the adverse action.

c. Financial Information: In instances where the only remaining deficiency cited by the Commission in an adverse accreditation decision is the institution's failure to meet the Commission's standards pertaining to financial soundness, an institution may present new financial information under the following conditions:

   i. The financial information was unavailable prior to the adverse accreditation decision;

   ii. The Commission or the Executive Committee has determined that the financial information is significant and bears materially on the financial deficiencies identified by the Commission; and

   iii. A school may present new financial information only once and any final determination reached with respect to the new financial information does not provide a new basis for appeal.

3. The school has the option of sending a representative(s) to make a presentation at the hearing. The school must provide to the Commission the names and titles of any representatives from the school who will offer testimony or argument in an appeal hearing before the Appeals Panel, and give the name and title of any outside counsel, if the school intends to be represented by counsel.

4. Record of Appeal Hearing: The school has the right to a transcript of the appeal hearing and may request one by notice to the Executive Director of ACCSC at the time of the filing of the Grounds for Appeal. Video or audio recording of the appeal hearing is not permitted. The school will be responsible for the cost of its copy of the hearing transcript. Any transcription of the hearing will be arranged by the Executive Director of ACCSC.

5. The appeal will be heard within 60 days of receipt of the school's Grounds for Appeal unless reasonable circumstances prevent the hearing of the appeal in that time frame.

6. The Sitting Appeal Panel will have 60 days after the appeal hearing to finalize its decision. The Commission will thereafter provide written notice of the appeal decision in accordance with the timeframes established in *Section X* of these *Rules*.

D. Appeals Panel

1. The Executive Director of ACCSC will make available the complete record of the accreditation proceeding involving the appealing school to the ACCSC Appeals Panel.

2. Standing Appeals Panel:
    a. The Standing Appeals Panel does not include any current member of the Commission.
    b. Members of the Standing Appeals Panel are subject to the ACCSC Appeals Panel Code of Conduct and other requirements as stated in the Commission's policies and may be removed from the list of Standing Appeals Panel members for failure to comply with these policies.
    c. At least 10 persons constitute the Commission's Standing Appeals Panel.
    d. Members of the Standing Appeals Panel are nominated by the Commission Chair, with the advice of the Executive Director of ACCSC, and confirmed by the Commission from a pool of candidates who have knowledge of accrediting policies and procedures, such as school and college administrators and academic personnel; public members with an academic and/or administrative background and individuals from industry, government, or education; or individuals with experience in accreditation.
    e. Prior to the Appeals Panel hearing, the school is advised of the names and school affiliations, if any, of members of the Standing Appeals Panel.
    f. Alternates: The Standing Appeals Panel may be supplemented with qualified alternates in the event that there is an insufficient number of members of the Standing Appeals Panel to constitute a Sitting Appeals Panel with the requisite number of persons.
3. Sitting Appeals Panel: Nominees by the Executive Director of ACCSC from the Standing Appeals Panel are confirmed by the Commission Chair to serve as the Sitting Appeals Panel, which will fairly and impartially consider a school's appeal. One member will be designated to Chair the Sitting Appeals Panel, one member will be designated as an administrative representative, one member will be designated as an academic representative, and at least one member will be a public member. In cases where a single purpose institution is appealing a Commission decision, the Appeals Panel will include a member that is designated as an Educator, Practitioner, and/or Employer. Each Appeal Panel member will be designated to fill only one role.
4. Objections:
    a. If the school has good cause to believe any member of the Standing Appeals Panel should not hear the appeal, it must promptly notify the Executive Director of ACCSC of its belief and the reasons for it in writing.
    b. Objections to any member of the Standing Appeals Panel hearing the appeal or any other procedural issues concerning the conditions under which the school's appeal is to be heard will be considered and ruled upon by the Executive Committee of the Commission. If it is not feasible to convene the Executive Committee, the Commission Chair may act upon the matter in question.

E. Sitting Appeals Panel Actions

1. The Sitting Appeals Panel can affirm, amend, or remand the adverse accreditation decision made by the Commission. The action taken must be approved by a majority of the Sitting Appeals Panel.
2. If the Sitting Appeals Panel affirms or amends the Commission's adverse accreditation decision, the decision becomes final unless in the judgment of the Sitting Appeals Panel, the amendment(s) to the adverse accreditation decision raises a question as to whether the amendment(s) would cause the Commission to alter its decision. In that case, the Sitting Appeals Panel should remand the matter to the Commission in accordance with (3.) below.

3. If the Sitting Appeals Panel remands the matter to the Commission for further consideration, the Sitting Appeals Panel will explain the basis for its decision that differs from the Commission's decision and identify specific issues that the Commission must review and address.
4. After reviewing and addressing the matter in a manner consistent with the Sitting Appeals Panel's decision to remand, the Commission may:
   a. Uphold its original adverse accreditation decision or
   b. Vacate the original adverse accreditation decision, reinstate the school's accreditation – with or without sanction – and may require or direct additional inquiry or review (which could lead to a subsequent adverse accrediting decision).
5. If the Commission, acting in a manner consistent with the Appeals Panel's decision to remand the case, upholds its original adverse accreditation decision based upon the grounds previously reviewed by an Appeals Panel, the adverse action will be final and the Commission will afford no additional appeal rights.
6. If the Commission, acting in a manner consistent with the Appeals Panel's decision to remand the case, takes a subsequent adverse action based upon grounds that have not been reviewed by an Appeals Panel, a school may appeal that action based only on those grounds not previously reviewed by an Appeals Panel.

F. Appeal Hearing Procedures

1. The appeal hearing will commence with an opening statement by the Appeal Panel Chair, which describes the applicable standard of review and the procedures to be followed during the hearing.
2. The appealing school's representative or counsel may then offer an opening statement summarizing the grounds for appeal. Presentations of all aspects of the appeal are limited to 30 minutes.
3. The Sitting Appeals Panel members may ask questions related to the record on appeal.
4. The appealing school may offer a closing statement and the hearing will adjourn.
5. The Executive Director of ACCSC communicates in writing to the school the Sitting Appeals Panel's decision and the reasons for that decision.

G. Appeal Fees and Expenses

1. Each school appealing a Commission decision is required to pay the established appeal fee, in accordance with Commission requirements. This includes:
   a. Any main school that is subject to an adverse action;
   b. Any branch campus that is subject to an adverse action independent of its main school; and
   c. Any branch campus that elects to be included in the appeal of a main school that is subject to an adverse action.
2. The expenses incurred in the development and presentation of an appeal, including the fee for the application to appeal, are borne by the school filing the appeal, as indicated in these *Rules*.

SECTION IX – REVISIONS TO AND WAIVERS OF THE *STANDARDS OF ACCREDITATION*

A. Authority

1. The Commission's criteria and standards are under continual review and changes are made as appropriate and required.
2. The Commission has the authority and responsibility to establish and promulgate criteria for the evaluation and accreditation of career schools and colleges. These criteria take the form of the *Standards of Accreditation – Rules of Process and Procedure, Substantive Standards,* and applicable *Appendices*.
3. The Commission maintains a comprehensive systematic program of review that occurs at regular intervals, involves all relevant constituencies, and that demonstrates that its standards are adequate to evaluate the quality of the education or training provided by the institutions relevant to the educational or training needs of students. If, at any point during this process the Commission determines that a change is necessary, the Commission will initiate action within 12 months to make the change and complete this change within a reasonable period of time.
4. The AACSC *Bylaws* are revised in the manner as described therein.

B. Proposed Changes to the *Standards of Accreditation* and Opportunity to Comment

1. Before making a change to a substantive standard, the Commission will provide notice and an opportunity to comment to ACCSC-accredited and applicant schools, persons, institutions, and organizations affected by or with an interest in the Commission's rules, policies, procedures, and standards ("interested parties"). Such proposed revisions are generally provided through a notice sent by ACCSC's Executive Director and posted on the ACCSC website.
2. Generally, interested parties will have 30 days to submit such comments; however, the Commission may establish a shorter or longer comment period as may be deemed necessary. The Commission will be responsive to interested party comments received by the comment deadline but is not required to consider comments received after the published comment deadline.
3. The Commission may make changes to the *Rules of Process and Procedure* and adjust fees without seeking comment as allowed by the *Bylaws*.
4. The Commission will submit to the U.S. Secretary of Education any proposed change in the policies, procedures, or accreditation standards of ACCSC that might alter the Commission's scope of recognition or compliance with the criteria for recognition by the U.S. Secretary of Education.

C. Publication of Final Changes

1. After evaluating and taking into account the comments submitted as well as all other available information, the Commission will prepare and publish in final form the change to the ACCSC standards.
2. The Commission can adopt standards as proposed, adopt with changes or modifications, defer action for further study and consideration, or reject proposed standards.
3. After adopting standards, the Commission announces the adopted standards and takes the action necessary for their implementation. The effective date and procedures for implementation, if required, are included in the announcement, providing a reasonable time for school compliance.
4. Information on new standards is published and disseminated to persons, institutions, and

organizations affected by or with an interest in the standards. The documents of the Commission are revised to include the new standards.

D. Waivers

1. Procedure for Submitting a Waiver Request: In limited and exceptional circumstances, the Commission will consider requests to waive the application of certain accreditation standards and/or procedures. Waiver requests must:
   a. Be submitted to the Commission office in writing, using the application found on the Commission's website;
   b. Identify the specific standard(s) and/or procedure(s) for which a waiver is sought; and
   c. Provide sufficient rationale, justification, and information necessary for the Commission to render a decision.
2. Bases for a Waiver Request: The application must explain in detail the basis/es for the request and provide relevant factual support and include appropriate documentation. The Commission may only grant a waiver if:
   a. The normal application of the standard, process, or procedure will create an undue hardship on students;
   b. The intent of the standard, process, or procedure will otherwise be met through the granting of the waiver; or
   c. Other special and extenuating circumstances exist that prevents compliance with the standard, process, or procedure.

   In all instances, a waiver may only be granted if the school demonstrates that educational quality will be promoted; the interests of students will be protected (e.g., does not create an undue hardship or harm); and will not represent a compromise of academic quality by the proposed waiver. Waiver requests that seek simply to excuse noncompliance with accrediting standards and procedures will be denied.
3. In granting a waiver the Commission will consider the school to be in-compliance with the standard(s)/rule(s) in question. The Commission may also impose such conditions as it deems appropriate on the scope or duration of any waiver that it may grant as it deems appropriate.
4. The decision whether to grant a waiver is made by the Commission and denials of waivers may not be appealed. Waiver requests that effectively seek to amend the *Standards of Accreditation* will not be granted. Instead, schools making such requests should offer proposals for changes to accrediting standards for the Commission's consideration.

E. Exceptional Circumstances Allowing a Limited Period of Non-Compliance

1. In limited and exceptional circumstances, the Commission may permit instances whereby an institution may be out of compliance with one or more of the standards, policies, and procedures for a period of time, as determined by ACCSC annually, not to exceed three years unless there is good cause to extend the period of time, and if circumstances requiring the period of noncompliance are beyond the institution's control (e.g., a natural disaster or other catastrophic event significantly impacting an institution's or program's operations; accepting students from another institution that is implementing a teach-out or closing; changes relating to State licensure requirements, etc.).

2. The grant of the period of noncompliance must be approved by the Commission projecting that the institution can achieve compliance with the standard, policy, or procedure postponed within the time allotted and the grant of the period of noncompliance will not:
   a. Contribute to the cost of the program to the student without the student's consent;
   b. Create any undue hardship to students; or
   c. Compromise academic quality.

SECTION X – NOTIFICATION AND INFORMATION SHARING

A. Scope of Public Information

1. The Commission will make available to the public and may publish in official ACCSC publications, including its website and Directory of Accredited Schools, the following information:
   a. The *Standards of Accreditation* and the associated forms, applications, and reports;
   b. Each accredited school's name, physical address, telephone number, email address, website, and director;
   c. The accredited (or non-accredited) status of a school;
   d. The date of a school's initial accreditation, renewal of accreditation, or previous term of accreditation;
   e. The current term of a school's accreditation;
   f. A list of a school's approved programs;
   g. The graduation and graduate employment rates for each approved program as reported in the school's most recent ACCSC Annual Report;[1]
   h. Information pertaining to actions taken by the Commission as described in these *Rules*; and
   i. The date of a school's voluntary withdrawal of accreditation and status of the school's accreditation as of that date (e.g., operating under Reporting, a Warning, Probation, Show Cause Order, etc.).
2. Confidentiality of Records: Information obtained in the accreditation process and pertaining to the Commission's actions is confidential and is not shared with third parties, other ACCSC school members, the press, or the public, except as authorized by a school or as required by these *Rules*, government regulation, judicial or administrative process, and other legal requirements. The Commission will not release any records that may contain student personally identifiable information which would violate any state or federal law or regulation.

B. Notification of Commission Actions to Schools

1. The Commission will provide written notice to a school of a decision to grant initial or renewal of accreditation within 30 days of the decision.
2. The Commission will provide written notice to a school of all other non-adverse actions in a timely manner, generally within 60 days of the decision.
3. The Commission will provide written notice to a school of an adverse accreditation decision.
4. The Commission will provide written notice to a school of a final adverse accreditation decision within 30 days of the decision.

C. Notification of Commission Actions to Government Entities and Other Accrediting Agencies

1. The Commission, no later than 30 days after making the decision, will provide written notice to the U.S. Department of Education, the appropriate state licensing agency, and other accrediting agencies of a decision by the Commission to grant initial accreditation or renewal of accreditation.

[1] In accordance with the Commission's "Disclosures" requirements established in *Section IV (C)(3), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation*, schools are required to make this disclosure.

The Commission will provide written notice to the U.S. Department of Education, the appropriate state licensing agency, and other accrediting agencies of other school actions in a timely manner as deemed appropriate.

2. The Commission, at the same time it notifies the school,[2] will provide written notice and the reasons why a school is placed on Probation or Warning to the U.S. Department of Education, the appropriate state licensing agency, and other accrediting agencies.
3. The Commission, at the same time it notifies the school, will provide written notice to the U.S. Department of Education, the appropriate state licensing agency, and other accrediting agencies, of an action subject to appeal along with the reasons for the Commission's action and information pertaining to the ACCSC appeal process.
4. The Commission will:
    a. Provide written notice to the U.S. Department of Education, the appropriate state licensing agency, and other accrediting agencies at the same time it notifies the school but no later than 30 days after a final adverse accreditation decision as defined in *Section I (A)(7), Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation* and
    b. Make available to the U.S. Department of Education, the appropriate state licensing agency, and other accrediting agencies the reasons for the Commission's decision along with any comments submitted by the school no later than 60 days after a final adverse accreditation decision as defined in *Section I (A)(7), Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*.
5. The Commission, no later than 10 days after the Commission has received notice of a decision by a school to voluntarily withdraw its accreditation or lets its accreditation lapse, will provide written notice to the U.S. Department of Education, the appropriate state licensing agency, and other accrediting agencies of such decision.
6. The Commission will notify the U.S. Department of Education of the name of any school accredited by ACCSC that the Commission, upon review of relevant information, has reason to believe may be failing to meet its program responsibilities or may be engaged in program fraud or abuse as a participant in Title IV, Higher Education Act federal student financial aid programs. The Commission will provide the reason(s) for the concern(s) in this notification, will review the circumstances related to the notification and keep that notification confidential as the Commission deems necessary, and will keep the notification confidential upon a specific request by the U.S. Department of Education.

D. Disclosure of Commission Actions to the Public

1. The Commission, no later than 30 days after making the decision, will make public any final decision to grant initial accreditation or renewal of accreditation. The Commission will make public other school actions in a timely manner as deemed appropriate.
2. The Commission, at the same time it notifies the school, will make public a decision to place a school on Probation or Warning and provide the reasons for the action.

[2] As used throughout this section, "at the same time" means within 24 hours from when the Commission sends the notice to the school.

3. The Commission, at the same time it notifies the school, will make public an action subject to appeal. The reasons for the Commission's action will also be made public along with information pertaining to the ACCSC appeal process.
4. The Commission will:
    a. Provide written notice to the public at the same time it notifies the school but no later than 30 days after a final adverse accreditation decision and
    b. Make available to the public no later than 60 days after a final adverse accreditation decision the reasons for the Commission's decision together with any comments submitted by the school.
5. The Commission notifies, upon request, the public if an accredited institution:
    a. Decides to withdraw voluntarily from accreditation, within 10 business days of receiving notification from the institution that it is withdrawing voluntarily from accreditation or
    b. Lets its accreditation lapse, within 10 business days of the date on which accreditation lapses.
6. The Commission will provide the disclosure of Commission actions to the public described above on its website and establishes the time frames for the publication and removal of the disclosures from the website.

E. Information Sharing with Government Entities and Other Accrediting Agencies

1. ACCSC will grant all reasonable special requests for accreditation information made by other accreditation agencies and government entities. Requests for information from such entities must be in writing and state the name and address of the school for which the information is sought and the specific information requested.
2. Schools accredited by or seeking accreditation from ACCSC agree to the sharing of accreditation information between and amongst the Commission, other accrediting agencies, state licensing agencies, and other state and federal governmental entities.
3. ACCSC will notify the U.S. Department of Education, the appropriate state agency, and applicable accrediting agencies when the Commission approves an institutional teach-out plan or institutional teach-out agreement. ACCSC will notify applicable accrediting agencies when the Commission approves a programmatic teach-out plan or programmatic teach-out agreement.
4. If an institution accredited by ACCSC closes without a teach-out plan or agreement, the Commission will work with the U.S. Department of Education, 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.

F. Exception in the Event of Appropriate Legal Request

As a general rule, the Commission has no authority or duty to refuse to disclose information about a school when requested to do so pursuant to appropriate legal process. If the request is made by a party with the ability to obtain school records through a legal process, it will be within the discretion of the Commission whether to require that the formalities of the legal process be observed or to provide such information to the requester as if the legal process has been followed. The Commission will be under no obligation to inform a school that such a request has been made and complied with. Such notice may be furnished to the school if the Commission so decides and if such notices are determined to be in accordance with law.

G. Authorized Disclosure of Information

A school may request specific accreditation information that is otherwise to be treated as confidential under this section of the *Rules*, to be released to third parties for appropriate purposes such as change of ownership transactions. In such an instance, the director of the school or a school-designated official must provide a written release to the Commission stating the precise information sought to be released and the party or parties to whom the information is to be released. Regardless of a school's request, the Commission is under no obligation to release the records if the Commission deems the request to be unreasonable. The Commission will not release any records that may contain student personally identifiable information which would violate any state or federal law or regulation.

SECTION XI – PILOT PROJECTS

The Commission will consider suspension of certain accrediting standards and grant approval to a limited number of applicants that propose innovative pilot projects in career-orientated education and training. The proposed pilot projects must reasonably appear to contribute to such education and training, strengthen the school, and benefit students. The Commission may utilize the experience gained from such pilot projects to adjust and improve accrediting standards.

A. Eligibility

An applicant for a pilot project must be accredited by the Commission. An applicant for a pilot project cannot be operating under a Warning, Probation, or Show Cause Order or subject to any form of Reporting. The applicant school and the proposed pilot project must also be in compliance with federal, state, and local law.

B. Application

1. The Commission will consider an application for a pilot project in accordance with the following criteria:
    a. The educational significance of the proposal and how the pilot project conforms to commonly accepted academic standards, or the equivalent;
    b. The diversity of the application pool in regard to geography, school size, and student population; and
    c. The potential for contribution to the development of career-oriented education and training and of accrediting standards.
2. A determination by the Commission not to accept an application for a pilot project will be without prejudice to its resubmission at a later time or to the school's current accredited status.
3. An applicant for a pilot project must submit the following to the Commission:
    a. A narrative statement demonstrating the applicant's eligibility and describing the pilot project in detail, and setting forth the accrediting standards for which a waiver is requested. The narrative should include a description of the specific objectives sought to be accomplished and an explanation of how the pilot project will strengthen the school, contribute to the development of career-oriented education and training, and benefit students.
    b. A statement of the length of time necessary to implement the pilot project proposal and to assess its effectiveness. This statement should explain the basis of the school's projections.
    c. A demonstration that the faculty, instructional material, equipment, and facilities that will be used in conjunction with the pilot project are sufficient to meet the objectives of the proposal. This demonstration must include Staff and Faculty Personnel Reports for all persons who will act in an instructional or administrative capacity in the pilot program and a detailed description of the instructional materials, equipment, and facilities that may be used.
    d. A description of the jobs that students completing the training can reasonably expect to obtain; a projection of the number of students expected to enroll, complete the training, and obtain such jobs; and the basis for the applicant's projections.
    e. An explanation of how the applicant will recruit and admit students, ensure that students are fully and accurately informed about the training to be provided, and determine that students have the

capability to benefit from and succeed at the training. The school must demonstrate that students' health, safety, and welfare will be protected.

f. A financial showing that describes the funding for the pilot program and demonstrates that the applicant is able to support and complete the pilot program.

g. A certification statement by the applicant or its authorized representative, that the information included in the application for a pilot project is true and correct.

4. The Commission will establish an appropriate fee to cover the costs associated with each pilot accreditation program

C. Evaluation

Concurrent with the submission of the information set forth above, the applicant must nominate an independent third party, with expertise in trade and technical education and training, to prepare a plan to review the information submitted to the Commission; to visit the applicant and, if feasible, the facilities where the pilot program will be conducted; and to otherwise evaluate the pilot program proposal. The applicant must promptly notify the Commission of its nomination of such evaluator and submit the evaluator's plan to the Commission. The Commission will review the evaluator nominated by the applicant and the plan for evaluating the application. The Commission may approve, modify, or reject the applicant's nomination and the plan of evaluation, and the Commission may require the selection of another evaluator acceptable to the Commission. The Commission may also require a team visit to verify the information supplied to the Commission and to develop a further understanding of the proposal. The findings of the evaluator and any on-site evaluation team will be set forth in a report that will be provided to the applicant and the Commission. The applicant will have the opportunity to respond to the report.

D. Commission Review

1. Upon consideration of the information provided pursuant to *Section XI (B), Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*, the findings and assessment described in *Section XI (C), Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*, and the applicant's response thereto, the Commission may grant approval for the proposed pilot program if it finds that the program can be reasonably expected to advance trade and technical education and training, strengthen the school, and be of benefit to students. The Commission has the discretion to grant pilot approval even though an applicant has not demonstrated conformity with other provisions of the *Standards of Accreditation*. However, the Commission will not consider a waiver request for the disclosure obligations or tuition refund policy requirements set forth in the *Standards of Accreditation*.

2. The Commission reserves the right to limit the duration of the pilot accreditation and the number of students who will be allowed to participate.

3. Pilot programs may be implemented only as approved by the Commission. Approval granted under this section may not be assigned or transferred without the prior approval of the Commission based upon the assignee's or transferee's satisfaction of *Section XI (A-C), Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*, and such other provisions of this section as may be applicable.

4. The Commission may establish such other terms and conditions upon any approval granted under this section of the *Rules* as the Commission deems appropriate.

E. Progress Report

After the grant of approval under this section, a progress report will be submitted to the Commission at the mid-point of the pilot program and at such other times as the Commission deems appropriate.

F. On-site Evaluation

Prior to the expiration of the term of the pilot program, an on-site evaluation team consisting of a member of the Commission or its designee and such other persons as the Commission determines appropriate will conduct an on-site evaluation of the pilot program. The on-site evaluation team will prepare a report to which the school will have an opportunity to respond.

G. Final Report

Within 180 days after completion of the term of the pilot program or such other time that the Commission sets, the school must submit a report to the Commission that describes the results of the pilot program. The report must state whether the objectives of the pilot program were achieved, explain the basis for assertions of success, analyze and explain why any objectives were not achieved, and provide recommendations for future efforts. The report must also state the number of students who enrolled, completed the training, and obtained employment and must include a detailed description of the positions in which students obtained employment. Proposals for amendment of accrediting standards, based upon the experience gained from the pilot program, may be made. The Commission may require supplementation of the report if additional time is needed to assess the results of the pilot program.

H. Renewal

Since the Commission will consider revisions to accrediting standards in response to successful pilot programs, approval granted under this section of the *Rules* will not be automatically renewed. Renewal of the pilot program may be granted by the Commission upon a showing that it was not feasible to complete the pilot program within its term or that a continuation of the pilot program is otherwise warranted. Such a showing must be submitted to the Commission at least 30 days prior to the completion of the term of the pilot program. The Commission will have the power to approve the request for renewal in accordance with these *Rules*.

I. Commission Decision

All Commission decisions related to a pilot project under this section of the *Rules* are final and are not subject to appeal.

ACCSC
STANDARDS OF ACCREDITATION

CHAPTER 2

SUBSTANTIVE STANDARDS

ACCSC STANDARDS OF ACCREDITATION
SUBSTANTIVE STANDARDS

SECTION I – OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND ADMINISTRATION

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of this section is to describe the fundamentals of leadership, management, and administrative elements essential to an institution dedicated to student success. These elements include well-qualified administrators engaged in continuous improvement; clearly written and consistently executed policies and procedures; sufficient numbers of administrators; adequate financial resources for the proper operation of the school; physical facilities that provide an appropriate and safe learning environment; and leadership that engages in ongoing assessment and improvement activities. These fundamentals provide assurance that the school will be focused on providing quality education to students, engage in ethical, fair, and honest practices, and comply with accrediting standards.

A. Ownership, Management, and Administrative Capacity

1. The school must have adequate management and administrative capacity in place that includes:
    a. Full-time on-site supervision by an individual or team with the appropriate combination of education, experience, and demonstrated ability to lead and manage a postsecondary educational institution in compliance with accrediting standards;
    b. Owners, board members,[1] members of school management, and administrative employees who are qualified for their particular roles and who possess the appropriate education, training, and experience commensurate with the level of their responsibilities;
    c. A sufficient number of managers and administrative employees necessary to support the school's operations, student services, and educational programs; and
    d. Appropriate administrative and operational policies and procedures to which the school adheres, reviews, and updates as needed.
2. All owners, members of school management, and administrative employees must have past records that demonstrate a commitment to:
    a. Providing quality education to students;
    b. Ethical, fair, and honest practice; and
    c. Compliance with accrediting standards and applicable federal, state, and local requirements.

    The Commission will consider affiliation with a school that has lost or been denied accreditation, entered into bankruptcy, or closed; involvement in criminal proceedings and any pending or past action in a judicial, law enforcement, or administrative body; and any other information related to the performance of or commitment to providing quality education to students; ethical, fair and honest practice; and compliance with accrediting standards and applicable federal, state, and local requirements.

[1] If the school is part of/owned by a non-profit organization/corporation, an individual/entity/group (owner or manager) that has any financial interest in the non-profit organization/corporation may not serve as a board member, have a seat on the Board, or be a member of the corporation. Financial interest in this context means instances when an individual could receive financial benefit or harm from the school's operations (e.g., an individual to whom the school owes debt, an individual that has a business or contractual relationship with the school, etc.). Financial interest in this context does not refer to a board member fulfilling fiduciary duties and responsibilities on behalf of the non-profit organization.

3. Members of school management and administrative employees must participate in ongoing development and training activities that support their particular roles in the school including as applicable, ACCSC requirements and procedures.
4. The school must ensure the continuity of management and administrative capacity through the reasonable retention of management and administrative staff.

B. Institutional Assessment and Improvement Activities

1. The school must demonstrate that it engages in significant and ongoing institutional assessment and improvement activities appropriate to the size and scale of the school's operations and that support the management and administration of the school as well as the quality of education provided.[2]
2. The school must demonstrate institutional assessment and improvement activities appropriate to the size and scale of the school's operations in the areas of management; fiscal condition and budget; administrative policies and practices; emergency preparedness; student support services; faculty and staff development; educational program curricula; learning resources system, equipment, and supporting materials; facilities; and student achievement outcomes.

C. Financial Stability and Responsibility

1. The financial structure of the school is sound, with resources sufficient for the proper operation of the school and the discharge of obligations to its students. Financial statements must be prepared in accordance with generally acceptable accounting principles, the ACCSC Instructions for the Preparation and Submission of Financial Statements and Related Information, and all applicable federal, state, and local requirements.
2. The school prepares a financial budget for each fiscal year that allocates working capital for expenditures required to ensure the proper operation of the school and the discharge of its obligations to students as well as for institutional improvement and faculty development activities. The school monitors its budgetary projections in relation to actual income and expenses on a regular basis throughout the fiscal year.
3. The school has insurance to provide adequate protection to the school, employees, and students.

D. Tuition, Cancellation, Refund, and Payment Policies

1. Tuition Policies: All charges must be as set forth in the catalog, enrollment agreement, and accompanying addendum(a).
    a. Tuition costs and charges, tuition discounts, scholarships, grants, and all costs incidental to training are:
        i. Fully, clearly, and accurately disclosed to the prospective student before enrollment and
        ii. Fairly applied.

[2] Institutional assessment and improvement activities should support and enhance the quality of the education provided. The school should seek to obtain information internally (e.g., staff and faculty development and planning, and student input and feedback) and externally (e.g., Program Advisory Committees, employers, community involvement, school graduates, etc.) to validate the school's educational and administrative practices and to document and improve student learning and achievement. Planning that includes goal setting, establishing timelines, and benchmarking is a useful practice in institutional assessment and improvement activities and is encouraged.

b. A tuition discount must be a bona fide reduction in the tuition that would otherwise be charged.

c. A grant or scholarship – as distinct from a tuition discount – must:

i. Be bona fide financial assistance whereby funds are applied toward a qualified student's costs;

ii. Be issued for recognized and acceptable purposes; and

iii. Include specified criteria that a student must meet in order to be eligible for and receive the grant or scholarship.

d. Tuition changes in programs are bona fide and effective on specific dates. Tuition for students currently in school is changed only if authorized in the enrollment agreement and only if reasonable advance notice is provided.

2. Cancellation Policies: The school must have and apply a fair and equitable cancellation policy in compliance with state or third-party requirements that minimally conforms to the following:

a. An applicant who has not visited the school prior to enrollment may cancel without penalty by requesting cancellation 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. An applicant requesting cancellation within three days after signing an enrollment agreement and making an initial payment is entitled to a refund of all monies paid by the applicant.

c. 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.

3. Refund Policies: The school must have and apply a fair and equitable refund policy also in compliance with state or third-party requirements, or in the absence of such requirements in accordance with generally accepted practices.

a. In all instances, a school's refund policy must contain minimally the following elements:

i. How refunds are calculated (e.g., pro rata);

ii. The date from which refunds will be calculated; and

iii. The time frame within which refunds will be made.

b. Written notification of withdrawal from the student shall not be required for refund payment.

c. In no instance may a school make required refunds in excess of 90 days from the student's withdrawal or termination date.

d. In instances where state or third-party requirements and accrediting requirements conflict, the more stringent requirement shall apply.

e. The refund policy must be disclosed consistently in the catalog and enrollment agreement and the language in the catalog and the enrollment agreement shall not be in conflict.

4. Payment Policies:

a. Requirements for student tuition and fee payments must be as set forth in the enrollment agreement, accompanying addendum(a), or other applicable documents (e.g., financial aid forms, loan documents, etc.);

b. If promissory notes or contracts for tuition are sold or discounted to third parties, either the student signing such note, or the financial sponsor who signed the note, must sign a statement authorizing such sales; and

c. Methods used by a school in requesting or demanding payment are in good taste and follow sound and ethical practices.

E. Student Loan Repayment

Accredited schools have an obligation to encourage and facilitate repayment of financial obligations, including guaranteed loans, used to finance students' education and training. This has a potential impact upon the school's financial stability and, consequently, its educational effectiveness and accredited status. Accredited schools can address two major factors affecting student loan repayment: willingness to pay and ability to pay. Schools can influence willingness to pay by providing information and advice and also develop an ability to pay by providing training and skills that enhance the value of their graduates to employers.

1. The school must engage in ongoing efforts to promote student loan repayment. To improve students' propensity to meet loan obligations, the school shall adopt a written comprehensive program, addressing such areas as student loan information, advising and monitoring, cooperation with lenders, and collection of information to facilitate location of borrowers. The school must document the implementation of the program and conduct an annual evaluation of the effectiveness of the school's efforts.

2. The Commission will review the annual cohort student loan default rates of its accredited institutions to determine if those rates are at a high level or have increased significantly in relation to standards established by law or regulation. If it is found that a school's annual cohort student loan default rates are at a high level or have increased significantly in relation to standards established by law or regulation, the Commission will review available information to determine whether the school is in compliance with accrediting standards. If it is determined that the school has failed to devote satisfactory ongoing efforts to promote student loan repayment or is in violation of other accrediting standards, the Commission may require additional reporting by the school as deemed appropriate; may direct a fact finding team to include an ACCSC staff member and Team Leader to conduct an on-site evaluation to the school; or may issue a Warning to the school or take other appropriate action.

F. Institutional Name

1. A school's name must be approved by the applicable state agency(ies) in which the school operates.

2. A school may use the term "University" in its name only when such use has been approved by the appropriate state authorities and upon approval by the Commission after the following elements have been demonstrated:

   a. The school offers at least one graduate-level degree;

   b. The school can show successful student achievement in offering graduate-level education;[3]

   c. The school offers diverse programs of study with a comprehensive learning resource system to support those fields;

[3] With the exception allowed pursuant to *Section IV (E)(5)(a)(ii), Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation* provided that the branch campus meets all other requirements for the use of the term University.

d. The school is comparable to other schools with university status; and

e. The school has an established professoriate with a commitment to scholarship.

G. Physical Facilities and Emergency Preparedness

1. All facilities owned or controlled for administrative, instructional, and housing purposes must meet fire, safety, and sanitation standards required by appropriate regulatory authorities.
2. The school's physical facilities must be sufficient to create an effective and suitable learning environment (e.g., size, resources, safety, etc.).
3. The school has a written emergency preparedness plan that is made available to all staff, faculty, and students, and includes the following elements:
   a. Emergency scenario identification and concordant action plans;[4]
   b. Evacuation and lockdown procedures;
   c. Communication protocols for sharing information with appropriate parties during and following an incident;
   d. Orientation for students; and
   e. Regular training for staff and faculty.

[4] Typical scenarios addressed to scale could include: weather-based events; fire and incendiary-based events; water-based events; events that pose a danger to students on or near campus; visitor protocol and campus intrusion; medical emergencies; physical and cyber threats; and acts of violence. By way of example, the plan's scale for weather-based events will vary depending on geographic location and for fire-based events will vary dependent upon whether flammable materials are maintained on the premises.

SECTION II – PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of this section is to establish the fundamental requirements for the development and delivery of viable, quality programs that lead to students' successful attainment of knowledge, skills, and vocational objectives. The fundamentals include a careful design process and rigorous ongoing assessment of programs; establishing an appropriate program length; furnishing detailed and organized course outlines and syllabi; identifying clear learning objectives; and resourcing the programs with adequate instructional materials, equipment, and learning resources materials.

A. General Program Requirements

The following requirements apply to all programs, irrespective of the credential offered.

1. Approval and Programmatic Accreditation
   a. Schools must:
      i. Have each program reviewed and approved by the Commission before the program is offered to students;[1]
      ii. Submit the appropriate substantive change application for the approval of any new program as set forth in these *Rules*; and
      iii. Demonstrate sufficient experience and resources necessary to offer a program.
   b. Upon approval by the Commission, if specialty/programmatic accreditation of the program is a condition for employment or licensure,[2] the school must immediately apply with the appropriate specialty/programmatic accreditor. The school must obtain the specialty/ programmatic accreditation within four years of the date of the Commission's approval.
2. Program Design and Development

   The school has an established process for the design and development of appropriate education and training programs and ensures that appropriate elements are included in the program curriculum. To meet this standard, the institution must demonstrate that the school has an established process:

   a. To design and develop courses, course learning materials and resources, curricula, student learning outcomes and competencies, and student assessment for which the institution obtains input from appropriate internal and external resources;[3]
   b. To determine the need and viability of the educational program using external validation (e.g., local demand for training, local employment outlook, earning potential of graduates, other factors that might affect the continued success of the program, etc.);
   c. To support articulation opportunities with other academic and training programs, where appropriate;

[1] For a school applying for accreditation for the first time, this means that each program offered by the school must be included in the initial accreditation application process.
[2] This requirement applies if programmatic accreditation is a condition of employment or licensure in the state in which the school is located or in any state from which the school enrolls students in the specific program. See *Section IV (C)(4), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation* for ACCSC's programmatic accreditation disclosure requirements.
[3] Examples of external resources include subject-matter specialists; the teaching and learning professional community; independent Program Advisory Committees; employers, technicians, and practitioners representing industry and the employment community; professional societies; and trade associations.

d. To address the instructional and teaching methods to be used in delivering the program content; and

e. To involve administrative and instructional staff, students, and graduates when appropriate.

3. Program Organization and Length

a. For every program:

i. There are detailed and organized instructional outlines and course syllabi showing a scope and sequence of subject matter sufficient to achieve the program objectives and to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and competencies;

ii. All course and program design and credit awards must conform to generally accepted practices in higher education; and

iii. All required courses must be available to enable students to complete their programs of study.

b. Programs are measured in clock hours or credit hours (semester or quarter equivalents – refer to *Appendix III*), include the appropriate number of didactic hours and, as applicable, the appropriate number of supervised laboratory and/or other hours (e.g., outside work/preparation, externship, etc.) necessary to achieve the program objectives.

c. For every program:

i. The program name accurately aligns with program objectives;

ii. The program is an appropriate length to enable students to achieve the program objectives and to acquire the knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary, minimally, for initial employment in the field for which training is provided;

iii. The program length is aligned with the program objectives and neither too short nor too long in relation to those objectives; and

iv. Where applicable, the program length conforms to regulatory requirements or state, federal, or national standards.

d. Programs are comprised of an appropriate mix of the following types of courses:

i. Technical and Occupationally Related Courses:

1. Technical and occupationally related courses are directly related and applicable to a specific occupation or occupational cluster. The course title and description should demonstrate that a course is technical and occupationally related in alignment with this definition.

2. Technical and occupationally related courses provide education and training in the areas associated with theoretical knowledge, technical skills, occupationally related skills, and associated competencies necessary for a student to achieve the program objectives.

ii. Applied General Education Courses:

1. Applied general education courses place an emphasis on practical applications of principles and theory associated with a particular occupation or occupational cluster. The course title and description should demonstrate that a course is applied general education in alignment with this definition.

2. Applied general education courses are directly applicable to a specific occupation or occupational cluster in areas such as related written and oral communication; quantitative principles; natural and physical sciences; STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math); social and behavioral sciences; technology; and humanities and fine arts that enhance the ability of an individual to apply occupational skills in the workplace.

iii. Academic General Education Courses:

1. Academic general education courses must place an emphasis on principles and theories not associated with a particular occupation or profession and are expected to develop critical thinking, problem solving and analytical skills; enable individuals to prepare for and advance in their professional lives; and contribute to lifelong learning. The course title and description should demonstrate that a course is academic general education in alignment with this definition.

2. Academic general education courses are in areas such as written and oral communication; quantitative principles; natural and physical sciences; STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math); social and behavioral sciences; and humanities and fine arts that are designed to develop essential academic skills for enhanced and continued learning.

3. Academic general education courses should generally be comprised of at least 15 hours of didactic learning and 30 hours of out-of-class work/preparation per semester credit hour or at least 10 hours of didactic learning and 20 hours of out-of-class work/preparation per quarter credit hour or an equivalent amount of in-class and out-of-class time and work that a school can justify and show as conforming to generally accepted practices in higher education.

iv. The program may include other types of courses that support a student's educational experience such as orientation, career services, health and wellness, and life skills.

e. Generally, the Commission measures program length based on clock hours and/or credit hours as follows:

i. A clock hour is defined as 50 minutes of instruction in a 60-minute period of time.

ii. A credit hour is defined as an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement for academic activities as established by the institution comprised of the following units: didactic learning environment; supervised laboratory setting of instruction; externship; and/or out-of-class work/preparation. See *Appendix III* for the Commission's specific measurements for a credit hour and a glossary of credit hour terms.

f. Generally, in order for the Commission to recognize a program in credit hours, the program must be comprised of a majority[4] of courses that require out-of-class work/preparation. Programs that do not have an out-of-class work/preparation component are considered clock-hour programs. A school must be able to justify the number of hours estimated and types of assignments for out-of-class work/preparation.

g. The estimated number of hours (clock or credit) awarded per course must conform to generally accepted practice in higher education. Schools that have or apply for programs that appear to

[4] In calculating the "majority" of courses in a program, the Commission would exclude an externship course from the denominator.

be significantly shorter or longer in clock or credit hours than comparable programs (i.e., within the same field of study) will be required to justify the appropriateness of the program length.

4. Program Evaluation
   a. The school has a systematic and evidence-based program evaluation process for each occupational program or each group of related occupational programs (referred to hereafter as "program area") designed to:
      i. Evaluate curriculum and course content (i.e., academic general education, applied general education, technical and occupational courses, electives, etc.);
      ii. Assess the appropriateness of that coursework in relation to program objectives;
      iii. Assess the adequacy of program equipment and supporting resource materials;
      iv. Assess student achievement outcomes and program viability; and
      v. Make revisions to the curriculum as deemed necessary.
   b. The school's program evaluation process is comprehensive, conducted by faculty and educational administrators regularly, and uses input from internal and external sources including, but not limited to, the following:
      i. An independent and diverse Program Advisory Committee for each program area to review the established curricula of the program/program area, instructional-related program materials, equipment and facilities, and student achievement outcomes as a means to provide the school with an external review of its programs (see *Appendix III* for the specific requirements for Program Advisory Committees);
      ii. Student and alumni input collected through sources such as: regular surveys, student governance groups, inclusion on Program Advisory Committees, community building initiatives, or other formal and informal means; and
      iii. As useful, needed, and appropriate:
         1. Subject-matter specialists;
         2. Employers, independent technicians, and practitioners representing industry;
         3. The teaching and learning professional community;
         4. Externship, practicum, and clinical sites;
         5. Professional societies;
         6. Trade associations; or
         7. Other similar resources.
   c. The school must provide evidence that it gives consideration to the input received from the sources which are a part of its program evaluation process.
   d. The school's program evaluation process is ongoing with set intervals for evaluation and is included as part of its institutional assessment and improvement planning activities (see *Section I (B), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation* for details regarding institutional assessment and improvement requirements).

5. Instructional Materials and Equipment

   a. Instructional materials are sufficiently comprehensive and reflect current occupational knowledge and practice.

   b. Instructional equipment is similar to that found in common occupational practice and includes teaching devices and supplemental instructional aids appropriate to the subject.

   c. Sufficient equipment and learning stations are provided to allow each student adequate scheduled time for practice and the school requires the use of safety equipment where applicable.

   d. Machinery and equipment are properly maintained and provided with proper safety devices, which are in working order and used whenever the machinery and equipment is operated.

6. Learning Resource System

   A learning resource system includes all materials that support a student's educational experience and enhance a school's educational program such as libraries; texts; electronic resources; learning resource laboratories and centers; library consortia and interlibrary loan agreements; computers; internet access; research databases; and other similar resources and equipment. Necessary elements of a school's learning resource system follow.

   a. A school's learning resource system must include materials commensurate with the level of education provided and appropriate to the courses of study in sufficient quantity and scope to meet the educational objectives of each program and include such elements as: relevant and current texts and periodicals; research journals and databases; standard works of reference; multi-media and/or electronic resources; electronic library resource technologies; and other resource materials necessary to adequately serve the student body.

   b. The learning resource system can be centralized or decentralized in organization but resources must be easily and readily accessible to students and faculty during and beyond classroom hours, regardless of location or means of delivery.

   c. Use of the learning resource system materials must be integrated into a school's curriculum and program requirements as a mechanism to enhance the educational process and to facilitate positive learning outcomes for students.

   d. A school's learning resource system must be managed by qualified school personnel with sufficient experience to provide oversight and supervision. Schools that offer a baccalaureate degree or higher must have a learning resource system coordinated by an individual holding a master's degree in either the library science or information specialist fields.

   e. Qualified school personnel orient, train, and assist students and faculty in the use of the learning resource system in a manner that supports learning objectives.

   f. A school must have written policies and procedures for the ongoing development of its learning resource system as part of its institutional improvement program. A school must demonstrate sufficient support and budgetary allocations for the learning resource system.

   g. In any case, it remains the responsibility of the school to ensure that its student body is adequately served and has ready access to sufficient and appropriate learning resource materials in compliance with these standards.

7. Externships

   These standards apply to externships, internships and other similar occupational activities for which educational credit is awarded. When used, an externship may occur throughout the course of a program or as a capstone requirement.

   a. An externship is a component of a program that is offered in a bona fide occupational setting for which training and education are provided. The objectives and goals of an externship must be to allow students to apply practically the knowledge and skills taught in didactic and supervised laboratory settings of instruction.

   b. Externships must be based on a written training plan that specifies the goals, educational objectives, and specific experiences and applications to be accomplished. The written training plan must identify required educational resources, established timelines for the externship, and the evaluation process, and criteria to be used that appropriately and fairly measure demonstrated competency and skill attainment.

   c. Individual student externships must be supervised by a designated school employee who has the appropriate practical work experience qualifications for instructors as follows:

      i. For externships in a non-degree or in an occupational associate degree program, instructor practical work experience means three years of related practical work experience in the occupational field associated with the training provided.

      ii. For externships in an academic degree program, instructor practical work experience means four years of related practical work experience in the occupational field associated with the training provided and an earned related degree at least at the same degree level as the program for which the externship is a component.

   d. The training plan must designate an on-site supervisor from the occupational setting who will guide and oversee the student learning experience and participate in student evaluations. School personnel must orient the on-site supervisor to evaluation processes and criteria in order to ensure the appropriate and fair measurement of demonstrated competency and skill attainment.

   e. Schools are expected to maintain an appropriate balance among didactic, supervised laboratory, outside work/preparation, and externship activities as applicable within the program, as evidenced by the course outline. Any externship that is greater than one-third of the total length of the program requires review and approval by the Commission, with the exception of cases where the length of the externship is due to requirements of another accrediting or certification agency. In such instances, schools must provide evidence of these requirements to the Commission.

   f. If an externship is part of the program completion requirements, students may not be considered as graduates or issued a graduation credential until the requirements of the externship have been satisfactorily completed.

8. Consortium/Partnership Agreements

   a. In any instance where the school has entered into a consortium/partnership agreement, the school retains responsibility for the quality of the courses of study and programs offered as well as the achievement of expected and acceptable outcomes irrespective of any such consortium, partnership, or contractual agreement.

   b. Any program where 50% or more of the total number of clock or credit hours is delivered via a consortium/partnership agreement requires review and approval by the Commission. A school

may not award more than 75% of the total number of clock or credit hours required in a program via a consortium/partnership agreement, with the exception of an approved teach-out plan or agreement.

9. Independent Study

   a. Independent study necessitates a high level of self-directed learning and should therefore require students to read, conduct research, complete written examinations, reports, research papers, portfolios, or similar assignments that are designed to measure the student's achieved competency relative to the required subject matter objectives. Independent study may only be offered within a credit hour program and must include comprehensive educational objectives and a written outline of the competencies to be achieved through independent study. Schools must demonstrate that the independent study is relevant and appropriate to program objectives and that students engaged in independent study meet regularly with the qualified independent study faculty.

   b. Schools must utilize thoroughly developed credit hour award rationales for independent study in alignment with the expectations set forth in *ACCSC's Definition of a Credit Hour – Appendix III* and must demonstrate that the credit hours awarded for independent study are appropriate to the credential offered (degree, diploma, or certificate). The school may accomplish this by demonstrating that students engaged in independent study have acquired the knowledge, skills, and/or competencies that are at least equivalent to those acquired by students enrolled in traditional courses (i.e., didactic, supervised lab, and externship).

      The number of allowable independent study credits awarded in a program should be limited and the school must maintain an appropriate balance amongst didactic, supervised lab, externship, and independent study.

   c. A school may not allow more than 10% of any program to be offered via independent study. Students awarded 75% of the required credits through transfer of credit or prior learning experience into the school awarding the completion credential may not be awarded credit for independent study in the remaining 25% of the curriculum.

10. Transfer of Credit and Prior Learning Experience

   a. Transfer of Credit: A school may accept transfer credit[5] for a postsecondary course completed at another institution when comparable in scope and content to the school's own coursework. In evaluating credit earned by students for transfer, a school must adhere to the following principles and practices:

      i. A school has established appropriate criteria (e.g., comparability, applicability, source, and age of the previously earned credit; academic preparedness of the student at the time of credit transfer; grade earned for the credit to be transferred; etc.) and applies a systematic, consistent process for determining whether to accept credit earned at other institutions for transfer.

      ii. A school publishes its transfer-of-credit policy in its catalog and clearly communicates the criteria and process for evaluating and accepting credit earned at other institutions for transfer as well as any types of institutions or sources from which the institution will not accept credits.

[5] Includes credit hours and clock hours.

iii. The acceptance of credit for transfer is primarily based on the competencies achieved by the student in previously completed coursework and whether the competencies reasonably align with the coursework and the program into which the credit is to be transferred.

iv. Accreditation of the institution or program from which the student is seeking to transfer credits is a consideration for credit transfer decisions; however, the source of accreditation of the institution or program from which the student is seeking to transfer credits is not the sole basis for accepting or denying credit for transfer.

v. The school must document in the student record from what school and on what basis transfer credit was accepted.

vi. The school must provide students with a list of institutions that the school has an established articulation agreement.

b. Prior Learning Experience: A school may award credit[6] based on an assessment of an incoming student's prior learning experience acquired outside of formal instructional or educational settings provided that the school:

i. Has appropriate written criteria used to evaluate prior learning equivalency;

ii. Only awards credit for documented equivalent prior learning experience gained through settings such service in the armed forces, employment and on-the-job training, apprenticeships, or other similar learning sources; and

iii. Limits the award of credit for prior learning experience to no more than 50% of the total number of clock or credit hours required to complete a program.

c. Allowance: Regardless of the acceptance of transfer credit or the award of credit for prior learning experience, minimally:

i. 25% of the credits required for non-degree and undergraduate degree programs must be earned from the school awarding the credential, with the exception of an approved teach-out plan or agreement and

ii. 50% of the credits required for a graduate degree program must be earned from the school awarding the degree.

B. Non-Degree Programs

1. Non-degree programs must be designed and offered in a way that appropriately balances distinct methods of education and training and includes a comprehensive curriculum with appropriate coursework to achieve the program objectives.

2. Non-degree programs are generally expected to be comprised of at least 80% technical and occupationally related courses. The remainder of the courses may be a combination of applied general education, general education, or other courses as appropriate and necessary to achieve the program objectives.

C. Degree Programs

Degree programs represent a significant, additional educational commitment by a school and must be consistent with the school's mission. Schools offering degree programs must meet the requirements set forth in this section and demonstrate the ability to meet this educational commitment and award degrees

[6] Includes credit hours and clock hours.

that represent sufficient breadth and depth of study in the field and only to eligible students who, within the appropriate time frame, successfully complete the program requirements and demonstrate the required proficiencies, competencies, and skills. In addition, schools offering degree programs must comply with all other applicable accrediting standards, including faculty, admissions, facilities, advertising, and student services standards.

1. General Requirements

    a. Degree programs are measured only in semester credit hours or the equivalent quarter hours (refer to *Appendix III*), include the appropriate number of didactic hours and, as applicable, the appropriate number of supervised laboratory, outside work/preparation, and/or externship hours necessary to achieve the program objectives.

    b. Degree programs must be comprised of courses with content that is appropriate to the academic level and type of degree awarded.

    c. Degree programs must use a course numbering system that differentiates between lower-level courses required at the associate degree level (e.g., 100 and 200 level courses); upper-level courses required at the baccalaureate degree level (e.g., 300 and 400 level courses); and graduate level courses at the master's degree level (e.g., 500 level courses and above). Remedial courses should be numbered below the 100 level and cannot be applied toward the credit hours required for the completion of a degree program.

    d. A student enrolled in a non-degree program at the time at which a school receives approval to award a degree for that program may transfer appropriate and equivalent credit into the new degree program provided that all admissions criteria are met and that the student will complete a minimum of 15 semester hours or the equivalent in the new degree program.

2. Associate Degrees

    a. The Commission has two classifications of associate degree programs – occupational and academic. Associate degree programs must be designed and offered in a way that appropriately balances distinct types of education and training and includes a comprehensive curriculum with appropriate coursework to achieve the program objectives.

    b. An associate degree program must be a minimum of 60 semester hours or 90 quarter hours. Associate degree programs may not exceed by more than 50% the minimum number of credit hours required to confer the degree by the appropriate regulatory agency in the state(s) in which the school operates. If such minimums have not been established, then generally accepted practices in higher education shall apply.

    c. Occupational Associate Degrees

        i. An occupational associate degree program must include a minimum of 9 semester hours or 13.5 quarter hours in academic general education courses or applied general education courses that support the program objectives.

        ii. An occupational associate degree program must include a minimum of 45 semester hours or 67.5 quarter hours in technical and occupationally related courses that are directly associated with the field for which the degree is offered.

        iii. The title of the degree program, the name of the degree, the credential issued, the program description in the school's catalog, and all advertising, promotional materials, and literature make clear that the degree is occupational not academic.

d. Academic Associate Degrees

i. An academic associate degree program must include a minimum of 15 semester hours or 22.5 quarter hours in academic general education courses. An academic associate degree program must include academic general education courses in written communication, oral communication, and quantitative principles. The remainder of the required academic general education courses must provide an appropriate balance of natural and physical sciences; social and behavioral sciences; and humanities and fine arts that are designed to develop essential academic skills for enhanced and continued learning.

ii. An academic associate degree program must include a minimum of 30 semester hours or 45 quarter hours in the technical field for which the degree is awarded.

3. Baccalaureate Degrees

a. A baccalaureate degree program must be designed and offered in a way that appropriately balances distinct types of education and training (i.e., technical and occupationally related courses and academic general education courses) and distinct levels of education and training (i.e., lower-level and upper-level courses), and must include a comprehensive curriculum with appropriate coursework to achieve the program objectives.

b. A baccalaureate degree program must be a minimum of 120 semester hours or 180 quarter hours. Baccalaureate degree programs may not exceed by more than 50% the minimum number of credit hours required to confer the degree by the appropriate regulatory agency in the state(s) in which the school operates. If such minimums have not been established, then generally accepted practices in higher education shall apply.

c. A baccalaureate degree program shall include a minimum of 30 semester hours or 45 quarter hours in academic general education courses. A baccalaureate degree program must include academic general education courses in written communication, oral communication, and quantitative principles. The remainder of the required academic general education courses must provide an appropriate balance of natural and physical sciences; social and behavioral sciences; and humanities and fine arts that are designed to develop essential academic skills for enhanced and continued learning.

d. A baccalaureate degree program shall include a minimum of 60 semester credit hours or 90 quarter credit hours that represent courses in the occupational field for which the degree is awarded. Within those occupationally related courses, a school may offer one or more concentrations, which provide a focused area of training and establish specialized learning experiences beyond the generalist level. Concentrations must consist of 18-24 semester credit hours (27-36 quarter credit hours) of occupationally specialized course work of which, at a minimum, nine semester credit hours (13.5 quarter credit hours) represent upper-level coursework.

4. Master's Degrees

a. General Requirements

i. The institution's curricular offerings must be consistent with the goals, objectives, and mission of the institution. Master's degree-granting institutions must place emphasis on higher-level course work, including research and analytical skills, and independent and critical thinking skills. The master's degree must evidence contribution to the field of study undertaken and that graduates are able to acquire the necessary competencies and skills for employment in the field of study undertaken.

ii. Only institutions that are approved by the Commission to award baccalaureate degrees or that solely offer master's degree programs and that have received approval from applicable oversight agencies may apply for master's degree approval.

iii. An institution seeking approval to add a master's degree program will receive an on-site evaluation to review compliance with accrediting standards in accordance with the Commission's processes and procedures.

b. Program Requirements

i. The length of a master's degree must be appropriate to enable students to achieve the required competencies and skills for employment or advancement in the field for which training is provided.

ii. A master's degree program must be designed and offered in a way that provides for a distinct level of education and fosters independent learning and an understanding of research methods appropriate to the academic discipline. Graduate level courses must be based on appropriate pre-requisites and learning outcomes and expectations must be clearly stated to students.

iii. Master's degree programs must include a minimum of 30 semester hours or 45 quarter hours. At least 24 semester hours or 36 quarter hours must be in the technical field for which the degree is awarded. Within the master's degree, a school may offer one or more concentrations, which provide a focused area of training and establish specialized learning experiences beyond the generalist level. Concentrations must consist of 6-12 semester credit hours (9-18 quarter credit hours) of occupationally specialized course work.

iv. In a master's degree program, the curriculum must include an applied, integrated, or culminating experience required for program completion (e.g., capstone experience, comprehensive examination, research project, or thesis).

c. Graduation Requirements

i. Graduation from a master's degree program requires a 3.0 grade point average or better (assuming the traditional 4.0 grade point scale) and is based upon the student's satisfactory achievement and demonstration of the required knowledge and skills.

ii. Only those graduate level courses in which a student earns the equivalent of a 2.0 or better may be applied toward the total number of credits required for graduation.

D. Secondary Educational Objectives

1. Continuing Education Courses and Avocational Courses

a. In order for a continuing education course or avocational course to be included in a school's scope of institutional accreditation, that course must be less than 300 clock hours and related to an ACCSC-approved vocational career-oriented program for that school.

b. A school may not advertise secondary educational objectives in a manner that would represent those courses as within the scope of the school's ACCSC institutional accreditation unless and until the school has applied for and received Commission approval for such courses to be included within that scope.

c. A school must ensure that an approved continuing education course or avocational course is offered in a manner that delivers the education as promised to students, of a quality nature consistent with the expectations for an ACCSC approved vocational program, and included in

the school's institutional assessment and improvement activities.

d. A school provides written disclosures to students prior to enrollment in accordance with the requirements set forth in the ACCSC Catalog Checklist.

e. A school uses an enrollment agreement in accordance with the requirements set forth in the ACCSC Enrollment Agreement Checklist.

f. A school makes its complaint process and procedure available to students enrolled in a continuing education course or avocational course.

g. A school is not required to track student achievement outcomes for continuing education courses or avocational courses required by *Section VII, Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation*; however, a school must track and maintain documentation of enrollment as a means to demonstrate that continuing education courses and avocational courses represent secondary educational objectives.

h. A school keeps records related to enrollment, payment, and course completion for continuing education courses and avocational courses for a minimum of five years.

2. English as a Second Language

a. English as a Second Language ("ESL") courses must be successfully articulated with and support the school's career-oriented vocational program(s), have objectives related to occupational training and concepts, and provide students with adequate linguistic proficiency for obtaining employment in the field for which they are or will be trained. ESL courses are secondary objectives of the school.

A school may seek recognition for only the following types of ESL courses to be included in an approved career-oriented vocational program:

i. Front-loaded courses in which the student completes ESL training prior to the career-oriented vocational courses.

ii. Integrated courses in which the student takes ESL training concurrently and in conjunction with the career-oriented vocational courses.

b. Criteria for Recognition

i. The objective of the ESL courses must be to aid in the employability of the student. Front-loaded and integrated ESL courses must be articulated in conjunction with the school's career-oriented vocational courses either at the school or with another accredited school.

ii. Instruction must be conducted primarily in English and must include a variety of teaching methods and materials.

iii. Curricula for ESL courses must include several levels of instruction, allowing for individual differences and needs, and must include reading comprehension, oral communication, and writing skills.

iv. All students enrolled in ESL courses must be tested in English proficiency prior to the start of the program and upon conclusion of the program. A qualified, independent third party must administer the test. The test scores must be measured against stated exit goals (e.g., a specific grade level). Schools must use nationally recognized tests with established norms (e.g., Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL); Test of Written English (TWE); or Test of Spoken English (TSE) or any other test acceptable to the Commission).

v. An ESL course of study must be comprised of courses totaling minimally 600 clock hours or the equivalent credit hours. A school must provide a justification to the Commission for an ESL course of study comprised of courses totaling greater than 900 clock hours.

vi. All students enrolling in ESL courses must have available to them the same student services offered to all non-ESL students enrolled at the school, including employment assistance.

SECTION III – EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND FACULTY QUALIFICATIONS

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of this section is to describe the fundamentals with regard to the administration and delivery of education in a manner that maximizes the students' ability to achieve the knowledge, skills, and vocational objectives of the program. These elements include well-qualified and competent educational administrators and faculty dedicated to student success and engaged in continuous improvement; clearly written and consistently executed educational policies and procedures; and sufficient numbers of educational administrators and faculty to support the student body.

A. Educational Administration

1. The school must have sufficient educational administration to support the program(s) offered as follows:
    a. The school must have educational administrative staff and operational policies necessary to adequately support educational programs and faculty.
    b. At least one on-site person at the school, usually a director of education, must have appropriate educational administration experience and competence necessary to lead and manage the school's instructional program(s) and overall educational experience in such areas as: curriculum development; educational effectiveness assessment and improvement; and faculty development and performance appraisals.
        i. For non-degree granting institutions, the director of education must have an educational background equal to or exceeding the maximum credential offered by the school.
        ii. For degree granting institutions, the director of education must have an earned degree at least one level higher than the highest degree offered by the school.
    c. Each distinct occupational area that leads to an occupational or academic degree must have a program head on-site at the school (e.g., lead faculty, department chair, dean, etc.) who possesses an educational background equal to or exceeding the maximum credential offered in that program area, the requisite qualifications for technical faculty teaching in a degree program, and an ability to administer the occupational components of the program. For schools that only offer a program or group of programs in one distinct occupational area, a single individual may fulfill both the director of education and the program head requirements as long as the individual possesses the requisite qualifications for each position.
    d. Graduate level education offered by an institution must be appropriately supervised and coordinated by an individual with an earned doctorate degree. The school must demonstrate that the director of graduate level education has the experience and competence to manage the instructional program.
    e. Each master's degree program must be appropriately managed by an individual with a minimum of a graduate degree in the same field for which training is provided.
2. The school must demonstrate that its faculty and educational administrators engage in ongoing faculty assessment and professional development activities[1] that: are appropriate to the size and scope of the school's educational programs; support the quality of education provided; and enhance

[1] Professional development activities include elements such as continuing education in the subject area(s) taught; teaching skill development; instructional methodology development; membership in trade and professional organizations as appropriate; and other elements appropriate for the ongoing professional development of faculty.

student learning and achievement. The school must document the implementation of assessment and professional development activities for its faculty.

3. The school must ensure the continuity of instruction by the reasonable retention of the educational administrative staff and faculty.
4. The school must verify prior work experience and maintain documentation of academic credentials of all faculty members and administrators, as required, to demonstrate compliance with applicable *Standards of Accreditation*.[2]

B. Faculty Qualifications[3]

1. The faculty must be sufficient in number to serve the number of students enrolled and must maintain a satisfactory working relationship with students.
2. Faculty members must be certified or licensed where required by law.
3. Faculty members must have appropriate qualifications and be able to teach in a manner that permits announced educational objectives to be achieved. All faculty must be able to demonstrate a command of theory and practice, contemporary knowledge, and continuing study in their field.
4. Faculty members must have received training in instructional methods and teaching skills or be experienced teachers. Should a school hire a faculty member without prior training or experience, the school must provide training before the faculty member assumes primary instructional responsibilities in any classroom, curriculum, laboratory, or program related training. A school's faculty must engage in ongoing development of teaching skills as part of its plan for faculty improvement.

   The school may provide its own faculty training using in-house resources or utilize resources outside the institution. In either case, teacher training shall include such elements as: formal education; workshops/seminars presented by an appropriate individual focusing on areas related to instructional methods and teaching skill development; or formal in-house mentoring programs with appropriately qualified and experienced faculty.
5. Faculty teaching technical and occupationally related courses in either non-degree or occupational associate degree programs must have a minimum of three years of related practical work experience in the subject area(s) taught.
6. Applied General Education Courses:
   a. Faculty teaching applied general education courses in an occupational associate degree program must have a baccalaureate degree with appropriate coursework and preparation in the subject area(s) taught or eight years related practical work experience and college-level coursework in the subject area(s) taught.
   b. Faculty teaching applied general education courses in a non-degree program must have three years prior relevant work experience or college-level coursework in the subject area(s) taught or an appropriate mix thereof that aligns with the curriculum content being taught.
7. Faculty teaching technical and occupationally related courses in an academic associate or baccalaureate degree program must have a minimum of four years of related practical work experience in the subject area(s) taught and possess a related degree at least at the same level of the course the faculty member is teaching. In limited and exceptional cases, professional experience and contributions to the occupational field of study may be substituted for a formal degree. In such

[2] See the Glossary of Terms at the end of this section for additional guidance.
[3] See the Glossary of Terms at the end of this section for additional guidance.

instances, the faculty member must possess a minimum of eight years of related practical work experience and the school must justify and document why the professional experience and contributions to the occupational field warrants substitution of the related degree.

8. Faculty teaching academic general education courses in a degree program or in a non-degree program that articulates to a degree program must have, at a minimum, a master's degree with appropriate academic coursework and preparation in the subject area(s) taught. Faculty teaching academic general education courses in a terminal non-degree program must have, at a minimum, a baccalaureate degree with appropriate academic coursework and preparation in the subject area(s) taught.
9. Faculty teaching other courses (e.g., electives, orientation, career services, health and wellness, and life skills, etc.) must be appropriately qualified based upon the type of course content offered and upon criteria established by the school that relies upon necessary experience and/or educational background requirements.
10. Graduate Degree Faculty Requirements
    a. At a minimum, at least 50% of graduate level courses included in a master's degree program must be taught by faculty members who possess a minimum of four years of related practical work experience and an earned doctorate degree or other terminal degree in a related field of study. The remaining 50% of the courses may be taught by faculty who possess a minimum of four years of related practical work experience and a master's degree in a related field of study or a master's degree in an unrelated field of study with 18 semester credit hours or 27 quarter credit hours of graduate level education in the subject area taught.
    b. In exceptional cases, outstanding professional experience and contributions to the occupational field of study may be substituted for a formal degree. In such instances, the faculty member must possess a minimum of eight years of related practical work experience and the school must justify and document, on an individual basis, the outstanding professional experience and contributions to the occupational field.
    c. Graduate faculty and other appropriate school personnel participate in the development, ongoing review, and improvement of graduate level curriculum.
11. Faculty teaching ESL courses must have appropriate experience and educational background including state or equivalent credentials in Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL).

Glossary of Terms:

The Commission has determined that "appropriate coursework and preparation," "college-level coursework," and "appropriate academic coursework and preparation" as used in *Section III (B)* means a minimum of 15 semester credit hours (or the equivalent) in related subject areas that support the curriculum content.

The terms "verify prior work experience" and "maintain documentation of academic credentials" of all faculty members and administrators in *Section III (A)(4), Substantive Standards*, *Standards of Accreditation* means that the school has a documented process to demonstrate that the school:

a. Has secured from previous employers written or verbal verification of prior work experience when prior work experience is a qualification requirement and/or
b. Has secured and keeps on file academic transcripts when an academic credential is a qualification requirement.

SECTION IV – STUDENT RECRUITMENT, ADVERTISING, AND DISCLOSURES

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of this section is to describe the fundamental elements of fair recruitment practices that ensure schools describe themselves fully and accurately to prospective students and permit prospective students to make well-informed and considered enrollment decisions without undue pressure. The recruitment practices of accredited schools should focus not on simply obtaining student enrollment numbers, but on creating a student body of individuals who are qualified and likely to benefit from the education and training objectives and to achieve success.

A. Recruitment[1]

Schools must observe ethical practices and procedures in the recruitment of students and must, at a minimum, adhere to the standards of recruitment to follow:

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 representatives[2] to conduct student recruiting activities. A school is prohibited from engaging employment agencies to recruit prospective students. Affiliated schools[3] may share representatives to conduct recruitment activities.
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 representatives 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 IV, Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation*, and is accepted and dated by the representative and the school maintains a copy.
5. A school's representatives 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 representatives 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 representatives do not make false, exaggerated, or misleading statements about the school, its

[1] Recruitment means engaging in activities or using promotional materials or presentations to attract and enroll students. Recruitment standards apply to school personnel primarily involved in any way in those types of activities.

[2] As used through this *Section* and in *Appendix IV*, "representative" means any individual, employee, personnel, or agent with whom the school enters into an arrangement (employment or contractual) whereby the school: a) is responsible for ensuring that the individuals, employees, personnel, or agents are operating in compliance and b) retains responsibility for all statements made by and the conduct of the individual, employee, personnel, or agent when representing the school. All requirements of this *Section* apply to all such representatives. See *Appendix IV* which requires a signed code of conduct for recruitment representatives.

[3] See *Section I, Rules of Process and Procedures, Standards of Accreditation* for the definition of "affiliated schools."

personnel, its training, its services, or its accredited status and to ensure that its representatives 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 representatives 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 representatives 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 representatives 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 representatives 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. A school provides an applicant for enrollment with a receipt for any money collected.
16. 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, Promotion, Statements, and Claims

Schools must observe ethical practices and procedures with regard to advertising, promotion, statements, and claims and must, at a minimum, adhere to the standards of advertising, promotion, statements, and claims as set forth below as well as in *Appendix IV – Recruitment and Advertising*.

1. All advertising, promotional materials, statements, and claims are truthful and accurate and avoid leaving any false, misleading, misrepresenting, or exaggerated impressions with respect to the school, its location, its name, its personnel, its training, its services, or its accredited status.
2. All 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 not use the Employment or Help Wanted advertisements for any form of student recruitment.

4. Endorsements, Images, and Publicly Shared Media:

    a. Endorsements: An endorsement means written and verbal statements given by an individual giving explicit approval or support for the school, its programs, or outcomes. A school may only use endorsements in school catalogs, literature, or advertising with the written consent of the authors. Any endorsement must be a bona fide expression of the author's opinions, strictly factual, and a portrayal of currently correct conditions or facts. A school may not use endorsements from currently enrolled students in promotional activities or advertisements.

    b. Images: A school may only use student images in school catalogs, literature, or advertising with the written consent of the subjects.

    c. Publicly Shared Media: A school may use/share an individual's publicly shared media (e.g., social media) regarding the school so long as the media originated with the individual and is bona fide, factually and contextually accurate, unadulterated, and a faithful representation of the shared information or images. Schools may not compensate or provide any or other consideration for such use and the school is responsible for compliance with all advertising standards in such use.

5. School representatives, 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.

6. A school may only use the term "accredited" if it indicates by what agency or organization it is accredited and advertising/disclosure of a school's accredited status must comply with *Appendix IV – Recruitment and Advertising, Guidelines for Advertising*.

7. Any advertising of financial aid and scholarships[4] must include an eligibility phrase (e.g., financial aid available for those who qualify).

8. 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

Schools must make accurate and readily available 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)(3)(e), 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-

[4] As defined in *Section I (D)(1)(c), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation*.

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)(3)(e), 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 and furnishes a final copy of the enrollment agreement signed by both parties to the student prior to the student starting class.

   e. No enrollment agreement is binding until it has been signed by the student and accepted by the appropriate school official.

3. Student Achievement Rates

   A school discloses, minimally, the graduation rate, graduate employment rate, and as applicable licensure/certification examination pass rate[5] for each program offered as reported to the Commission in the school's most recent Annual Report.[6] The disclosure for each program's graduation rate, graduate employment rate, and licensure/certification examination pass rate must be accurate, not intended to mislead, and include the program population base and time frame upon which each rate is based.

4. Accreditation and Approval

   a. A school must disclose its ACCSC institutional accreditation and the Commission's contact information (i.e., address, phone number, and website address).

   b. A school must inform current and prospective students of Commission actions and where additional information regarding these actions can be obtained from the Commission's website in accordance with *Section VII* of the *Rules of Process and Procedure*.

   c. The school must disclose in its catalog all state, federal, and accreditation approvals for which the institution has received (e.g., state or federal approving/authorizing agency, licensing agency, oversight board, national certification entity, institutional or programmatic accreditation, etc.) In cases where a program requires specific approval for the purpose of licensure, examination, certification, or employment, a school also discloses to students whether or not such accreditation and/or third-party recognition has been achieved and is in good standing. Any claims regarding any type of accreditation or approval by an oversight entity must be truthful and accurate.

[5] For those programs where a governmental entity requires the attainment of a passing score on a licensure/certification exam in order to work in a particular field.

[6] Schools may also disclose updated student achievement rates so long as those rates have also been reported to ACCSC in conjunction with monitoring or Reporting requirements directed by the Commission (e.g., Deferral, Outcomes Reporting, etc.).

SECTION V – ADMISSIONS POLICIES AND PRACTICES

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of this section is to describe the fundamental elements of admissions policies and procedures that contribute to identifying prospective students that are capable of completing the training offered and achieving success. These elements include fair, objective, and effective admissions criteria that: contribute to an informed judgment as to an applicant's ability to achieve the program's objectives, are consistently applied, and are thoroughly documented.

A. General Requirements

1. The school must develop admissions criteria that are designed to admit only those students who are reasonably capable of successfully completing and benefiting from the training offered and which take into account the nature of the training and education provided and the program's responsibilities and demands.
2. The school must publish in its catalog and inform, 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 (C), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation*.)
3. The school must consistently and fairly apply its admission requirements.
4. Prior to enrollment the school must:
    a. Determine that an applicant meets the school's admissions requirements;
    b. For distance education courses or programs, review an applicant's access and technical readiness relative to the school's specific distance education platform/environment;
    c. Secure documentation to demonstrate that each applicant meets all admission requirements; and[1]
    d. Document that applicants rejected did not meet admissions requirements.
5. The school must maintain 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. The school neither denies admission nor discriminates against students enrolled at the school on the basis of race, religion, color, gender, sexual orientation, genetic information, age, disability, or national origin. Schools must reasonably accommodate applicants and students with disabilities to the extent required by applicable law.
7. The 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 schoolwork.
8. The Commission, at its discretion, may require a school to conduct a study to document the effectiveness of its admission requirements for all students.

[1] See also *Appendix V, Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation*.

B. Non-Degree Programs

If the school enrolls a person who does not possess a high school diploma or recognized equivalency certificate (non-degree programs only):

1. The school must determine the applicant's ability to benefit from the training offered which must be confirmed by documentation of the applicant's achievement of an approved score on a test or tests that have been reviewed by a qualified, independent third party for appropriateness of the instrument and specific score levels required for admission.
2. The school must establish an acceptable score for the purpose of determining that students can benefit from the training provided and that a substantial number of students can complete the training and be employed in the field for which training was provided.

C. Degree Programs-Undergraduate

The school must use appropriate techniques to assess whether applicants have the skills and competencies to benefit from the training provided at the undergraduate level. Students admitted into associate or baccalaureate degree programs must have earned at least a high school diploma or recognized equivalency certificate prior to starting class.

D. Degree Programs-Graduate

1. The school must use appropriate techniques to assess whether applicants have the skills and competencies to benefit from the training provided at the graduate level. A student admitted into a master's degree program must possess an earned baccalaureate degree from a recognized higher-education institution (e.g., accredited by an agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education or the equivalent). All admission criteria, to include evidence of an earned baccalaureate degree, must be met prior to matriculation.
2. For graduate level courses or master's degree programs, standardized or national examinations may be required (e.g., GRE or GMAT). The school may utilize other entrance tests that have been reviewed by a qualified, independent third party for appropriateness of the instrument and specific score levels required for admission. In any case, the school must disclose the type and nature of examination and the acceptable score and/or range of scores applicants must receive to be admitted.

E. ESL Courses

1. Students enrolled in ESL courses must meet all other admission requirements applicable to students enrolled in the school's career or occupational programs, which may be established through testing in the student's native language. During the enrollment process, adequate translation resources must be available to assist students in their comprehension of the process and all program requirements.
2. The school must demonstrate that, with appropriate teaching, the students enrolled in front-loaded and integrated ESL courses can qualify for specialized training or continue their occupational education.

SECTION VI – STUDENT SERVICES AND RECORDS

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of this section is to describe the fundamentals of assessing and addressing students' educational and other needs and ensuring an appropriate and safe learning environment. Basic elements include mechanisms for ongoing attentiveness to student needs and directing appropriate resources to address those needs. Resources include support for students' academic and nonacademic needs; employment assistance; and the availability and secure maintenance of student records.

A. Student Services

1. The school:
   a. Is attentive to its students' needs as a means to support student achievement outcomes;
   b. Maintains written policies and procedures addressing student services; and
   c. Makes students aware of such services.
2. The school maintains adequate student services and resources that support its students in maintaining satisfactory progress, achieving successful educational and student achievement outcomes (i.e., knowledge and skill attainment, retention, graduation, and employment), and making informed decisions concerning training and employment.
3. The school maintains a student services program that takes into account the number of programs, and size and mix of the student body and that responds to individual student needs.
   a. The student services program must be coordinated by an individual with appropriate professional and educational qualifications.
   b. The student services program must minimally encompass relevant coping skills (e.g., life, career development, budget, and personal financial planning skills); general development appropriate to higher education students; student retention strategies suited to the school's programs; academic advising; testing and tutoring services; supervision and monitoring of attendance records and leaves of absence; graduate employment assistance; student safety and well-being; and information concerning housing, transportation, and child care.
   c. Schools must have counseling services available to students when warranted and necessary based on the student population and circumstances.
      i. An individual providing counseling services must have an appropriate license, credential, or training and work experience in the area of counseling.
      ii. A school may contract with or refer students to an individual or service that is able to provide such counseling services as may be needed. Unless so qualified, an advisor may not perform the functions of a counselor and may not be referred to as a counselor.
4. The school maintains comprehensive documentation of student advising sessions.
5. The school continually monitors and addresses student satisfaction and student needs for services as a means to support students in achieving successful outcomes.

B. Student Records

1. The school maintains an educational record for all currently enrolled students that consists of all admissions; transcript (see #2 below) and academic progress reports; records related to tuition and

fee payments, refunds, and financial aid; and information upon which a student's initial and continued enrollment is based. The school maintains these records during the student's enrollment and for five years post the student's graduation, withdrawal, or termination date.

2. The school maintains indefinitely a permanent official transcript for all current and formerly enrolled students (i.e., graduates and terminated or withdrawn students). The transcript must include, at a minimum, the student's name and unique identifier; the name and address of the school; the program of study; the name and date/term of courses taken; the clock or credit hours and grades earned for each course; any credits accepted for transfer; the cumulative grade point average; the date of program entry; and the date of graduation, termination or withdrawal.
3. The school must make transcripts available to students upon request and in accordance with the school's policies.
4. The school must securely maintain and protect the above records (physical or electronic) against damage or loss (e.g., fire, water, theft, tampering, etc.).
5. The school must maintain student records in accordance with state or federal regulation or law, which may require additional information or longer retention periods than described above.
6. The school:
   a. Establishes processes that protect student privacy and
   b. Notifies students at the time of registration or enrollment of any projected additional charges associated with the verification of student identity.

C. Graduate Employment Assistance and Records

1. The school makes graduate employment assistance available to students and the extent and nature of employment assistance services provided aligns with any claims made by the school with regard to those services.
2. The school maintains verifiable records of each graduate's initial employment for five years. Any statement regarding the percentage of graduate employment, e.g., annual employment rates of graduates, must be based upon these verifiable records.

D. Student Complaints

1. The school must have and adhere to a policy and procedure for fairly and consistently handling and addressing student complaints
2. The school's complaint policy and procedure must:
   a. Be published in the school's catalog;
   b. Include a reference to the school official(s) responsible for the complaint policy and procedure;
   c. Fully and fairly review the complaint; and
   d. Communicate the status of the complaint to the student in writing.
3. The school may not:
   a. Retaliate against a student for lodging a complaint;
   b. Require a complainant to complete the school's complaint process before filing a complaint with ACCSC or any other regulatory or oversight entity; or

c. Attempt to prevent a student from making a complaint to ACCSC or any other regulatory or oversight entity.

4. The school must also publish in its catalog the ACCSC Student Complaint/Grievance Procedure contained in the ACCSC Complaint Review Process Form.

5. The school must maintain a complete record of all written student complaints for at least the last five years.

ACCSC STANDARDS OF ACCREDITATION
SUBSTANTIVE STANDARDS

SECTION VII – STUDENT LEARNING, ASSESSMENT, PROGRESS, AND ACHIEVEMENT

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of this section is to describe the fundamental elements of assessing student progress and success in relation to program objectives. These fundamental elements include establishing clear learning outcomes, effectively assessing satisfactory student progress through the program, and ultimately demonstrating acceptable levels of student achievement and student success. Assessment of a school's performance in these areas includes a broad consideration of circumstances that affect student learning, satisfactory progress, and student achievement as well as a broad consideration of qualitative and quantitative factors that represent a school's performance in these same areas.

A. Student Learning, Assessment, and Satisfactory Progress

1. Student Learning

    a. Student learning outcomes for each program are consistent with the program objectives defined by the institution's program design and development process and meet any relevant academic, occupational, or regulatory requirements.

    b. Student learning outcomes for each program are aligned with the program's objectives, the occupational area of study, and with the level of education intended (e.g., non-degree, degree, degree level).

    c. Student learning outcomes for each program reflect the necessary occupational and academic knowledge, skills, and competencies as applicable.

2. Student Assessment

    a. The school has a developed and structured process to assess and evaluate the defined student learning outcomes of the education and training and established competencies (e.g., the application of knowledge and skills to the standard of performance articulated in the program objectives and as expected in the workplace). This process may include a variety and combination of methods such as grading, portfolio assessment, and criterion referenced testing based on developed and appropriate rubrics.

    b. Student assessment approaches must be documented for each course or program offered and are designed and implemented in a valid, reliable, fair and, where relevant, flexible[1] manner and included as part of the institution's institutional assessment and improvement planning activities (see *Section I (B), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation* for details regarding institutional assessment and improvement requirements).

    c. The school establishes criteria to assess a student's academic progress through the program.

    d. The school promotes academic integrity and has policies and controls to discourage academic dishonesty (i.e., cheating, plagiarism, etc.) and clearly communicates the consequences of such behavior. The school may utilize its own methods to prevent, detect, document, and take appropriate action in instances of academic dishonesty.

    e. At a minimum, the school reports academic progress to students at regular intervals (e.g., phase, module, mid-term, term, quarter, semester, etc.) and evaluates the minimum grade point average that students must attain at those intervals.

[1] See the Glossary of Assessment Terms at the end of this section for more information related to these terms.

f. The school provides students with learning outcomes for each course and publishes in its catalog a written policy for assessing satisfactory student progress through the program. The school measures grades, projects, portfolios, externships, or other assessments against stated educational objectives that the school explains clearly to students. This policy must address performance standards and grading and be applied consistently.

3. Student Satisfactory Progress

   a. The school establishes a policy and process to assess student academic progress throughout the program and to inform students of their academic progress at established and specific intervals.

      i. The school establishes cumulative grade point average requirements at specific intervals throughout the program and requires that students minimally attain a cumulative grade point average of 2.0 in order to be eligible for graduation. At each interval specified, the school determines the likelihood that the student will be able to attain the minimum cumulative grade point average required for graduation.

      ii. In those instances when the school determines that a student has not met minimum cumulative grade point average requirements, the school places the student on academic probation or terminates the student, based on the school's established policies.

      iii. If the school uses a grading scale other than the traditional 4.0 scale (e.g., letter grades, percentages, pass/fail, etc.) the school establishes comparable progress standards and publishes the grade conversion scale in its catalog.

   b. The school publishes in its catalog and enforces a policy of acceptable student attendance. The policy must promote sufficient levels of student attendance such that the required knowledge, skills, and competencies can be reasonably achieved.

   c. Leave of Absence

      i. If the school allows students to take a leave of absence, the school defines and publishes in its catalog the leave of absence policy to include the process to have a leave of absence approved, the acceptable reason(s) why a student can request a leave of absence, the allowable leave of absence period, and the consequences of a student's failure to return from an approved leave of absence. The period of the leave of absence may not begin until the student has submitted and the school has approved a written request for an approved leave of absence except in those cases where unforeseen circumstances would prevent a student from submitting a request in advance.[2]

      ii. A leave of absence period may not exceed 180 days within any 12-month period. A school may grant more than one leave of absence provided that the combined leaves of absence do not exceed 180 days within the 12-month period and that each leave of absence is properly requested by the student in accordance with the school's policy and standards set forth here.

      iii. If the student does not return following the leave of absence, the school must terminate the student and apply the school's refund policy in accordance with applicable and published requirements.

[2] In cases where a school grants a leave of absence to a student who could not provide a request prior to the leave of absence period due to unforeseen circumstances, the school must secure at a later date the request and the reason(s) for the leave of absence along with documentation to show that the leave of absence could not have been requested and approved in advance. In these cases, the beginning date of the leave of absence period can be no earlier than the date that the circumstances prevented the student from attending school.

d. The school publishes in its catalog the normal duration of each program based on regular and required course loads and schedules, the maximum time frame within which a student is expected to complete the program, and the implications when a student does not complete the program within the maximum time frame (e.g., loss of financial aid eligibility and program enrollment termination). For a clock hour program, the maximum time frame shall not exceed 1.5 times the normal duration of the program. For a credit hour program, the credit hours attempted cannot exceed 1.5 times the credit hours required to complete the program. The school is not required to terminate the enrollment of a student who is unable to complete the program within the maximum time frame unless the school has determined that the student has failed to meet school policies that would otherwise warrant termination (e.g., academic progress or attendance policies). For the purposes of reporting student achievement, the school may not classify students who do not complete the program within 1.5 times the normal duration of the program as graduates.

e. The school publishes policies that define the effect of course incompletion, course withdrawal, course repetitions, and, if offered, policies that define the requirements for non-credit remedial courses.

f. A student may only earn educational credit when, based on the school's assessment methods, the student has demonstrated that the required educational objectives have been met at an acceptable level. Successful program completion is based upon satisfactory achievement of the knowledge, skills, and competencies required by the program objectives and is confirmed by an appropriate credential (e.g., certificate, diploma, degree).

g. The credential document identifies the school's name, location, program of study, and date of graduation in an accurate manner.

4. Probation and Termination Policies

   a. The school must have and follow probation and termination policies and procedures to:

      i. Notify and warn a student in writing that continued unsatisfactory academic progress, failure to meet attendance requirements, or failure to adhere to the school's conduct policies will result in probation or termination and

      ii. Document that the student received the notification or that the school made an attempt to notify the student of the warning.

   b. The school publishes its probation and termination policies in its catalog.

   c. The school terminates any student who does not satisfactorily acquire the minimum knowledge, skills, and competencies required by the program objectives based on the school's assessment criteria and satisfactory progress policy. The school publishes its termination policies and procedures and policies and procedures for a student to request reinstatement after termination.

B. Student Achievement

1. The school assesses educational quality, institutional effectiveness, and student achievement taking into account the rates at which students graduate from each training program, attain employment in a training related field, and pass licensure/certification exams required for employment, as well as other factors that are reasonably related to student achievement.

2. The school demonstrates successful student achievement by:

a. Documenting through its assessment practices that students are acquiring the knowledge, skills, and competencies intended by the program objectives and

b. Maintaining acceptable rates of student graduation and employment in the career field for which the school provided education as well as acceptable pass rates on licensure/certification exams where required by governmental entities to work in a particular career field.[3]

In determining whether the school maintains acceptable rates of student graduation and employment, the Commission will review and consider not only the rates at which students graduate from a training program, attain employment in a training related field, and pass licensure/certification exams required for employment in relation to the Commission's established benchmark rates, but also other factors that impact student achievement as presented by a school.

3. For any program that has a graduation, employment, or licensure/certification exam pass rate that is lower than the Commission's established benchmark rates, a school may still demonstrate with supporting documentation the successful achievement of its students in that program by:

   a. Providing other reliable indicators of successful student learning and

   b. Showing that factors such as economic conditions, state and national trends, location, student population served, length of program, students who withdraw from training but still obtain employment, state requirements, or other external or mitigating factors reasonably related to student achievement are adversely impacting the school's ability to meet the Commission's established benchmark rates.

4. The school supports student achievement rates through student transcripts, the school's verifiable records and documentation of initial employment of its graduates, and exam pass rate data obtained from the requiring entity.[4]

5. Upon presentation by a school, the Commission may consider an aggregated institutional rate of graduation or employment attainment in determining whether to take a programmatic or institutional action related to student achievement.

Glossary of Assessment Terms:

"Valid" means an assessment process that is sound and assesses that which is claimed (e.g., assessment against the program outcomes that covers the broad range of skills and knowledge that are essential to competent performance in the workplace).

"Reliable" means that evidence presented for assessment is consistently interpreted and results in consistent assessment outcomes.

"Fair" means that assessment processes are equitable, reasonable, consistently applied, and that instructional staff clearly communicate the assessment process to students.

"Flexible" means that, where relevant, assessment reflects the individual student's needs; provides for recognition of skills and program outcomes achieved prior to undertaking the program; and draws on a range of methods appropriate to the context, program outcomes concerned, and the student.

[3] See *Appendix VI* for the Commission's current established graduate, graduate employment, and licensure/certification exam benchmark rates for acceptable student achievement. See the *Rules of Process and Procedure* for reporting and monitoring related to student achievement.

[4] See *Appendix VII* for the Commission's Guidelines for Employment Classification. See also the Commission's *Guidelines for Independent Third-Party Employment Verification*.

ACCSC STANDARDS OF ACCREDITATION
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SECTION VIII – SEPARATE FACILITIES

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of this section is to set forth the requirements with regard to the operation of separate facilities. These include requirements for ownership and management; disclosures and advertising; programs; and sufficiency of resources and student services.[1]

A. Classification

1. Branch Campus

   a. A facility approved by the U.S. Secretary of Education as a branch campus and is an independent separate facility established by a main school that:

      i. Is geographically apart from the main school and permanent in nature;

      ii. Offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, a certificate, or other recognized educational credential;

      iii. Has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization;

      iv. Has its own budgetary and hiring authority; and

      v. Provides all necessary educational resources and student services (e.g., advising, testing, library resources, financial aid, employment assistance, etc.) required by accrediting standards.

   b. A facility that is an independent additional location established by a main school that:

      i. Is geographically apart from the main school and permanent in nature;

      ii. Offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, a certificate, or other recognized educational credential;

      iii. Has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization;

      iv. Has its own budgetary and hiring authority; and

      v. Provides all necessary educational resources and student services (e.g., advising, testing, library resources, financial aid, employment assistance, etc.) required by accrediting standards.

2. Satellite Location

   A satellite location is a classroom extension of a main school or branch campus. A satellite location must be within a reasonable and commutable distance from its main school or branch campus oversight entity. It is the responsibility of the school seeking to establish a satellite location to demonstrate with documentation the reasonableness of the commuting distance. A school seeking to establish a satellite location must be able to assure its proper management, control, and supervision through qualified administrative staff and faculty. All educational and student services available at the school seeking to establish a satellite location must be provided and readily available to students attending the satellite location (e.g., advising, testing, learning resources, financial aid, employment assistance, etc.) A satellite location that provides more than 50% of any one program will be required to submit segregated student achievement data for that program and

[1] See *Section IV (E)(5), Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation* for separate facility eligibility and application requirements.

will be considered an additional location when the definition in *Section I (A), Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation* is applicable.

3. Distance Education Facility

   A distance education facility is a separate facility housing the functions associated with distance education delivery operations. The facility is an extension of a main school or branch campus that has distance education within the school's scope of accreditation.[2] A distance education facility must be licensed by the appropriate state regulatory agency with oversight responsibilities of the school. A distance education facility must be under the same ownership as the main school or branch campus, and must demonstrate proper management, control, and supervision of the distance education facility. A distance education facility that provides more than 50% of any one program will be considered an additional location when the definition in *Section I (A), Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation* is applicable.

B. Responsibility

1. A main school or branch campus is responsible and accountable to the Commission for its separate facilities and is responsible and accountable for compliance with accrediting standards by its separate facilities. The main school bears ultimate responsibility for compliance with accrediting standards by its separate facilities (e.g., the main school bears ultimate responsibility of the compliance of its branch campus's satellite location).
2. Accredited status of the branch campus is dependent upon the continued accreditation of the main school. Recognition of a satellite location or distance education facility is dependent upon the continued accreditation of the recognized facility's main school or branch campus.
3. The accredited status of a distance education facility is dependent upon the continued approval of distance education at the main school or branch campus.
4. Accreditation of the main school requires adherence to accrediting standards by its separate facilities.
5. A main school or branch campus may not have a separate facility that is not accredited or recognized by the Commission when that facility has students who receive benefits due to the accredited status of the school or students who are recruited using the name or accredited status of the school.

C. Ownership

The ownership of the branch campus, satellite location, or distance education facility must be identical to that of the main school; all ownership interests (including beneficial, voting, and non-voting interests and options) must be reported to the Commission. If the ownership of the separate facility proves to be different from that of the main school, then the main school and all of its separate facilities shall be removed from the list of accredited schools.

D. Name, Relationship, Disclosure, and Advertising

1. A branch campus may bear a different name from the main school provided that all applicable state requirements have been met. A satellite location or distance education facility must bear the same name as its main school or branch campus except that the name of the satellite location or distance

[2] A school will be exempt from obtaining distance education facility approval if the distance education facility is within a reasonable, commutable distance from the main school or branch with distance education approval.

education facility may also refer to its geographic location or type of training.

2. Each school's catalog and enrollment agreement must clearly disclose and define the relationship between a branch campus and its main school. All advertising and publications (e.g., catalog, enrollment agreement, recruiting literature, public notices, etc.) must identify the relationship between a satellite location and its branch campus or main school oversight entity.
3. A branch campus may advertise and disclose its relationship to the main school only after the approval of the Application for a Branch Campus-Part I. A satellite location may disclose in advertising and promotional materials its recognized status and relationship to the main school only after it has been granted recognition by the Commission.

E. Programs

1. Separate facilities may offer programs with other than trade, occupational or technical objectives provided that (1) any program with other than a trade, occupational or technical objective is also offered at the main school, and is so approved by the Commission and (2) the predominant program offerings and scope of the facility remain trade, occupational, or technical.
2. See *Section IV (E)(5), Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation* regarding branch campus program approval rules and requirements.

SECTION IX – DISTANCE EDUCATION

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of this section is to ensure that schools delivering a portion of a program via distance education remain engaged with students, provide sufficient resources for students, and assess the rate at which students successfully achieve program objectives. These elements include proper authorization, management, program elements, student assessment, faculty, student services, and distance education facilities.[1]

A. General Distance Education Requirements

The following requirements apply to all programs, irrespective of the credential offered.

1. Schools offering programs or courses using hybrid or blended approaches or offering 100% of a program using distance education technologies are responsible for demonstrating compliance with accrediting standards as prescribed by this section, and elsewhere in the *Standards of Accreditation*.
2. Schools must ensure that:
    i. Only appropriate programs or courses of study are taught using distance education methodologies (the delivery of educational materials via technology);
    ii. There are appropriate admissions criteria;
    iii. Assessment measures are in place for student progress and student achievement; and
    iv. Appropriate resources and services are available to support student success.
3. State Authorization: A school must obtain all necessary authorizations or approval(s) as required by applicable state oversight agencies where the school has enrollments or intends to enroll. If a state does not require approval, the school must be able to provide evidence to that effect.

B. Management and Administrative Operations

1. The school must have adequate distance education management and administrative capacity in place that includes:
    a. A qualified distance education administrator or team of administrators with the appropriate combination of distance education experience and/or training to effectively oversee the school's distance education programs or courses of study, and to ensure that those programs and courses meet the objectives and the mission of the school.
    b. The distance education administrator or team of administrators must participate in ongoing distance education development and training activities. When new members of the distance education management and administrative team are hired by the school, the school must provide distance education related development and training activities.
    c. Appropriate management, administrative capacity, and infrastructure to support the growth in a distance education program. The Commission will monitor student enrollment data for distance education programs on an annual basis to determine if the enrollments in an approved distance education program have experienced significant growth and to ensure that the school

[1] See the Glossary of Distance Education Terms at the end of this section for more information.

has maintained its ability to successfully administer, support, and manage its distance education activities.

d. Appropriate distance education administrative and operational policies and procedures to which the school adheres, reviews, and updates as needed.

2. The school retains responsibility for the quality of the programs and courses of study offered through distance education methods and the achievement of expected and acceptable outcomes, irrespective of any contractual arrangements, partnership agreements, or consortia agreements entered into with third parties for the provision of components of a distance education program or course of study.

3. Institutional Assessment and Improvement

   a. The school's institutional assessment and improvement activities must ensure that sufficient facilities, equipment, technology, and other resources and infrastructure associated with distance education are appropriate to the subject matter of the program or courses of study, and are integrated in the institutional assessment and improvement activities and budget of the school.

   b. The school must directly review and is responsible for the currency and quality of all distance education components as part of its institutional assessment and improvement activities. The school's institutional assessment and improvement activities must meet all necessary requirements outlined in *Section I (B), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation.*

4. The school establishes authentication policies and processes regarding student verification in a distance education course or program as follows:

   a. The school uses effective practices to verify that the student who registers in a distance education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives the academic credit (e.g., a secure login and/or pass code, proctored examinations, student identity technologies, etc.).

   b. The school establishes processes that protect student privacy and notifies students of any projected additional student charges associated with the verification of student identity at the time of registration or enrollment.

C. Objectives and Student Achievement

1. The objectives of distance education programs and courses of study must be consistent with the mission of the school and its educational and training objectives and must be readily available for student consideration.

2. Programs and courses of study must be appropriate for delivery through distance education methods and facilitate delivery of course content such that students may reasonably be expected to achieve the learning outcomes.

3. Observable, measurable, and achievable student performance outcomes must be identified so that programs or courses of study offered through distance education methods can be compared to programs or courses of study with similar subject matter and objectives, whether offered by distance education methods or residential means.

4. The school must specify the expected knowledge, skills, and competency levels that students will achieve in a distance education program or course of study, and such knowledge, skills and competency levels are equivalent to those expected from comparable programs or courses of study.

5. Graduation, employment and, where applicable, state licensing examination pass rates are assessed in accordance with *Section VII (B), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation.*

D. Programs, Curricula, and Resources

1. The length of the distance education programs and courses of study must meet all necessary requirements outlined in *Section II, Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation.*
2. The school must demonstrate that the content and length of a distance education program or course of study are comparable to residential programs. The school must justify and provide validation for any deviation from established clock-to-credit hour conversions, if applicable.
3. The school must ensure that materials, programs, and courses of study are current and comprehensive, and undergo periodic review as part of the school's institutional assessment and improvement plan.
4. The programs and courses of study must provide for timely and meaningful interaction between students and faculty, and among students.
5. The school's learning resource system must meet all necessary requirements outlined in *Section II (A)(6), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation* and be available in an online format.
6. Program Advisory Committees for programs or courses of study that include content delivered via distance education must include at least one individual with experience in the delivery of distance education programs who is qualified to review and comment on the school's distance education platform, methods, processes, procedures, and infrastructure in the context of the program/course content and objectives.
7. The school must establish and adhere to clear policies on ownership of instructional materials and protection of copyright.

E. Catalog and Advertising

1. The catalog and other publications must clearly describe distance education programs or courses of study, including the school's expectations of distance education students, admissions requirements, the prerequisites for participation, expected learning outcomes, graduation requirements, access to the learning resource system, student services, technology requirements, and any other requirements.
2. The catalog must meet all necessary requirements outlined in *Section IV (C)(1), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation.*
3. All advertisements and promotional materials must meet all necessary requirements outlined in *Section IV (B), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation* and *Appendix IV – Recruitment and Advertising*.

F. Faculty

1. The school must employ faculty who have the qualifications and the experience to teach using distance education methods. Faculty teaching in distance education programs must meet the appropriate requirements set forth in *Section III (B), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation.*

2. The school must provide orientation and training for faculty in accordance with *Section III (B)(4), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation*, which specifically addresses teaching skills and instructional methods in a distance education environment.
3. The institution must have clear, consistent policies, measures, and procedures to evaluate the performance and needs of faculty members, and to assess faculty effectiveness in distance education programs or courses of study.
4. The school must ensure that faculty provide opportunities and means for timely and meaningful interaction with students appropriate to the learning environment.
5. The school must develop policies addressing teaching load (inclusive of residential and distance education), class size, time needed for course development, and the sharing of instructional responsibilities that allow for effective teaching in a distance education environment.

G. Student Services

1. Student services must be made available to students enrolled in distance education programs or courses of study in accordance with *Section VI, Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation.* The school must ensure that there is adequate supervision of its student services for students enrolled in a distance education program or course of study.
2. The school must provide orientation to the distance education environment for students enrolled in distance education programs or courses of study.
3. The school must ensure that faculty and staff respond in a timely manner to student questions and concerns, both academic and administrative.

H. Distance Education Facility[2]

1. A distance education facility must be, where required, licensed by the appropriate state regulatory agency with oversight responsibilities of the school.
2. A distance education facility must be under the same ownership as the main school or branch campus, and the oversight school[3] must demonstrate its proper management, control, and supervision of the distance education Facility.
3. A distance education facility must meet all necessary requirements outlined in *Section VIII, Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation*.

Glossary of Distance Education Terms:

Distance education, as defined by the Commission, is a formal process in which instruction within a program or course of study occurs when the student and instructor are not in the same location at the same time. Distance education employs telecommunication or other electronic technologies (e.g., a learning management system) for the delivery of instruction and may be synchronous or asynchronous in nature. Distance education teaching and learning activities may be used for a complete program or for a portion of a program employing hybrid or blended distance education.

"Distance Education Program" means a program in which all courses are delivered via distance education teaching and learning activities, without the need for any on-campus in-person classes/activities.

[2] See *Section VIII (A)(3), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation* for the definition of a distance education facility.
[3] The school that possesses the locus of distance education approval.

"Hybrid" or "Blended" means courses or programs in which some portion of on-campus instruction is replaced by distance education teaching and learning activities.

"Synchronous" means courses where all students are required to participate at the same time with an instructor; however, the students and the instructor are in separate locations. These courses may be delivered by video conferencing, web conferencing, audio conferencing, etc.

"Asynchronous" means courses where students are not required to participate in any distance education teaching and learning activities live/in real time with an instructor, but instead engage in such activities based upon teaching materials and assignments compiled and made available by an instructor.

ACCSC
STANDARDS OF ACCREDITATION

APPENDICES

ACCSC STANDARDS OF ACCREDITATION
APPENDIX I – ACCREDITATION FEES

ACCREDITATION FEES

Sustaining Fees (from *Section 3.01* of the AACSC *Bylaws*):

Effective July 1, 2023, members of the Corporation shall pay dues annually in accordance with the following:

i. If the gross tuition of the member is $850,000 or less, the dues shall be $1,591 plus .003033 times gross tuition over $200,000;

ii. If the gross tuition of the member is greater than $850,000 but not more than $2,500,000, dues shall be $3,713 plus .001167 times gross tuition over $850,000; and

iii. If the gross tuition of the member is greater than $2,500,000, dues shall be $5,835 plus .000174 times gross tuition over $2,500,000.

Sustaining Fees are due within six months of a school's fiscal year end along with the school's audited financial statements and Sustaining Fee Calculation Worksheet.

Application and Report Fees:

Activity / Application / Report	Fee
Accreditation Workshops	
• Member	
• 1st Member Attendee	$650
• Each Subsequent Member Attendee	$550
• Non-Member	
• Pre-Workshop Application	$150
• 1st Non-Member Attendee	$650
• Each Subsequent Non-Member Attendee	$550
• Consultants	$1,200
Annual Report Processing Fee	$250*
Appeals Hearing Transcript	50% of Actual Cost
Application for an Acquisition	$2,500
Application for Appeal of Commission Decision	$8,000
Application for Approval of a Degree Program	
• Associate Degree	$1,500
• Baccalaureate Degree	$2,000
• Master's Degree	$2,500
Application for Approval of a Degree Program-Affiliated Schools	
• 1st School	Same as Above
• Each Affiliated School – Associate Degree (must be submitted concurrently)	$750
• Each Affiliated School – Baccalaureate Degree (must be submitted concurrently)	$1,000
• Each Affiliated School – Master's Degree (must be submitted concurrently)	$1,250
Application for a Branch Campus	
• Part I	$1,500
• Part II	$2,500
Application for a Branch Campus Realignment	
• Part I	$1,250
• Part II	$2,000
Application for a Change of Control	
• Part I Transactions Less Than $5 million	
• Main School	$4,000†
• Branch Campus	$2,500
• Part I Transactions $5 million to $10 Million	
• Main School	$6,000†

- Branch Campus $2,500
- Part I Transactions Greater than $10 million
  - Main School ..... $8,000†
  - Branch Campus $2,500
- Part II Main School $750
- Part II Branch Campus $500

Application for a Change of Location
- Part I $1,000
- Part II $350

Application for a Change of Mission or Educational Objectives $1,000

Application for a Change of Name
- Part I $500
- Part II $250

Application for Clock Hour to Credit Hour Conversion $500

Application for Clock Hour to Credit Hour Conversion-Affiliated Schools ..... $500^

Application for a Consortium/Partnership Agreement $2,000

Application for Continuing Education and Avocational Courses $500

Application for a Distance Education Facility $1,500

Application for Initial Accreditation
- Part I $1,250
  - Use of University in Name to be submitted with Part I (if applicable) $500
- Part II $2,250
  - Program Fees to be submitted with Part II:

Program Type	# of Programs	Fees
Non-Degree Programs	1 to 3	No Fee
	4 to 9	$500
	10 to 15	$1,000
	16 to 20	$1,500
Degree Programs – Occupational Associate, Academic Associate, and Baccalaureate	1	No Fee
	2 to 3	$1,000
	4 to 9	$2,000
	10 to 15	$3,000
	16 to 20	$4,000
Master's Degree	Each Program will require a separate Application for Approval of a Master's Degree Program	$2,500/each

Application for Initial Distance Education Approval $1,500
- Application for Expansion of Distance Education Approval $500

Application for a Distance Education Consortium/Partnership Agreement $2,000

Application for a Non-Degree Program
- Related Program $1,250
- Unrelated Program $1,500

Application for a Non-Degree Program-Affiliated Schools
- Related Program
  - 1st School $1,250
  - Each Affiliated School (must be submitted concurrently) $750
- Unrelated Program
  - 1st School $1,500
  - Each Affiliated School (must be submitted concurrently) $750

Application for Recognition of English as a Second Language Courses $500

Application for Renewal of Accreditation $2,250

Application for a Satellite Location $1,500
Application for a Substantive Program Modification $750
Application for a Substantive Program Modification-Addition of a Concentration $750
Application for a Substantive Program Modification-Affiliated Schools ..... $750^
Application for Use of a Diminutive Name $350
Application for Use of "University" in School Name
- Part I $1,000
- Part II $500

Facility Expansion Report $500
Modification of Ownership Report ..... $500†
Program Modification Report for Non-Substantive Changes $350
Program Modification Report for Non-Substantive Changes-Affiliated Schools ..... $350^
Request for Good Cause Showing $500
Request for a Waiver of a Standard or Policy
- Member $500
- Non-Member $1,000

***** To be paid with the school's annual Sustaining Fee.

^ Each School/Each Program.

† In instances where the Commission needs to seek outside counsel or opinion related to a proposed change of control or ownership, the associated costs will be passed on to the school.

Commission Action Related Fees:

At the Commission's discretion, the fees set forth below will be assessed for the processing of the following types of Commission actions:

Incorrect Application Resubmission Fee $250
Request for Additional Information $250
Reporting $500
Warning $750
Probation $1,250
Show Cause Order $1,250
Failure to Submit Substantive Change Application within Prescribed Timeframe $1,500

Assessment Evaluations Fees:

Initial and Renewal of Accreditation Evaluations:

- Orientation Evaluation $2,000
- Institutions with three or fewer programs[1] $7,500
- Institutions with four to nine programs $9,000
- Institutions with ten to fifteen programs $12,500
- Institutions with sixteen to twenty programs $14,000
- Institutions with greater than twenty programs ..... $15,000 + $500 for each additional program
- Institutions with more than 500 students are assessed an additional $2,000.
- If an Occupation/Subject Matter Specialist travels more than 200 miles to participate in an evaluation, ACCSC assesses an additional travel-based fees on a direct cost basis.
- If an evaluation team requires more than two days at the school, ACCSC assesses an additional fee of $600 per evaluator per day.
- If an evaluation requires additional evaluators based upon institutional and/or programmatic circumstances, ACCSC assesses an additional $2,000 per evaluator.

[1] A 100% or hybrid distance education program is not considered a separate program from a residential program for the purpose of calculating these assessment fees if the credit hours and clock hours match the residential program.

Substantive Change Evaluations:

- The fee for a required substantive change evaluation is $3,500 with the exception of a change of location (less than 25 miles) which is $2,000.
- When combined with another substantive change evaluation or an initial or renewal of accreditation evaluation, the fee for each combined substantive change evaluation is $500.

Unannounced and Commission Directed Announced Evaluations:

- Regular Unannounced: $2,500.00 for the first day and $600.00 for each day thereafter.
- Commission Directed Unannounced and Announced:
  - First Assigned Evaluator: $2,500.00 for the first day and $600.00 for each day thereafter.
  - Each Subsequent Assigned Evaluator: $1,500 per evaluator for the first day and $600 per evaluator for each day thereafter.

International Evaluations:

- Evaluation fees for schools outside of North America (including Hawaii) and the Caribbean will be assessed on a direct cost basis if the cost of the evaluation exceeds the fees collected as described above.
- Additional fees may also be assessed to non-English speaking schools to accommodate language translation needs.

Pass-Through Fees:

As applicable, additional pass-through fees will apply for stipends to be paid to Team Leaders, Education Specialists, and Occupation/Subject Matter Specialists when such fees have not been included in the evaluation fees described above.

Late Fees:

Late fees will apply to all reports and applications, responses to on-site evaluation reports, and any other Commission directed report or response that has a specific deadline. The $750 late processing fee is assessed and due the day following the due date of a report, application, or response. A late fee may be reduced to $350 if the school requests and receives an extension grant prior to the due date. A list of schools which have not paid fees in accordance with established requirements will be reported to the Commission at each regularly scheduled meeting and may constitute reason for the Commission to take an action set forth in *Section VII* of the *Rules of Process and Procedure*, including denial or withdrawal of a school's accreditation.

Other Circumstances:

In instances where circumstances exist that are not covered by the fees included here, the Commission may charge additional fees to cover the costs associated with the review/evaluation.

Other Fees and Obligations:

The AACSC *Bylaws* describe other fees and obligations required of Members of Corporation under Section 3.02.

APPLICATIONS, REPORTS, FORMS, AND INSTRUCTIONS

Below are the applications, reports, and forms that schools must submit to inform the Commission of any changes that affect the educational purposes, programs, administrative functions, or management of the school as well as instructions as to how the school is to engage in a particular function. These applications, reports, forms, and instructions are considered part of the *Standards of Accreditation* and are critical to the Commission's ability to determine compliance with accrediting standards. A school is responsible through these applications, reports, forms, and instructions for demonstrating continuing compliance with accrediting standards. A school is responsible for monitoring when appropriate applications, reports, and forms need to be filed and for ensuring that applicable instructions are followed. Applications, reports, and forms submitted for Commission review must be complete, accurate, certified by the school's chief executive officer, and filed in a timely manner. Applicable fees must accompany the application, report, or form. At its discretion, the Commission may prescribe a specific time frame that is different from the customary period for the submission of school applications or reports. ***The applications, reports, forms, and instructions are available on the Commission's website – www.accsc.org***

- Allocation of Hours for Clock-Hour Programs
- Annual Report
- Application for an Acquisition
- Application for Appeal of a Commission Decision
- Application for Approval of a Degree Program
  - Occupational Associate Degree
  - Academic Associate Degree
  - Baccalaureate Degree
  - Master's Degree
  - Affiliated Schools
- Application for a Branch Campus-Part I
- Application for a Branch Campus-Part II
- Application for a Branch Campus Realignment-Part I
- Application for a Branch Campus Realignment-Part II
- Application for a Change of Control-Part I
- Application for a Change of Control-Part II
- Application for a Change of Location-Part I
- Application for a Change of Location-Part II
- Application for a Change of Mission or Educational Objectives
- Application for a Change of Name-Part I
- Application for a Change of Name-Part II
- Application for Clock Hour to Credit Hour Conversion
- Application for Clock Hour to Credit Hour Conversion-Affiliated Schools
- Application for a Consortium/Partnership Agreement
- Application for Continuing Education and Avocational Courses
- Application for a Distance Education Consortium/Partnership Agreement
- Application for Expansion of Distance Education Approval
- Application for Initial Accreditation-Part I
- Application for Initial Accreditation-Part II
- Application for Initial Distance Education Approval
- Application for a Non-Degree Program
  - Affiliated Schools
- Application for Recognition of English as a Second Language Courses
- Application for Renewal of Accreditation
- Application for a Satellite Location
- Application for a Substantive Program Modification
- Application for a Substantive Program Modification-Affiliated Schools
- Application for a Substantive Program Modification-Addition of a Concentration
- Application for Use of a Diminutive Name
- Application for Use of "University" in School Name-Part I
- Application for Use of "University" in School Name-Part II
- Catalog Checklist
- Complaint Review Process Form
- Complaint Form
- Graduation and Employment Chart
- Modification of Ownership Report
- Enrollment Agreement Checklist
- Facility Expansion Report
- Faculty Personnel Report
- Instructions for Arbitration
- Instructions for the Preparation and Submission of Financial Statements and Related Information
- Instructions for Electronic Submission
- Outline of a Non-Degree Program
- Outline of a Degree Program
- Pre-Workshop Application for Initial Applicant Schools
- Program Chart
- Program Modification Report for Non-Substantive Changes
- Program Modification Report for Non-Substantive Changes-Affiliated Schools
- Retention Chart
- Request for a Waiver of an Accrediting Standard or Policy
- Request to Show Good Cause
- Self-Evaluation Report
- Staff Personnel Report
- Sustaining Fees Calculation Worksheet
- Teach-Out Forms
  - Institutional Teach-Out Plan Approval Form
  - Notice of Discontinued Programs
  - Programmatic Teach-Out Plan Approval Form
  - Teach-Out Agreement Approval Form

ACCSC STANDARDS OF ACCREDITATION
APPENDIX III – PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

DEFINITION OF A CREDIT HOUR

In accordance with *Section II (A)(3)(b), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation*, the following sets forth criteria for establishing credit hour measures.

A credit hour is defined as an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement for academic activities as established by the institution comprised of the following units: didactic learning environment; supervised laboratory setting of instruction; externship; and out-of-class work/preparation. The following are the measures of these units for establishing credit hour awards:

Credit Hour:

One semester credit hour equals 45 units (and one quarter credit hour equals 30 units) comprised of the following academic activities:

- One clock hour in a didactic learning environment = 2 units
- One clock hour in a supervised laboratory setting of instruction = 1.5 units
- One hour of externship = 1 unit
- One hour of out-of-class work and/or preparation for the didactic learning environment or supervised laboratory setting of instruction that are designed to measure the student's achieved competency relative to the required subject matter objectives = 0.5 unit

Glossary of Terms:

- A "didactic learning environment" is one which is led by a qualified faculty member for the intention of teaching and learning and can be in a classroom or laboratory setting of instruction.
- A "supervised laboratory setting of instruction" is one where students engage in discussion and/or the practical application of information presented in the didactic portion of the program or discovered through out-of-class work/preparation (e.g., practical application settings, clinical settings, etc.) under the supervision of a qualified school faculty member.
- "Out-of-class work/preparation" is that which students engage in as a means to prepare for the didactic learning environment or supervised laboratory setting of instruction and must be articulated through a course syllabus. An institution must be able to justify the number of hours estimated for that outside-of-class work. The student's work outside of class must be consistent with course educational goals and objectives; documented, assessed/graded; and serve as an integral part of the structured, sequenced educational program as described in the syllabus.
- An "externship" is a component of a program that meets the Commission's externship standards and is offered in a bona fide occupational setting for which training and education are provided, the externship component may occur throughout the course of a program or as a capstone requirement. The objectives and goals of an externship must be to allow students to apply practically the knowledge and skills taught in didactic and laboratory settings of instruction.

ACCSC STANDARDS OF ACCREDITATION
APPENDIX III – PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

PROGRAM EVALUATION – PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEES

In accordance with *Section II (A)(4)(b), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation*, schools are required to have an independent Program Advisory Committee for each occupational program or program area to review the established curricula of the program/program area, instructional-related program materials, equipment and facilities, and student achievement outcomes as a means to provide the school with an external review of its programs. The following sets forth more specific criteria for Program Advisory Committees.

1. Program Advisory Committees must be comprised of appropriately qualified representatives external to the institution (i.e., non-school employees) who can provide a meaningful review of the school's programs and supporting resources and materials. These include representatives from the local employment community, practitioners, and others from the field of education, regulators, etc. as appropriate and necessary to fulfill the guidelines below for a functioning Program Advisory Committee;
2. The school must conduct at least one regularly scheduled Program Advisory Committee meeting annually with the following guidelines:
    a. At least three members that represent the employment community and/or practitioners from the program area must be in attendance in order to be considered a Program Advisory Committee meeting;
    b. Written and detailed minutes of each meeting must be maintained and include:
        i. A description of all members in attendance (i.e., names, titles, and affiliations);
        ii. The date, time, and location of the meeting; and
        iii. A comprehensive and clear description of the review of and commentary made by the school representatives and the Program Advisory Committee members;
    c. Program Advisory Committee review and comment activities must include:
        i. The established curriculum of the program and commentary as to the appropriateness and adequacy of the:
            - Program objectives and length;
            - Curriculum content (including academic general education or applied general education as appropriate);
            - Learning resources;
            - Equipment; and
            - Facilities;
        ii. Student graduation, graduate employment, and where required, state licensing examination outcomes of each program; and
        iii. For any new program, the appropriateness of curriculum objectives, program length, and curriculum content prior to submitting an application for Commission approval.
    d. If the Program Advisory Committee meeting is not held at the physical campus of the school, then the school must provide the committee with a sufficiently detailed description and virtual tour of the equipment and facilities representing current conditions at the school.
    e. In addition to the requirements above:

i. For each master's degree program/program area, the Program Advisory Committee must include at least two individuals with graduate level education experience such as graduate students, alumni, graduate faculty from other institutions, etc. as appropriate.

ii. For programs or courses of study that include content delivered via distance education, Program Advisory Committees must include at least one individual with experience in the delivery of distance education programs who is qualified to review and comment on the school's distance education platform, methods, processes, procedures, and infrastructure in the context of the program/course content and objectives (see also *Section IX (D)(6), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation*).

3. The school must provide evidence that it gives consideration to Program Advisory Committee input. Evidence in this regard can take many forms, one such being the disclosure of the school's consideration recorded in Program Advisory Committee meeting minutes, whereby a school describes whether recommendations were implemented or not and explains the school's decisions.

4. Multiple affiliated schools may use a single Program Advisory Committee to review the same established curricula of a program area and student achievement outcomes across the system of schools; however, the review of a school's learning resources, facilities, and equipment must be fulfilled for each individual campus. For example, a school may use a non-local Program Advisory Committee to review the program curriculum offered across a system of affiliated schools and use a local Program Advisory Committee for the campus-level review of the school's learning resources, facilities, equipment, and outcomes.

ACCSC STANDARDS OF ACCREDITATION
APPENDIX IV – RECRUITMENT AND ADVERTISING

ACCSC CODE OF CONDUCT FOR REPRESENTATIVES ENGAGED IN RECRUITMENT ACTIVITIES

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 in the code of conduct as it deems appropriate. The code of conduct must be in writing and accepted, minimally, by all representatives whose primary duties include student recruitment and admissions functions.[1]

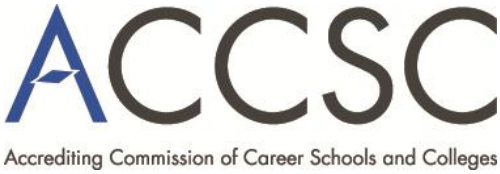
1. Student recruitment, enrollment, and admissions duties will be conducted in an ethical and professional manner and in keeping with organizational policies and procedures as well as relevant accreditation requirements.
2. Student recruitment, enrollment, and admissions duties will be geared toward 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 representatives 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 representatives will work to ensure that students are fully informed and able to make considered enrollment decisions without undue pressure.
5. Student recruitment and admissions representatives 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 representatives 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 representatives will participate in relevant training provided by the school to enhance their skills as school representatives.
8. Student recruitment and admissions representatives will not assist prospective students in providing false or misleading information on any application.
9. Student recruitment and admissions representatives 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 representatives 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 representatives acknowledge having received a copy of the ACCSC *Standards of Accreditation* and having read the sections pertaining to recruitment, advertising, and admissions.

[1] As used through this *Appendix* and in *Section IV*, "representative" means any individual, employee, personnel, or agent with whom the school enters into an arrangement (employment or contractual) whereby the school: a) is responsible for ensuring that the individuals, employees, personnel or agents are operating in compliance and b) retains responsibility for all statements made by and the conduct of the individual, employee, personnel, or agent when representing the school.

ACCSC STANDARDS OF ACCREDITATION
APPENDIX IV – RECRUITMENT AND ADVERTISING

GUIDELINES FOR ADVERTISING

1. Pursuant to *Section IV (A)(7), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation*, a school approves all promotional materials used by school personnel in advance and accepts full responsibility for the materials used.
2. A school's advertising and promotional materials, including the school's name, are truthful and accurate and avoid leaving any false, misleading, or exaggerated impressions with respect to the school or its accredited status.
3. A school may only advertise its name or a diminutive version of its name as approved by the Commission.[2] In places where the *Standards of Accreditation* require the inclusion of the school's name, then the school must use the full name of the school (e.g., enrollment agreement, transcript, completion credential).
4. An ACCSC-accredited institution may publish official affiliation with the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges by imprinting the ACCSC logo on advertising, literature, or other publications. The ACCSC logo is available for download from the Commission's website.



5. When citing accreditation status in advertising, literature, or publications, the following types of references, or substantially similar, may be used:
   a. Accredited by the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (ACCSC). This reference may be used alone; with the name of the school/institution/college[3]/university[4] immediately preceding; or as a part of a sentence prefixed by phrases such as:
      - This [school/institution/college[*]/university[†]] is accredited by the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (ACCSC).
      - Our [school/institution/ college[*]/university[†]] is accredited by the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (ACCSC).
      - [Institution Name] is accredited by the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (ACCSC).
   b. Accredited [Member/Institution/School/College[*]/University[†]], Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges.
   c. Accredited Member/Institution/School/College[*]/University[†] – ACCSC.
6. ACCSC-accredited institutions may not use the phrase "fully accredited."
7. An applicant institution seeking initial accreditation from ACCSC may not make any promotional use of its application for accreditation prior to a grant of accreditation and may not use the ACCSC logo in any publication until the Commission has conferred accreditation.

[2] Submit the Application for Use of a Diminutive Name for approval of a shorter/abbreviated version of the school's name (e.g., a nickname).
[3] If permitted by applicable law.
[4] A school may use the term "University" in its name only when such use has been approved by the Commission and appropriate state authorities (*Section I (F)(2), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation*).

8. When referring to the accredited status of a satellite location in advertising, the following statement must be included:
    - (Name of satellite location) is recognized by the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (ACCSC) as a satellite location of (name and location of main school/branch).
9. For Occupational Associate Degrees, all advertising, promotional materials, and literature make clear that the degree is occupational not academic (*Section II (C)(2)(c)(iii), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation*).
10. When referencing ACCSC's recognition by the U.S. Department of Education, the following types of statements may be used:
    - The Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges/ACCSC is recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education as a reliable authority concerning the quality of education or training offered by the institutions it accredits.
    - The Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges/ACCSC is a recognized institutional accrediting agency by the U.S. Department of Education.
    - The Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges/ACCSC is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as an institutionally recognized accrediting agency.
11. When citing recognition as an ACCSC School of Distinction or an ACCSC School of Excellence in advertising, literature, or publications, the following types of references, or substantially similar, references may be used:
    - [Institution Name] has been recognized by ACCSC as a [Year] ACCSC School of Distinction/ ACCSC School of Excellence.
    - ACCSC has recognized [Institution Name] as a [Year] ACCSC School of Distinction/ACCSC School of Excellence.
    - [Institution Name] has fulfilled ACCSC's requirements for institutions seeking [initial/renewal of] accreditation and has been recognized as a [Year] ACCSC School of Distinction/ACCSC School of Excellence.
    - ACCSC only awards the School of Distinction / School of Excellence to an institution in conjunction with a school's initial or renewal of accreditation review, which generally occurs every 5 years / which last occurred for the school in [YEAR].
    - Examples include:
        - ABC Technical Institute has been recognized by ACCSC as a 2022 ACCSC School of Distinction.*
            - **ACCSC only awards School of Distinction to an institution in conjunction with a school's initial or renewal of accreditation review, which occurred in 2022 for our school.*
        - ACCSC has recognized ABC Technical Institute as a 2016 and 2022 ACCSC School of Excellence. ACCSC only awards School of Excellence to an institution in conjunction with a school's initial or renewal of accreditation review, which for ABC Technical Institute occurred in 2016 and 2022.
        - The Accrediting Commission of Career School and Colleges has recognized ABC College as a 2022 ACCSC School of Excellence.
        - ABC Technical Institute has fulfilled ACCSC's requirements for institutions seeking renewal of accreditation and has been recognized as a 2022 ACCSC School of Distinction.

12. *Section IV (B)(4), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation*: In this section of the standards, the Commission has established a distinction between "endorsements" and "publicly shared media." The key distinction is origination. If a school solicits an endorsement for its advertising and the endorser gives such written or verbal statements, then the school must obtain written consent. The standards prohibit the use of currently enrolled students for such endorsements. However, if "an individual" – including current students – chooses of their own volition to post a comment using publicly shared media (e.g., a social media site), then the school can use/share that post in its own social media and advertising so long as "the media originated with the individual and is bona fide, factually and contextually accurate, unadulterated, and a faithful representation of the shared information or images."

    Below are illustrative examples to provide guidance regarding compliance with *Section IV (B)(4), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation*:

    Scenario: A school wishes to post/use in advertising a video it has created of students in action. No comments from students or graduates are shared, only the narrator describing the school's programs and equipment.

    Guidance: Pursuant to *Section IV (B)(4)(b)*, the school would need to obtain written consent from the students allowing the school to share their images.

    Scenario: A school wishes to post/use in advertising a video it has created of students in action that includes former students/graduates providing statements about their positive experiences at the school and after graduation working in their chosen field.

    Guidance: Pursuant to *Section IV (B)(4)(a-b)*, the school would need to obtain written consent from the former students/graduates allowing the school to share their endorsements and images.

    Scenario: A school wishes to post/use in advertising a video it has created of students in action that includes current and former students/graduates providing statements about their positive experience at the school and after graduation working in their chosen field.

    Guidance: Pursuant to *Section IV (B)(4)(a-b)*, the school would need to obtain written consent from the former students/graduates allowing the school to share their endorsements and images. However, the school would be in violation of *Section IV (B)(4)(a)*, if in fact the school uses endorsements from currently enrolled students.

    Scenario: A current student posts to a social media account about a Blood Drive hosted by the school and the student's "awesome experience" helping people and practicing new skills. The post thanks the faculty and the school director for "making this happen for our community." The school sees this post and re-posts it to its own social media account with the caption "We are so excited to share our student success stories."

    Guidance: Pursuant to *Section IV (B)(4)(b)*, so long as the media originated with the individual (i.e., the current student) and is bona fide, factually and contextually accurate, unadulterated (i.e., not changed), and a faithful representation, then no written consent is required.

    Scenario: A current student posts to a social media account content regarding their experience at a school. The school reposts this on its own social media account. The school also would like to pay for the student's content to be "boosted" or amplified in the social media algorithm so that it will appear more frequently in other user's feeds.

    Guidance: Pursuant to *Section IV (B)(4)(b)*, so long as the media originated with the individual (i.e., the current student) and is bona fide, factually and contextually accurate, unadulterated (i.e., not changed), and a faithful representation, then no written consent is required for the school to post this

content to its own social media. However, in this scenario and others like it (i.e., regardless of whether the student is a current student or a graduated student), the paid re-distribution in this manner renders the content to be an advertisement/endorsement and the school would be required to follow all advertising and endorsement standards and prohibitions as applicable.

Scenario: A current student posts to a social media account upset with the current training because the equipment is completely out of date. The post states "I had a great experience at the beginning, but now I think this school is terrible and I just feel let down." The school sees this post and re-posts only the portion that states "I had a great experience."

Guidance: In this scenario, the school would be in violation of *Section IV (B)(4)(b)*, because the school has taken a quote out of context and portrayed it in a positive light when in fact the student expressed a negative experience. This would not be considered a "faithful representation" or "contextually accurate" depiction of the original social media post.

Scenario: A school informs its students that for each five "likes" or a "shout outs" given on their social media accounts will earn them a five-dollar credit at the bookstore.

Guidance: In this scenario, the school would be in violation of *Section IV (B)(4)(b)*, because the school is essentially "paying" students to post positive comments.

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Schools are advised to maintain documentation of the content used as a means to demonstrate context and accuracy and because if the original content is removed (e.g., a post is deleted), then the school may not be able to carry its burden to provide evidence to support compliance with the Commission's expressed expectations in *Section IV (B)(4)(c) Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation*. In addition, if the school continues to use old social media posts that do not otherwise reflect current conditions at the school, then the school may also be found out of compliance with *Section IV (B)(4)(c) Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation*. The school must in all cases be able to carry its burden of demonstrating ongoing compliance with accrediting standards and should remove/ discontinue use of the content if the author of the content requests the school to do so.

ACCSC STANDARDS OF ACCREDITATION
APPENDIX V – ADMISSIONS DOCUMENTATION

ADMISSIONS DOCUMENTATION

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" prior to enrollment. 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 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.

Moreover, the Commission believes that it is the responsibility of each school to make a determination that a student meets the school's admissions criteria prior to that student beginning a program of study as a means to ensure that the student can perform the level of work required by the program curricula. The fundamental rationale is that admissions criteria are a key and front-line indicator of a potential student's ability to be successful in a program and as such a school should not admit students to a program of study until the potential students can show that those qualifications have been met. The Commission also concluded that requiring admissions documentation prior to enrollment aligns with *Section V, Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation,* which establishes that: a) schools should only admit those students who are capable of successfully completing the training offered and achieving success and b) that admission decisions should be based on fair, effective, and consistently applied criteria that enable a school to make an informed judgment as to an applicant's ability to achieve the program's objectives.

As such, the Commission has interpreted that "prior to enrollment" in the context of *Section V (A)(4)(a-b)* means prior to the acceptance of the student through the full execution of the enrollment agreement (e.g., signed by the accepting school official) and before allowing a student to start classes. As a practical matter, the Commission concluded that a student may sign an enrollment agreement and a school may communicate conditional or provisional acceptance of a student prior to receipt of documentation that admissions criteria have been met. However, a school may not consider a student fully enrolled and may not allow a student to start classes without the requisite documentation. Thus, each school must have a policy and procedure for ensuring that admission documentation is secured prior to fully executing the enrollment agreement and allowing the student to start class. The Commission also concluded that this interpretation applies equally to "conditional" or "trial" periods of enrollment.

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 attest 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 (D)(3), Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*).

ACCSC STANDARDS OF ACCREDITATION
APPENDIX VI – STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT RATES

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT RATES – GRADUATION AND EMPLOYMENT

The Commission determines the established benchmark rates of student graduation and graduate employment for its accredited schools from information collected in Annual Report submissions.[1] Schools should set goals to exceed not only the benchmark rates, but also the average rates of graduation and employment.

The following student achievement rates are in effect for all Graduation and Employment Charts that use a Report Date of July 1, 2016 and later. These rates remain in effect until further notice.

Established Benchmark Graduation Rates			
Program Length in Months	**Average Rates of Graduation**	**Standard Deviation**	**Established Benchmark Graduation Rates***
1-3	**92%**	**8%**	**84%**
4-6	**84%**	**11%**	**73%**
7-9	**72%**	**12%**	**60%**
10-12	**69%**	**14%**	**55%**
13-15	**64%**	**14%**	**50%**
16-18	**62%**	**15%**	**47%**
19-23	**61%**	**18%**	**43%**
24+	**53%**	**13%**	**40%**

* If a school reports a lower graduation rate for a program, that program will be subject to additional monitoring or reporting as deemed appropriate. Prolonged failure to meet a benchmark rate will result in a programmatic or institutional action as deemed appropriate by the Commission.

Established Benchmark Employment Rate			
	Average Rate of Employment	**Standard Deviation**	**Established Benchmark Employment Rate***
All Programs	**78%**	**8%**	**70%**

* If a school reports a lower employment rate for a program, that program will be subject to additional monitoring or reporting as deemed appropriate. Prolonged failure to meet a benchmark rate will result in a programmatic or institutional action as deemed appropriate by the Commission.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT RATE – LICENSURE/CERTIFICATION EXAM PASS RATE

For those programs where a governmental entity requires the attainment of a passing score on a licensure/certification exam in order to work in a particular field, the Commission considers the benchmark rate to be **70%** of the students that take the exam attain a passing score.[2]

[1] The Graduation and Employment Chart is the Commission's mechanism for collecting student achievement data and schools must provide this information in accordance with the prescribed requirements and instructions that accompany this chart. Generally, the Commission establishes the benchmark rate at one standard deviation below the average (mean) aggregated graduation and employment rate data collected in the Annual Report.

[2] If another entity or agency requires a higher examination pass rate, the higher standard shall apply and the Commission will take into consideration any action taken by another oversight entity or agency with regard to a school's failure to meet an examination pass-rate requirement.

ACCSC STANDARDS OF ACCREDITATION APPENDIX VII – GUIDELINES FOR EMPLOYMENT CLASSIFICATION

GUIDELINES FOR EMPLOYMENT CLASSIFICATION

The school must be able to justify the classification of each graduate as employed in a training-related field and maintain internal verifiable employment records using the following guidelines. In accordance with *Section I (A)(1)(d) Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation*, the school should have and adhere to policies or protocols in regard to these guidelines (e.g., reasonable period of time, sustainability, relatedness, etc.).

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 consistent and sustainable.
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 and that the employment is related to the student's program of study at the school; or
        ii. The school secures written documentation from the graduate verifying the employment and that the employment is related to the student's program of study at the school; or
        iii. In cases where a school can show diligent efforts have been made to secure such written documentation without success, the school maintains documentation of verbal verification that includes the following:
            1. The graduate's and employer's name and contact information;
            2. An attestation by school staff confirming the verbal employment verification with the employer and the date of verification; and
            3. An attestation by school staff confirming the verbal employment verification with the graduate and the date of verification.
    b. Self-Employment:

        The school secures written documentation from the self-employed graduate verifying that the employment is valid, including the graduate's name and contact information and an attestation by the graduate confirming that:

        i. The self-employment is aligned with the individual's employment goals, is vocational, and is based on and related to the education and training received;
        ii. The graduate is earning consistent training-related income; and
        iii. That any required licensure for employment has been achieved, if applicable - (e.g., this would not apply in cases where the state or regulatory entity would allow an individual to work under a licensed practitioner before obtaining licensure).

c. Career Support/Advancement:

Students that are already employed in the field of study at the time of graduation[1] 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 support or 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.

5. The school maintains employment files and records that contain sufficient information to be verifiable by third parties such as the Commission, including the following information:

- Graduate Name and Contact Information (contact information may be maintained in the school's electronic database);
- Program Name;
- Date of Graduation;
- Date of Initial Employment;
- Place of Employment;
- Employer Address;
- Employer Contact Person/Supervisor and direct contact information; and
- Descriptive Job Title (please also provide job duties if the job title is insufficient to demonstrate alignment with program name).

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.

[1] The intent of this provision does not apply in cases where a student secures employment toward the end of the program but prior to graduation, where the employment is based on the near anticipated completion of the program (e.g., externship to hire prior to graduation).

ACCSC STANDARDS OF ACCREDITATION APPENDIX VIII – STATEMENT FOR WORKING WITH CONSULTANTS IN THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS

ACCSC STATEMENT FOR SCHOOLS WORKING WITH CONSULTANTS IN THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS

The following statement is provided to assist an institution undergoing the process of accreditation to understand the perspective of the Commission regarding the utilization of consultants in the accreditation process.

A cornerstone of the accreditation process is self-evaluation. Self-evaluation aids the staff and faculty of an institution in analyzing and verifying that it is effectively accomplishing its stated objectives according to its established policies and procedures as well as the established policies and procedures of federal and state agencies and of an accrediting body. The process helps the staff and faculty to develop the knowledge and skills that enable the institution to continuously monitor and maintain quality throughout its organization.

It is important to recognize that an institution must demonstrate to the Commission that it is capable of offering programs and services of quality to its students and that the institution has the internal infrastructure, management and administrative capacity, and educational staff and faculty to provide and sustain those efforts.

ACCSC does not take a position with regard to whether institutions should seek the assistance of a consultant while undergoing any part of the accreditation process, particularly the self-evaluation process. Furthermore, ACCSC does not recommend specific individuals or consulting firms to any institution seeking external assistance.

If an institution chooses to use a consultant in the accreditation process, the consultant may not be present at the institution during any part of an on-site evaluation. The Commission and on-site evaluation team will expect to communicate directly with management and employees of the institution and not with a consultant employed solely for the purpose of completing the accreditation process. Regarding a substantive change process or other required compliance reports and responses, the Commission allows for the involvement of a consultant who may join communication between ACCSC and the institution; however, Commission staff will not communicate with a consultant solely.

ACCREDITATION ALLIANCE OF CAREER SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION AND BYLAWS

ACCREDITATION ALLIANCE OF CAREER SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES – ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION

ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION

ACCREDITATION ALLIANCE OF CAREER SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES (AACSC)

THE UNDERSIGNED, for the purpose of forming a nonstock corporation pursuant to the Virginia Nonstock Corporation Act, certifies:

FIRST: The name of the corporation is Accreditation Alliance of Career Schools and Colleges.

SECOND: The corporation shall have one class of voting members. The members of the corporation shall consist of institutions of higher education which provide career training and education and which have been accredited by the board of directors of the corporation. These articles of corporation shall be amended only upon at least a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the board of directors to propose an amendment to the members of the corporation and an affirmative vote by mail ballot of at least two-thirds (2/3) of the votes cast by the members of the corporation. The Corporation may sell, lease, exchange or otherwise dispose of all or substantially all of its assets, merge into another corporation, or permit another corporation to merge into the corporation only upon at least a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the board of directors to recommend such transaction or merger to the members of the corporation and an affirmative vote of at least two-thirds (2/3) of all of the votes cast by the members of the corporation. The qualifications and rights of the members, including the voting rights of the members, shall otherwise be as set forth in the bylaws of the corporation.

THIRD: The board of directors of the corporation shall be elected and hold office as set forth in the bylaws of the corporation. Directors who are representatives of the public shall be elected by the board of directors. Except as otherwise provided by law or in the bylaws of the corporation, the business of the corporation shall be managed by and all of the powers of the corporation shall be exercised by the board of directors.

FOURTH: The address of the initial registered office of the corporation is 200 West Grace Street, Richmond, Virginia 23220. The name of the initial registered agent of the corporation at that address is Calvin F. Major, a resident of Virginia and a member of the Virginia State Bar.[1]

FIFTH: The names and addresses of the individuals who are to serve as the initial directors until the first annual meeting or until their successors are elected and qualify are:

Name and Address	Name and Address
Robert E. Taylor HCR 88061, 35 McMillen Road, Silver City, NM 88061	George L. Pry 4825 Mooreridge Dr., Pittsburgh, PA 15227
Gerald A. Murphy 39 W070 Cranston Road, St. Charles, IL 60715	Timothy T. Schutz 68 Fife Court, San Ramon, CA 94583
Richard J. Armbruster 522 Little John Hill, Sherwood Forest MD 21405	William M. Slonaker 609 Lamont Drive, Kettering, Ohio 45429
Frances M. Carter 77 South Rolling Road, Springfield, PA 19064	Darrell L. Ward 4840 Orchard Heights Rd., N.W., Salem, OR 97304
Charles S. Collins 5104 N. 32nd Street #240, Phoenix, AZ 85018	

[1] The Commission's registered agent as of July 1, 2003 is Commonwealth Legal Services Corporation 4701 Cox Road Suite 301, Glen Allen, Virginia 23060

ACCREDITATION ALLIANCE OF CAREER SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES – ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION

SIXTH: The corporation is organized and shall be operated exclusively for educational purposes. These purposes are as follows:

- To be a reliable authority as to the quality of education and training offered by institutions of career education;
- To establish and foster high educational standards and ethical practices among such institutions;
- To promulgate standards for the accreditation and evaluation of such institutions;
- To receive applications for accreditation from such institutions;
- To adopt and apply processes and procedures for the evaluation and accreditation of such institutions;
- To issue a list of accredited institutions and disseminate information on the corporation's accrediting standards, procedures and activities; and
- To sponsor and conduct other activities related to accreditation which further and enhance the purposes of the Corporation.

In furtherance of the aforesaid purposes, the corporation may appoint and employ such persons as may be necessary; accept charitable contributions and grants; acquire, hold and dispose of property, both real and personal; exercise such incidental powers as are reasonable and necessary; and have and exercise all of the powers conferred upon nonstock corporations organized pursuant to Title 13.1 of the Code of Virginia as now in effect or as may hereafter be amended.

SEVENTH: No part of the net earnings of the corporation shall inure to the benefit of, or be distributed to, its members, directors, officers, or other private persons, except that the corporation shall be authorized to pay reasonable compensation as set forth in the bylaws of the corporation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes set forth in Article Sixth hereof. No substantial part of the activities of the corporation shall be the carrying on of propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, and the corporation shall not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distribution of statements) any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office. Notwithstanding any other provision of these articles, the corporation shall not carry on any other activities not permitted to be carried on (a) by a corporation exempt from federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code, or (b) by a corporation, contributions to which are deductible under section 170(c)(2) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code.

EIGHTH: Upon the dissolution of the corporation, assets shall be distributed for one or more exempt educational purposes within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code.

NINTH: To the fullest extent permitted by the Virginia Nonstock Corporation Act, as now in effect or as may hereafter be amended, no officer or director of the corporation shall be personally liable for any damages in any proceeding brought by or in the right of the corporation or brought by or on behalf of the members of the corporation, or in connection with any claim, action, suit or proceeding to which he or she may be or is made a party by reason of being or having been an officer or director of the corporation.

ACCREDITATION ALLIANCE OF CAREER SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES – BYLAWS

BYLAWS

ACCREDITATION ALLIANCE OF CAREER SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES (AACSC)

ARTICLE I – BOARD OF DIRECTORS, ACCREDITING COMMISSION OF CAREER SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

Section 1.01 – Definitions

a. Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (ACCSC). The Board of Directors of the Corporation, also hereinafter referred to as the "Accrediting Commission" or the "Commission."

b. Affiliated.

   i. An ownership interest in one or more members of the Corporation;

   ii. Governing board-level responsibilities for one or more members of the Corporation;

   iii. Employment by (to include contractual responsibilities or obligations) with one or more members of the Corporation; or

   iv. Employment (to include contractual responsibilities or obligations) with any ownership entity of one or more members of the Corporation.

   Ownership of or employment by (to include contractual responsibilities or obligations) one member of the Corporation means also affiliation with any other member of the Corporation under the same ownership or ownership structure where any of the same parties are involved.

c. Public Commissioner. A person who:

   i. Has experience in industry, government, education (e.g., accreditation, postsecondary, public, private, adult or vocational/career-oriented), or in similar or allied fields;

   ii. Is not an employee, member of the governing board, owner, shareholder, or consultant of an institution that is accredited by the Commission, has applied for accreditation by the Commission, or is affiliated with a School Commissioner or any institution or entity which is also affiliated with a School Commissioner;

   iii. Is not a member of any trade association or membership organization related to, affiliated with, or associated with ACCSC;

   iv. Is not a spouse, parent, child, or sibling of an individual identified in paragraph (ii) or (iii) of this definition; and

   v. Has been appointed to serve on the Commission pursuant to Section 1.05 hereof.

d. School Commissioner. A person who:

   i. Is a proprietor, owner, or bona fide executive of a member of the Corporation as described in Section 2.01 hereof that has been accredited by ACCSC for at least five years;

   ii. Has at least five years of ownership or bona fide executive experience in an ACCSC-accredited school, has participated in at least one full accreditation process with an ACCSC-accredited school, and is active in school operations;

iii. Has a past record demonstrating:

1. A commitment to providing quality education to students;
2. A commitment to ethical, fair, and honest practice; and
3. Compliance with accrediting standards and applicable federal, state, and local requirements; and

iv. Has been elected or appointed to serve on the Commission pursuant to Section 1.04 hereof.

The Commission shall not have among its membership more than one (1) School Commissioner affiliated with a single member of the Corporation or multiple members of the Corporation under common ownership and control.

e. Members of the Corporation (also referred to as "member"). Postsecondary higher education institutions that provide career training and education and which meet the Commission's eligibility requirements and have been accredited by the Commission.

f. The *Standards of Accreditation*. The document that establishes the Commission's *Rules of Process and Procedure* and *Substantive Standards* with which institutions seeking accreditation and accredited institutions must comply.

Section 1.02 – Powers and Duties

Except as otherwise provided by law or in these *Bylaws*, the Accrediting Commission shall have the exclusive right and responsibility to manage and direct the affairs and exercise the powers of the Corporation. Without limiting the foregoing or the rights, responsibilities or powers set forth in the Articles of Incorporation or elsewhere in these *Bylaws*, the Accrediting Commission shall have the right to promulgate, after notice to and comment from the members of the Corporation, standards of accreditation. The Commission shall also have the right to adopt and apply processes and procedures for accreditation, receive applications for accreditation, monitor compliance with the standards of accreditation of members of the Corporation, issue a list of accredited institutions, disseminate information on the Commission's standards of accreditation, procedures and activities, and exercise other powers and duties incidental to the foregoing.

Section 1.03 – Composition

The Commission shall be composed of an odd number of not less than nine (9) members and not more than seventeen (17) members consisting of individuals elected or appointed as established in these Bylaws and designated as set forth in the *Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*. The number of Public Commissioners shall be at least 15% but less than a majority of the total number of Commissioners. The number of Commissioners may be changed within the foregoing limits by a vote of at least two-thirds of the Commission. The number and composition of the Commission may otherwise be changed only by amendment of the Bylaws pursuant to Section 4.04 hereof.

Section 1.04 – Election and Appointment of School Commissioners

a. Election. School Commissioners shall be chosen by vote of the members of the Corporation from among the nominees designated by the Nominating Committee established by the Commission pursuant to Section 1.09.b hereof. For School Commissioner positions subject to election, the candidates receiving the greatest number of votes shall be elected. (See also 1.09.b.iv for nomination consideration factors.)

b. Appointment. For the term commencing July 1, 2012 and biennially thereafter, the Commission shall appoint one School Commissioner to a four-year term, from among the nominees for such position designated by the Nominating Committee pursuant to Section 1.09.b hereof. The Commission will afford the members of the Corporation the opportunity to comment on the nominee(s) and will take into consideration any comments received prior to making an appointment. (See also 1.09.b.iv for nomination and appointment consideration factors.)

Section 1.05 – Appointment of Public Commissioners

Public Commissioners shall be appointed by the Accrediting Commission, after affording the members of the Corporation the opportunity to comment, from among the nominees designated by the Nominating Committee established by the Commission pursuant to Section 1.09.b hereof. (See also 1.09.b.iv for nomination and appointment consideration factors.)

Section 1.06 – Term

Members of the Commission shall serve for a term of four (4) years except as provided by Section 1.08 (a-b). Upon completion of a Commissioner's term, the Commissioner shall be eligible for election or appointment for one consecutive term. Subsequently, the Commissioner shall not be eligible for election or appointment for another term until four (4) years have elapsed. A Commissioner's term shall commence on the first day of the Corporation's fiscal year.

Section 1.07 – Removal

Upon a finding on a majority vote by the Commission that a School Commissioner no longer meets the requirements of Section 1.01.d or a Public Commissioner no longer meets the requirements of Section 1.01.c, such Commissioner shall be removed from office. A School Commissioner shall also be removed upon a determination by the Commission on a majority vote that one or more of the following circumstances have occurred:

a. A final action to deny or withdraw/revoke the accreditation at any institution with which the Commissioner is affiliated;

b. The involuntary loss of state authority to operate any institution with which the Commissioner is affiliated;

c. The cessation or announced cessation of operations at an institution such that the Commissioner ceases to be eligible to serve pursuant to Section 1.01;

d. The filing for reorganization or bankruptcy by any institution or its parent corporation which the Commissioner is affiliated;

e. A final finding by a state or federal agency or authority that the Commissioner engaged in fraudulent activities such that state or federal laws were violated;

f. The debarment of the Commissioner by the U.S. Department of Education from employment at any institution participating in federal student funding programs;

g. The failure of any institution with which the Commissioner is affiliated to meet its financial obligations to the Corporation which results in loss of membership; or

h. A change of control or ownership at the institution with which the Commissioner is affiliated or change of employment by the Commissioner to another institution such that the eligibility requirements of Section 1.01 (b) would not be met.

The Commission may also remove a Commissioner on a majority vote because of conviction of a felony or a crime of moral turpitude, a final determination by the Commission of a violation of the Code of Conduct adopted by the Commission, or any adverse decision rendered by a federal, state, or accrediting agency. The effective date of removal pursuant to this section shall be the date of the Commission's vote.

Section 1.08 – Vacancies

a. In the event of a vacancy on the Commission by reason of resignation, health, removal or otherwise, the Executive Committee of the Commission established pursuant to Section 1.09.a hereof shall nominate candidates to fill such vacancy from among former Commissioners, irrespective of the date that their terms ended. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Executive Committee may nominate only one candidate to fill a vacancy if it is not practicable to nominate multiple candidates. Based upon a review of the nominations presented by the Executive Committee, the Commission shall fill such vacancy only upon a majority vote. If a majority vote cannot be secured for a nominee, the Commission shall request new nominations from the Executive Committee, and the vacancy shall not be filled until a nominee is appointed by the Commission upon a majority vote. A Commissioner selected to fill such vacancy shall serve until the end of the fiscal year in which the Commissioner is selected.

b. The Nominating Committee established pursuant to Section 1.09.b hereof shall nominate candidates for election to serve the remainder of the term of the position in which the vacancy occurred either when it normally convenes to nominate candidates to fill vacancies on the Commission for Commissioners whose terms are expiring or at another time if the normal nominating process has been completed. A Commissioner elected to serve the remainder of a term shall thereafter be eligible to run for election to serve for a subsequent full term without having to wait four (4) years as set forth in Section 1.06 hereof. Upon completion of a partial term and a subsequent term, the Commissioner shall be ineligible to serve for another full term until four (4) years have elapsed.

Section 1.09 – Committees

The Commission may create such standing or special committees as it may deem necessary or desirable and define their duties and responsibilities. Except as provided below, appointments to such committees shall be made by the Chair of the Commission as such office is defined in Section 1.11.a.i hereof and confirmed by the Commission. In addition to any standing or special committees created in accordance with the foregoing, the following shall constitute standing committees of the Commission:

a. Executive Committee: The membership of the Executive Committee shall consist of the Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer of the Corporation, as such offices are defined in Section 1.11 hereof. Between meetings of the Commission, the Executive Committee is delegated authority and empowered to act upon matters related to the management and operations of the Commission, but the Executive Committee may not change or waive standards of accreditation or make decisions that would change the accredited status of a school—i.e., place a school on Warning, Probation, or Show Cause or grant, renew, deny, or withdraw accreditation—which are authorities reserved exclusively by the Commission as the decision-making body. The Executive Committee may also perform such other functions as the Commission may direct. The Executive Committee shall convene, only in person or by telephone or video conference call, whenever the Chair or, in the Chair's absence, any two (2) members of the Executive Committee are made aware of a matter requiring Executive Committee consideration or action hereunder. At any meeting of the Executive Committee, three (3) members shall constitute a quorum. All actions of the Executive Committee shall be taken by majority vote. Accurate minutes of Executive Committee meetings shall be kept by the Executive Director and staff of the Commission under the direction of the Secretary, and final minutes approved by the Executive Committee shall be promptly circulated to the members of the Commission.

b. Nominating Committee:

i. The Nominating Committee shall consist of five (5) persons as follows:

1. The Chair and Vice Chair of the Commission;

2. One (1) person who is not affiliated with any sitting Commissioner, appointed by the Chair and confirmed by the Commission from among the following categories: a current member of the Standing Appeals Panel established by the Commission under the *Standards of Accreditation*, a person who has served as a leader of visiting teams used by the Commission for site visits to accredited institutions, a former School Commissioner or Public Commissioner as defined in Section 1.01, or a representative of the public with special knowledge, interest and expertise in career education and training; and

3. Two (2) representatives of the members of the Corporation who are not affiliated with any sitting Commissioner, with each one (1) nominated and elected by the members biennially in alternate years in accordance with the voting and election procedures provided in Section 2.07 hereof.

ii. The Commission shall inform the members of the Corporation and other interested parties of the vacancies on the Nominating Committee and request the submission of nominations to fill those vacancies. The Commission will review the Nominating Committee nominations received, select those deemed most appropriate to serve, and will put forth for election minimally two nominations for each vacancy to be filled on the Nominating Committee, unless the Commission does not receive a sufficient number of nominations to fulfill this requirement in which case the Commission will put forth as many nominations that are deemed appropriate and as are available.

iii. The Nominating Committee shall nominate at least a greater number of candidates than there are vacancies on the Commission and shall report its nominations to the Commission and the members of the Corporation, except as provided in Section 1.08 hereof.

iv. The Nominating Committee may not process a nomination when the nominee's locus of eligibility to serve as a School Commissioner is a school (including an affiliated school within a group) that:

a. Is currently or has been within the preceding five years subject to an ACCSC-issued Show Cause or Probation or

b. Is currently or has been within the preceding 12 months subject to an ACCSC-issued Warning.

v. The Nominating Committee in nominating candidates, and the Commission in appointing Commissioners pursuant to Section 1.04, 1.05, and 1.08 hereof, shall, minimally, give consideration to:

1. A nominee's:

a. Background, level of experience, and knowledge regarding accreditation, postsecondary education, industry, and Board governance;

b. Affiliation with any school that has:

i. Lost or been denied accreditation by any accrediting agency;

ii. Been issued a Warning, Probation, Show Cause, or equivalent action by any accrediting agency, except nominees excluded from consideration pursuant to 1.09.b.iv hereof;

iii. Entered into bankruptcy, or

iv. Closed;

c. Involvement in criminal proceedings and any pending or past action (e.g., investigation,

inquiry, etc.) in a judicial, law enforcement, or administrative body; and

d. Performance and commitment with respect to:
   i. Providing quality education to students;
   ii. Ethical, fair, and honest practice; and
   iii. Compliance with accrediting standards and applicable federal, state, and local requirements;

2. Any comments provided by the Executive Director; and
3. The Commission's goal to achieve a diversity of backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives in order to achieve the purposes of the Corporation.

c. Audit Committee: The Audit Committee shall consist of the Treasurer of the Corporation, two (2) Public Commissioners and one (1) School Commissioner. The Public Commissioners and School Commissioners shall be appointed by the Chair of the Commission and confirmed by the Commission, and the Treasurer shall serve in a non-voting capacity. The Audit Committee, with assistance from the Executive Director, shall:

i. Recommend to the Commission the selection of an independent auditor to review the accounts and financial affairs of the Commission;

ii. Consult with the independent auditor with regard to the plan of audit;

iii. Review and evaluate such audit and the financial reports submitted to the Commission by the Treasurer;

iv. Consult with the independent auditor on the adequacy of internal financial controls;

v. Direct staff to ensure the availability of the Commission's audited financial statements to Commissioners, members of the Corporation, and the public as required by applicable law; and

vi. Ensure the annual report on the finances of the Corporation is provided to the members of the Corporation by the Treasurer.

Section 1.10 – Meetings

The Commission shall convene at the annual meeting of the Corporation and a minimum three (3) times each fiscal year for regular meetings at such times and places as may be fixed by the Commission for the transaction of business. The Commission may also convene, only in person or by telephone or video conference call, for special meetings whenever called by the Chair, the Executive Committee, or at least two-thirds (2/3) of the Commission in writing. At any meeting of the Commission, a majority of the Commission shall constitute a quorum. Except as otherwise provided by law or in these *Bylaws*, all matters properly before the Commission for consideration and action shall be resolved by majority vote of those Commissioners present and voting. Proxy voting shall not be allowed. The Commission may, at its discretion, provide for a portion of the meeting where the members of the Corporation may attend and express their views on matters pertinent to the business of the Commission, with the exception of specific school actions. Meetings of the Commission shall otherwise not be open to attendance by members of the Corporation or the public. Accurate minutes of meetings shall be kept by the Executive Director and staff of the Commission under the direction of the Secretary, and draft minutes shall be promptly circulated to the Commissioners for review. Final minutes shall be adopted no later than the next regular meeting of the Commission. The Commission shall establish procedures for making available to the members of the Corporation the accreditation actions taken after each meeting of the Commission. In addition to the foregoing, the Commission may adopt such procedures as it deems necessary for the conduct of its business,

including meetings in executive session. In the absence of an established procedure, Roberts Rules of Order shall apply.

Section 1.11 – Officers

a. The officers of the Corporation shall consist of the following:

   i. Chair: The Chair shall preside over all Commission and Executive Committee meetings and carry out the policies established and the actions taken by the Commission. The Chair may represent the Commission in its dealings with governmental bodies, the press and the public, and may sign or approve correspondence and other instruments of the Commission. The Chair shall oversee the activities and performance of the Executive Director on behalf of the Commission. The Chair shall also perform such other duties as are assigned by the Commission and are incidental to the office of Chair.

   ii. Vice Chair: The Vice Chair of the Commission is the Vice President of the Corporation and shall act in the place of the Chair in the event of the Chair's absence or inability to carry out the duties described in Section 1.11.a.i hereof. The Vice Chair shall also perform such duties as may be assigned by the Chair or the Commission.

   iii. Secretary: The Secretary shall be responsible for preparing and maintaining custody of minutes of all meetings of the members of the Corporation and of all meetings of the Commission, for authenticating the records of the Corporation, for giving all notices required by these *Bylaws*, and for performing all duties customary to the office of Secretary. The Secretary shall also have custody of the corporate seal of the Corporation and authority to affix the seal to any instrument requiring it.

   iv. Treasurer: 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 of the Corporation and shall deposit all monies and other valuable property of the Corporation in such banks or depositaries as the Commission may designate. The Treasurer shall perform all duties incident to the office of Treasurer, subject to the supervision of the Commission, and shall regularly report to the Commission on the financial affairs of the Corporation.

b. The officers of the Commission shall be elected by the Commission at the last regular in-person Commission meeting of the fiscal year and shall serve for a term of one year commencing the first date of the ensuing fiscal year. Officers shall be elected by a majority vote via a secret ballot conducted by the Secretary of the Corporation. Proxy voting shall not be permitted. Any member of the Commission shall be eligible to serve as an officer; provided that if the Chair is a Public Commissioner, the Vice Chair shall be a School Commissioner, and if the Chair is a School Commissioner, the Vice Chair shall be a Public Commissioner. An officer may serve for as many years, consecutively or otherwise, as he or she is a member of the Commission provided that no member of the Commission may simultaneously hold more than one office. Vacancies shall be filled by a vote of the Commission at the first meeting of the Commission immediately following the occurrence of the vacancy. A Commissioner elected to fill such a vacancy shall serve until the next regularly scheduled election of officers.

Section 1.12 – Compensation

School Commissioners shall serve on the Commission without compensation. Public Commissioners may receive honoraria for their service on the Commission. Upon presentation of appropriate documentation to the Treasurer, Commissioners shall be reimbursed for expenses incurred in the performance of Commission

duties. The Commission shall annually establish and disclose to the members of the Corporation the amount of honoraria that may be paid.

Section 1.13 – Agents and Employees

a. Executive Director: The Commission shall engage an Executive Director who shall be the Commission's Chief Executive Officer. The Executive Director shall have charge of and responsibility for the administration of the Commission's affairs and for management of the staff of the Commission. The Executive Director shall represent the Commission in its dealings with governmental bodies, the press and the public, and sign or approve correspondence and other instruments of the Commission. The Executive Director shall be answerable to the Commission, but the Chair acting on behalf of the Commission shall oversee the Executive Director's performance of his or her duties. Except when the Commission is in executive session to discuss and review the Executive Director's compensation or the performance of his or her duties, the Executive Director shall attend all meetings of the Commission and the Executive Committee and participate in its deliberations in a non-voting capacity.

b. Other Agents and Employees: The Commission may engage such other agents and employees who shall have such authority and perform such duties as the Commission may prescribe.

c. Compensation: The Corporation shall pay compensation to the Executive Director and other agents and employees of the Commission in amounts established by the Commission. The Executive Committee shall serve as a Compensation Committee for the purpose of recommending the compensation of the Executive Director to the full Commission.

ARTICLE II – MEMBERS

Section 2.01 – Qualifications

The Members of the Corporation (also "member") shall consist of institutions of higher education which provide career training and education and which have been accredited by the Commission. The members shall include main schools and branch campuses as described in the *Standards of Accreditation* of the Accrediting Commission.

Section 2.02 – Term

The term of membership shall be the period of accreditation by the Commission. Any member which ceases to be accredited by the Commission shall automatically, and without the necessity for further action, be deemed removed from membership. Any member may also resign by so notifying the Secretary of the Corporation in writing. Resignation results in the removal of accreditation by the Commission. All obligations owed to the Corporation, including the payment of dues and fees, shall be fulfilled prior to resignation. Each member agrees to consent to entry of judgment in a court of competent jurisdiction for the amount of all unpaid dues and fees, including all costs incurred by the Accrediting Commission in seeking recovery of the fees and dues.

Section 2.03 – Annual Meeting

The Accrediting Commission shall hold a meeting of the members annually at a date and a place to be determined by the Accrediting Commission. The purpose of such meeting shall be the delivery of a report on the budget and finances of the Corporation and its activities and affairs, approval or disapproval of dues and assessments pursuant to Article III hereof, if necessary, and the transaction of other business as specified by the Accrediting Commission.

Section 2.04 – Special Meetings

Special meetings of the members may be called at any time by the Accrediting Commission or by a request submitted in writing to the Secretary of the Corporation by a number of members that equals or exceeds the quorum set forth in Section 2.06 hereof. The Accrediting Commission shall specify a date and a place for such meetings. Only business within the purpose or purposes described in the meeting notice may be conducted at a special meeting.

Section 2.05 – Notice

Notice of the time, place, and purpose of meetings of the members shall be mailed to the last recorded address (physical or electronic) of each member at least thirty (30) days before the date appointed for the meeting. A member may waive any notice required by law or these *Bylaws* before or after the date and time of the meeting that is the subject of such notice. The waiver shall be in writing, signed by an authorized representative of the member, and delivered to the Secretary of the Corporation. A member that attends a meeting (1) waives objection to lack of notice or defective notice of the meeting unless the member at the beginning of the meeting objects to holding the meeting or transacting business at the meeting and (2) except in the case of a special meeting, waives objection to consideration of a particular matter at the meeting that is not within the purpose or purposes described in the meeting notice unless the member objects to considering the matter when it is presented.

Section 2.06 – Quorum

One-tenth of the members entitled to cast votes shall constitute a quorum at a meeting of the members for the transaction of any business. If a meeting cannot be organized because a quorum is not present, then those present may adjourn the meeting for a maximum of seven (7) days from the date of the meeting as originally scheduled without notice other than announcement at the meeting, until a quorum is present or represented. At such adjourned meeting at which a quorum is presented or represented, any business may be transacted that might have been transacted at the meeting as originally called.

Section 2.07 – Voting

a. Manner: Each member shall have one vote, except that a group of affiliated schools – i.e., schools under common ownership – may have no more than five total votes regardless of the number of members in the group. Such vote shall be cast by an individual affiliated with and duly appointed by the member to vote (hereinafter referred to as the "Designated Delegate"). Proxies shall not be permitted on any vote, and no person may be the Designated Delegate for more than one member; however, a Designated Delegate may serve as such for up to five (5) members under common ownership and control. Election of School Commissioners, members of the Nominating Committee, and approval or disapproval of amendments to the Articles of Incorporation and the *Bylaws* shall occur through mail or electronic ballots in accordance with procedures established by the Accrediting Commission. All other matters subject to a vote under these *Bylaws* may be determined by mail or electronic ballots, voting in person at a meeting of the members, or both in accordance with procedures established by the Accrediting Commission. Election and voting procedures shall be subject to such conditions and limitations as the Accrediting Commission may establish to provide for an orderly and considered decision by members of the Corporation. Upon accreditation by the Commission, each member shall notify the Secretary of the Corporation in writing of its Designated Delegate. Changes in a member's Designated Delegate shall be made in writing to the Secretary at least fifteen (15) days prior to the date of any scheduled meeting of the members. The record date for determining eligibility to vote shall be the date that the vote is taken.

b. Rights: In addition to amendment of the Articles of Incorporation and approval of a merger and other transactions as set forth therein, members shall have the right to vote upon the election of School Commissioners pursuant to Section 1.04a hereof, upon dues and assessments as set forth in Section 3.01 hereof, upon the selection of representatives of the members for the Nominating Committee pursuant to Section 1.09.b.iii hereof, amendment of the *Bylaws* of the Corporation pursuant to Section 4.04 hereof, and upon such other matters as the Accrediting Commission shall determine to submit to the members for a vote.

Section 2.08 – Members' List

The Secretary of the Corporation shall maintain a complete list of members with the address of each. Such list shall be subject to inspection by any member at any time during the usual business hours of the Corporation.

Section 2.09 – Liability

No member shall be liable for the debts of the Corporation in any amount except to the extent of the dues, assessments, and fees required of such member pursuant to Article III hereof. Notwithstanding the foregoing, a member of the Corporation shall pay all litigation costs and expenses incurred by the Commission in defending (i.) any suit, claim or proceeding filed by such member against the Corporation, Commission, or any officer, director, Commissioner, member of a committee, agent or employee acting on

behalf of the Corporation or Commission if any such defendant substantially prevails in any such suit, claim or proceeding or (ii.) any suit, claim or proceeding brought by a third party against a member if the Corporation, Commission, or any officer, director, Commissioner, member of a committee, agent or employee acting on behalf of the Corporation or Commission are named as a defendant or defendants and substantially prevail.

ARTICLE III – DUES AND FEES

Section 3.01 – Dues

a. Amount: Effective July 1, 2026, members of the Corporation shall pay dues annually in accordance with the following:

   i. If the gross tuition of the member is $850,000 or less, the dues shall be $1,591 plus .003033 times gross tuition over $200,000;

   ii. If the gross tuition of the member is greater than $850,000 but not more than $2,500,000, dues shall be $3,713 plus .001167 times gross tuition over $850,000; and

   iii. If the gross tuition of the member is greater than $2,500,000, dues shall be $5,835 plus .000174 times gross tuition over $2,500,000.

   Starting July 1, 2017, the Accrediting Commission may on a triennial basis increase the base fee, the multiplier, or both up to 3% without a required vote by the members of the Corporation. Additional increases in dues shall be proposed by the Accrediting Commission and submitted to the members for approval or disapproval on a majority vote of the votes cast at the annual meeting of the Corporation.

b. Assessments: The Accrediting Commission, upon a two-thirds (2/3) vote, may propose an assessment in addition to the annual dues established pursuant to Section 3.01.a hereof where there has occurred or is impending an emergency which may impair the ability of the Corporation to achieve its purposes and the amount of annual dues is insufficient to meet the Corporation's requirements. The proposed assessment shall be submitted to the members of the Corporation for approval or disapproval on a majority vote of the votes cast.

c. Payment: Dues and assessments are payable annually at the office of the Corporation thirty (30) days after the beginning of the fiscal year of the Corporation or pursuant to a payment schedule established by the Accrediting Commission. Dues and assessments shall be considered delinquent if not paid within ten (10) days of the due date. The Accrediting Commission may establish and charge a late fee upon the initial delinquency and monthly thereafter.

d. Proration: An institution which becomes a member during the first quarter of the fiscal year shall pay the full amount of applicable annual dues and assessments. An institution which becomes a member during any succeeding quarter shall pay a proportional amount of the applicable dues and assessments determined by the number of quarters remaining in the fiscal year after becoming a member including the quarter in which the institution became a member.

Section 3.02 – Fees

In addition to dues and assessments established pursuant to Section 3.01 hereof, the Accrediting Commission may establish fees for applications, reports, evaluations, visits, appeals, and other accreditation activities to defray the costs of such activities. The Accrediting Commission may also establish late charges to be assessed for delinquent payment of any such fee. Such fees shall be set forth in the *Standards of Accreditation* of the Accrediting Commission. The Accrediting Commission may change such fees after notifying the members of the Corporation of proposed changes and inviting and considering comments thereon. The schedule of fees shall be published in the Commission's *Standards of Accreditation*.

Section 3.03 – Budget

The Accrediting Commission shall establish a budget for each fiscal year. A summary of such budget shall be provided to the members of the Corporation together with the notice of the annual meeting of the Corporation. The Treasurer shall report on the Corporation's budget and finances at the annual meeting.

Section 3.04 – Fiscal Year

The fiscal year of the Corporation shall be July 1 through June 30.

ARTICLE IV – MISCELLANEOUS

Section 4.01 – Corporate Seal

The corporate seal shall be in such form as may be approved by the Accrediting Commission.

Section 4.02 – Checks, Notes, and Contracts

The Accrediting Commission shall determine the persons from amongst the Executive Committee, Executive Director, and Director-level staff who shall 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, and contracts, or to execute and deliver other documents and instruments. Approval from the Chair or the Treasurer of the Commission and the Executive Director is required for any check in the amount of $10,000 or greater. The Accrediting Commission may require officers, agents, employees and other persons so authorized pursuant to this section to give security for the faithful performance of their duties.

Section 4.03 – 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 4.04 – Amendment of *Bylaws*

The *Bylaws* of the Corporation may be amended only upon at least a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Accrediting Commission to propose an amendment to the members of the Corporation and an affirmative vote by mail or electronic ballot of at least two-thirds (2/3) of the votes cast by the members of the Corporation.

Section 4.05 – Indemnification and Insurance

The Corporation shall indemnify and hold harmless each director, officer, Commissioner, member of an Appeals Panel, member of a visiting team, agent, employee or other person acting on behalf of the Corporation or Commission 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 he or she acted on behalf of the Corporation or Commission as a director, officer, Commissioner, member of an Appeals Panel, member of a visiting team, agent or employee. The rights specified in this section shall apply whether or not such persons continue to act in such a 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 in such claim, suit or proceeding to be liable for willful misconduct. The Accrediting Commission may also authorize the purchase and maintenance of insurance on behalf of such persons and the Corporation against any liability which arises from their actions in such capacities.

Section 4.06 – Arbitration, Jurisdiction, and Venue

a. By applying for accreditation with the Accrediting Commission, the member agrees to exhaust all appeal opportunities and to submit fully and faithfully to final, binding arbitration proceedings as set forth in the *Standards of Accreditation*[1] before filing any suit, claim or proceeding relating to membership, accreditation or accredited status, whether a claim for damages or injunctive or

[1] See the Instructions for Arbitration (*Appendix II – Applications, Reports, Forms, and Instructions, Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation*).

declaratory relief, brought by a member, former member, or applicant for accreditation, against the Corporation or the Commission, or a Commissioner, member of an Appeals Panel, member of a visiting team, or other agent or employee of the Corporation or the Commission because he or she acted on behalf of the Corporation or Commission.

b. Jurisdiction and venue of any suit, claim, or proceeding not subject to final, binding arbitration shall only be in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia or, if the Commission's main office is not located in such district, in the federal district court for the district in which the main office of the Commission is located.

ACCREDITATION ALLIANCE OF CAREER SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES – BYLAWS

LIST OF AMENDMENTS TO THE *BYLAWS*

Unless otherwise noted, the following amendments to the *Bylaws* of the Accreditation Alliance of Career Schools and Colleges were approved in accordance with Section 4.04 or Section 3.01.a. of the *Bylaws*:

April 19, 1995:
- Section 2.01 (conforming revision)

June 4, 1996:
- Section 1.08
- Section 1.10
- Section 3.01.a

January 22, 2001:
- Section 4.06

September 7, 2001:
- Section 1.06
- Section 1.08
- Section 1.11

August 1, 2003:
- Section 2.01 (conforming revision)
- Section 1.03
- Section 1.04
- Section 1.06
- Section 1.08
- Section 1.09.b
- Section 1.11.a
- Section 1.11.d
- Section 1.1.3.a

September 1, 2009:
- Section 1.08
- Section 1.09
- Section 2.03
- Section 2.05
- Section 2.07
- Section 4.04

March 1, 2013:
- Section 1.01.b
- Section 1.01.c
- Section 1.01.d
- Section 1.01.e
- Section 1.01.f
- Section 1.03
- Section 1.06
- Section 1.07.a-h
- Section 1.08.a
- Section 1.09.a-c
- Section 1.10
- Section 1.11.a-b
- Section 1.12
- Section 1.13.a&c
- Section 2.01
- Section 2.02
- Section 2.03
- Section 2.05
- Section 2.06
- Section 2.08
- Section 3.01.c
- Section 3.02
- Section 4.02
- Section 4.06

July 1, 2017:
- Section 1.01
- Section 1.03
- Section 1.09
- Section 2.07
- Section 3.01

May 1, 2019:
- Section 1.06
- Section 1.11.b

July 1, 2020:
- Section 1.01.d.i
- Section 1.01.d.ii
- Section 1.09.b.i.2
- Section 1.09.b.i.3
- Section 1.09.b.iv.1.b

January 1, 2022:
- Section 3.01.a

July 1, 2023:
- Section 3.01.a (triennial fee increase)

July 1, 2024:
- Section 4.02

July 1, 2025:
- Section 1.03
- Section 1.09

July 1, 2026
- Section 1.08 (conforming revision)
- Section 1.09.b (conforming revision)
- Section 3.01.a (triennial fee increase)