



Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges

2101 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 302
Arlington, Virginia 22201
703.247.4212
703.247.4533 fax
www.accsc.org

ACCSC ACCREDITATION ALERT

To: ACCSC Accredited Institutions and Other Interested Parties
From: Michale S. McComis, Ed.D., Executive Director
Date: January 2, 2024
Subject: Conforming Revisions to the ACCSC *Standards of Accreditation*

Conforming Revisions to the *Standards of Accreditation*:

Chapter 1 – Rules of Process and Procedure

Section I (A)(7)
Section IV (C)(2)(b)
Section IV (E)(2)(h)
Section VII (D)(2, 7, & 8)
Section VII (G)(1)
Section VIII (C)(2)(c) & (6)
Section IX (E & F)
Section X (B)
Section X (C)(2-4)
Section X (D)(4)

Chapter 2 – Substantive Standards

Section VI (D)(1-5), Substantive
Section VIII (A)(1), Substantive

All revisions set forth herein are effective January 1, 2024 and will be added to the republished version of the *Standards of Accreditation* dated July 1, 2024 replacing the previous version. For additional information related to this Accreditation Alert, please contact Michale S. McComis, Ed.D., Executive Director, at 703.247.4520 or mccomis@accsc.org.

In preparation for ACCSC's Petition for Rerecognition with the U.S. Department of Education, ACCSC has conducted a comprehensive study of the federal regulations and has identified the following conforming revisions as useful to demonstrate or strengthen ACCSC's compliance with the federal regulations. Because the Commission views these changes as non-substantive and primarily comprised of conforming and clarifying language, the Commission determined that a Call for Comment is not required and has made these changes effective immediately.

New text in *red, bold, and italic print*
Deleted text in ~~blue strikethrough print~~.

CHAPTER 1 – RULES OF PROCESS AND PROCEDURE

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

A. Definitions

7. *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.*

Renumber 8.–19.

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

C. Substantive Changes

2. The Commission considers the following to be substantive changes to an educational institution:
 - b. Level II – Commission Level Approval:

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

[Re-number *iv.–ix.*]

E. Substantive Change Application Requirements

2. Change of Control and Change of Ownership

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 Approval of 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.

[Re-letter *i.–s.*]

SECTION VII – COMMISSION ACTIONS

D. Commission Consideration of Third-Party Information

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.* ~~Whenever information from third parties is included in the record, the school will have an opportunity to respond before any decision becomes final.~~
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 ~~Warning, Probation, or equivalent status~~ *Show Cause Order*, the Commission will provide the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, *within 30 days of that action, with* 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.*

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;*
 - c. *A pending or final action brought by a recognized accrediting agency to suspend, revoke, withdraw, or terminate the institution's accreditation; or*
 - d. *Probation or an equivalent status imposed by a recognized accrediting agency or state or federal regulatory oversight entity.*

[Renumber Remaining Items 2.–4.]

SECTION VIII – APPEAL OF A COMMISSION DECISION

C. Appeal Procedures

2. Application for Appeal of a Commission Decision and Grounds for Appeal:
 - 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 is significant as determined by the Executive Committee of the Commission;~~
 - ii. The financial information was unavailable prior to the adverse accreditation decision;

iii. *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.

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.*

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

E. Waivers

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.*

4.3. The decision whether to grant a waiver is made by the Commission and denials of waivers may not be appealed. ~~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.~~ 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.

F. *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

B. Notification of Commission Actions to Schools

2. The Commission will provide written notice to a school of all other non-adverse actions in a timely manner, generally within ~~30~~**60** days of the decision, ~~except as indicated in number 3 below.~~
3. ~~The Commission will provide written notice of a decision to place a school on Probation within 30 days of the decision.~~
4. The Commission will provide written notice to a school of an adverse accreditation decision.
45. The Commission will provide written notice to a school of a final **adverse accreditation** decision ~~to deny or withdraw accreditation~~ within 30 days of the decision.^{FN} ~~A final decision to deny or withdraw accreditation 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.~~

^{FN}~~“A final decision to deny or withdraw accreditation is one reached after a school has exhausted the appeals process” means the date upon which the Sitting Appeals Panel approves the content of the letter expressing the decision of the panel to uphold the Commission’s decision to deny or withdraw accreditation, which shall be no later than 60 days from the date of the appeal hearing. This applies to all references to a final decision to deny or withdraw accreditation in these Rules.~~

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

2. The Commission, at the same time it notifies the school, 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 ~~the same~~ **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 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 and**
 - b. ~~, no later than 60 days after a final decision to deny or withdraw accreditation, will m~~**Make** available to the U.S. Department of Education, the appropriate state licensing agency, and other accrediting agencies **no later than 60 days after a final adverse accreditation decision** the reasons for the Commission’s decision **along with any** ~~and the~~ comments, ~~if any, that~~ **submitted by** the ~~affected school has submitted regard to that decision. A final decision to deny or withdraw accreditation 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.~~

D. Disclosure of Commission Actions to the Public

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. , no later than 60 days after a final decision to deny or withdraw accreditation, will m~~***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.

~~A decision to deny or withdraw accreditation becomes final when 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 failed to avail itself of its appeal rights within the prescribed time frame.~~

CHAPTER 2 – SUBSTANTIVE STANDARDS

SECTION VI – STUDENT SERVICES

D. Student Complaints

1. The school ***must have and adhere to*** ~~utilizes~~ a policy and procedure for ***fairly and consistently*** handling ***and addressing*** student complaints ~~and inform students in writing of the policy and procedure.~~
2. The school's complaint policy and procedure ***must:***
 - a. ***Be*** published in the school's catalog; ~~and~~
 - b. ***I***nclude 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 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.***
42. The school ***must also*** ~~publishes~~ in its catalog the ACCSC Student Complaint/Grievance Procedure contained in the ACCSC Complaint Review Process Form.
53. The school ***must*** ~~maintains~~ a complete record of all written student complaints for at least the last five years.

SECTION VIII – SEPARATE FACILITIES

A. Classification

1. Branch Campus

- a.** A branch campus is **an independent** separate facility established by a main school that:
 - i.** Is Geographically apart from the main school **and** ~~The branch campus must be~~ permanent in nature;⁵
 - ii.** ~~Offers~~ courses in educational programs leading to a degree, a certificate, or other recognized educational credential;⁵
 - iii.** ~~Has~~ its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization;⁵ ~~and must~~
 - iv.** **Has its own budgetary and hiring authority; and**
 - v.** ~~Provides for all required~~ **necessary** educational resources and student services (e.g., advising, testing, library resources, financial aid, employment assistance, etc.) **required by accrediting standards.**
- b.** A branch campus must be adequately managed in accordance with the requirements set forth in *Section I, Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation*. The management and supervision oversight of the branch campus must be carried out by the same ownership and management that controls the main school.
