ACCREDITING COUNCIL FOR INDEPENDENT COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS
MEMORANDUM TO THE FIELD

TO:      ACICS-Accredited Institutions and Other Interested Parties
FROM:    Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools
DATE:    September 5, 2014

The Memorandum to the Field contains final criteria, proposed criteria and other information for ACICS-Accredited Institutions and Other Interested Parties

1. Final Criteria Revisions ........................................................................................................................................1
A. GLOSSARY OF DEFINITIONS ...........................................................................................................................1
B. CHANGE OF OWNERSHIP ...............................................................................................................................5
C. BRANCH-TO-MAIN RECLASSIFICATION ........................................................................................................7
D. TRANSLATION OF FACULTY TRANSCRIPTS ...............................................................................................7
E. CHANGE OF ADDITIONAL LOCATION NAME AND DEFINITION ..............................................................11
F. CHANGE OF CAMPUS ADDITION NAME ........................................................................................................11
G. DIRECT ASSESSMENT COMPETENCY-BASED PROGRAMS ......................................................................12
2. Proposed Criteria Revisions ..........................................................................................................................18
A. LEARNING SITE .................................................................................................................................................19
B. EDUCATION ABROAD ACTIVITIES ................................................................................................................19
3. For Information Only .....................................................................................................................................23
A. ACICS WEB SITE ..............................................................................................................................................23
B. 2014 WORKSHOP SCHEDULE .......................................................................................................................24
C. PUBLIC COMMENT ...........................................................................................................................................24
D. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ..................................................................................................................................24
E. ACICS AWARE WEBINARS ...........................................................................................................................24
F. 2014 CAMPUS ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT (CAR) SUBMISSIONS .............................................................25
4. Comment Form-Proposed Criteria Revisions ..............................................................................................26
1. **Final Criteria Revisions**

At its August 2014 meeting, the Council reviewed specific areas of the ACICS Accreditation Criteria. The language contained in this section was previously reviewed by ACICS constituents or reflects a clarification of previously approved criteria.

The Council has updated the respective sections of the Accreditation Criteria to reflect all final criteria revisions. To obtain a current copy of the Accreditation Criteria, please visit our Web site at [www.acics.org](http://www.acics.org). The Accreditation Criteria can be found in the Publications section of the Web site.

The following criteria were previously reviewed and, unless otherwise noted, have been accepted as **final, effective immediately** *(new language is underlined, deleted language is struck):*

**A. GLOSSARY OF DEFINITIONS**

*Explanation of Final Changes*

The Council approved final language to remove dated language and clarify definitions listed in the Glossary and corresponding areas of the Accreditation Criteria.

*Introduction*

The following definitions are provided in order to assist institutions in understanding and interpreting the Accreditation Criteria. The definitions include some of the most commonly used terms and are defined to reflect their most common usage. These normative definitions are drawn from a variety of sources no single source and meant to be exemplary rather than limiting, are offered by way of example rather than limitation. The Council recognizes the evolving and dynamic nature of post-secondary education in the U.S. and Internationally. American postsecondary education. While it has no intention of imposing rigid expectations, when an institution departs from these norms, it may be called upon to defend the academic integrity of the questioned activity.

**Credit Hour.** A unit by which an institution may measure its course work. The number of credit hours assigned to a traditionally delivered course is usually defined by a combination of the number of hours per week in class, the number of hours per week in a laboratory, and/or the number of hours devoted to externship times the number of weeks in the term. One unit of credit is usually equivalent to, at a minimum, one hour of classroom study and outside preparation, two hours of laboratory experience, or three hours of externship internship or practicum, or a combination of the three times the number of weeks in the term. The number of credit hours assigned to a nontraditionally delivered course must be determined and justified by the institution and approved by the Council.
Degree, Associate. The academic credential granted upon successful completion of an educational program of at least generally two but less than four years of full-time equivalent academic years of college-level work, including a minimum number of credits as specified under Sections 3-3-202 and 3-4-202.

Degree, Baccalaureate. The academic credential granted upon successful completion of an educational program of at least four years of full-time equivalent academic years of college-level work, including a minimum number of credits as specified under Section 3-5-202.

Externship. See Practicum. A supervised practical experience that is the application of previously studied theory. Normally, three hours of work in a practical setting has the credit equivalency of one hour of classroom lecture. Under the supervision of a faculty or staff member, a written agreement shall be developed that outlines the arrangement between the institution and the externship site, including specific learning objectives, course requirements, and evaluation criteria.

General Education. Humanities—Courses in fields such as literature, philosophy, logic, foreign language, art, music, theater appreciation, and communications, including rhetoric, composition, and speech; but excluding business communications, and business writing, spelling, letter writing, and word study.

Internship. See Externship Practicum.

Practicum. See Externship. A supervised practical experience that is the application of previously studied theory. Normally, three hours of work in a practical setting has the credit equivalency of one hour of classroom lecture. Under the supervision of a faculty or staff member, a written agreement shall be developed that outlines the arrangement between the institution and the practicum site, including specific learning objectives, course requirements, and evaluation criteria.

Student Learning Outcomes. Student Learning Outcomes are a required element of the Campus Effectiveness Plan (see Section 3-1-111 of the Accreditation Criteria). Student Learning Outcomes are defined by the institution based upon information collected on a regular basis by faculty in the programs offered by the institution. Recommended information includes data on student learning outcomes of job-specific courses as well as the outcomes of general education courses, where applicable. Measures should, where possible, be applied rather than abstract or theoretical, integrated rather than fragmented, and program level rather than course-level or institution-level. Examples of data include
student externship/practicum grades, student portfolio, grades, capstone, course grads, GPA, CGPA, pre- and post-tests, Ability-to-benefit (ATB) and other entrance or course placement assessments, graded portfolios, standardized tests, professional licensure exams, program reviews, skill checklists, competency tests, clinical work, and senior projects. Placement data should not be used as a measure of student learning outcomes. Concise measurable statements of direct and indirect learning outcomes with assessments that specify what students will know be able to do, or demonstrate as a result of a specific, planned education experience. Outcomes are expressed as measurable knowledge, skills, abilities or attitudes.

Direct Assessment of Learning Outcomes. See Direct Assessment Competency-based Programs for examples.

Indirect Assessment of Learning Outcomes. See Indirect Assessment for examples.

3-1-513. Program Development.
(a) The curricula shall be published in the institution’s catalog and shall state objectives specific to each curriculum. Additionally, there shall be a detailed syllabus on file for each course in each curriculum that is made available to each student enrolled in the class. For independent study courses, institutions are required to develop a learning contract signed by the student and institution that outlines the course objectives and procedures unique to this form of instruction. For practica, externships, or internships, institutions are required to develop a written and mutually signed agreement that outlines the arrangement between the institution and the practicum site, including specific learning objectives, course requirements, and evaluation criteria. The Council’s expectations for detailed syllabi, independent study, practica, and externships, and internships are outlined in the Glossary.

3-1-516. Course and Program Measurement. The Council recognizes that institutions must provide for their students a learning environment in which achievement is encouraged. It further recognizes the legitimacy of both traditional (e.g., lecture/laboratory/practicum externship) and nontraditional (e.g., distance education or independent study) educational delivery methods. A framework for transfer of credit and consistent application of academic credit awards should apply to all of these varied forms of educational delivery.

Institutions, therefore, must demonstrate in written policies and procedures for determining credit hours a knowledge of appropriate academic course and program measurement and correct application of the measurement.

(a) Credit in traditionally delivered programs measured in credit hours must be calculated based on one of the following attribution formulas:
(i) One quarter credit hour equals, at a minimum, 10 classroom hours of lecture, 20 hours of laboratory, and 30 hours of externship practicum. The formula for calculating the number of quarter credit hours for each course is: (hours of lecture/10) + (hours of lab/20) + (hours of externship practicum/30); or

(ii) One semester credit hour equals, at a minimum, 15 classroom hours of lecture, 30 hours of laboratory, and 45 hours of practicum. The formula for calculating the number of semester credit hours for each course is: (hours of lecture/15) + (hours of lab/30) + (hours of externship practicum/45).

(a) Credit award rationales for nontraditional delivery of courses or programs (e.g., distance education or independent study) generally do not use the above lecture/laboratory/externship practicum formulas for credit calculation. The rationale used must be submitted to the Council for pre-approval of the credit calculation. As a part of the approval application, an institution must demonstrate that the clock or credit hours awarded are appropriate for the degrees and credentials offered using a thoroughly developed rationale. The institution may accomplish this by demonstrating that students completing these programs or courses have acquired equivalent levels of knowledge, skills, or competencies to those acquired in traditional formats.

3-7-303. Program Advisory Committee. A program advisory committee, comprised of individuals from similar accredited doctoral programs and representatives of the employers that would be hiring graduates, shall meet at least annually with program administrators and faculty. The committee shall provide advice and guidance about the program, the currency and content of its curriculum, admissions criteria, and internship/externship practicum opportunities. Members of this committee may also provide information regarding the validity and rigor of the program and the quality of the graduates.

Appendix H Principles and Requirements for Nontraditional Education

Curriculum & Instructional Delivery

(c) Institutions must demonstrate to the Council that the clock or credit hours required and awarded are appropriate for the degrees and credentials offered using a thoroughly developed rationale. Credit award rationales for distance education delivery of courses or programs generally do not use the traditional lecture/laboratory/externship practicum formulas for credit calculations (See Section 3-1-516, Course and Program Measurement).
(b) Institutions must demonstrate to the Council that the clock or credit hours required and awarded are appropriate for the degrees and credentials offered using a thoroughly developed rationale. Credit award rationales for distance education delivery of courses or programs generally do not use the traditional lecture/laboratory/externship practicum formulas for credit calculations (See Section 3-1-516, Course and Program Measurement).

B. CHANGE OF OWNERSHIP

Explanation of Final Changes

The Council approved final language to clarify the process involved in Council review and approval of Change of Ownership and Control applications.

2-2-400 – Ownership or Control

The Council at all times must know who is in control of an accredited institution. The transfer of ownership or a change in the control of an institution is a substantial change that must be reported to approved by the Council before continuation of accreditation can occur. In addition, any institution or owning corporation that is contemplating a transaction that may result in a change of ownership/control must notify submit the appropriate application and supporting documentation to the Council for approval at least 15-30 days prior to consummating the proposed change. Failure to provide this notification in a timely manner may result in a delay processing the application negatively impact the continuation of accreditation. Transactions that constitute a change of ownership/control vary depending on the structure of the entity that owns or controls the institution.

Accredited institutions are owned or controlled by one of several types of corporations, by a limited partnership with a corporate general partner, or by a limited liability company, each of which is defined in the following subsections. In cases where the entity that directly owns or controls the institution is a subsidiary of another entity, the Council requires information on and monitors the ownership of the controlling entity, the parent entity, and any entities in the chain between those two.

(a) Privately held corporation. A privately held corporation is one that operates for profit in which one or more stockholders own the voting stock of the corporation. The stock is marketable, but a majority of the voting stock is not traded on public markets overseen by governmental agencies such as the Securities and Exchange Commission in the United States. The control of a privately held corporation is vested in those in control of a majority of the voting stock of the corporation.

(b) Publicly traded corporation. A publicly traded corporation is one that operates for profit in which a majority of the voting stock is traded on public markets
overseen by governmental agencies such as the Securities and Exchange Commission in the United States. The control of a publicly traded corporation is vested in the voting members of the board of directors of the corporation.

(c) **Not-for-profit corporation.** A not-for-profit corporation is one that has been determined by a governmental agency to be tax exempt for reasons the same as or similar to those set forth in Section 501 of the Internal Revenue Code of the United States. The control of a not-for-profit corporation is vested in the voting members of the board of directors of the corporation.

(d) **Limited partnership with corporate general partner.** A limited partnership is one that is organized in accordance with the partnership laws of its home jurisdiction. The control of the limited partnership is vested in the general partner, which must be a corporation as defined in subsection (a), (b), or (c) above.

(e) **Limited liability company.** A limited liability company is one that has been granted a certificate of approval under the laws of the state corporation office or other appropriate regulatory body in its home jurisdiction. A limited liability company may or may not issue certificates of ownership. The control of a limited liability company is vested in the members, whose ownership interests are defined in the limited liability company operating agreement or other such governing document, who are in control of a majority of the direct or beneficial ownership interest in the company.

**2-2-403. Change of Ownership or Control Review Procedures.** Institutions must submit Part I of the change of ownership/control application at least 30 days prior to the transfer of ownership or change in control occurs. Part II of the change of ownership/control application must be submitted within five business days after the transaction. The following procedures govern the Council’s review of change of ownership/control:

(a) **Automatic Discontinuation.** Any change of ownership/control results in the immediate and automatic discontinuation of an institution’s grant of accreditation until approval of part II of the change of ownership/control process by Council. Because the discontinuation results without action or prior approval on the part of the Council, this change in status does not constitute withdrawal of accreditation and is not a negative action.

(b) **Reinstatement.** After the grant of accreditation has been discontinued, it may be reinstated at the discretion of the Council within 30 days of the change in ownership/control, at such time and according to terms and conditions that it has established or may establish in the future. Those terms and conditions of the reinstatement process are set forth in policy statements issued to the field and in the change of ownership/control application document that institutions must file to initiate the reinstatement process. When the Council is not in session, the Financial Review Committee is authorized to grant a temporary reinstatement of the grant of accreditation for a period sufficient to permit the Council to
review and consider the application and all required supporting documentation. The Council will conduct a site quality assurance monitoring visit at any institution that has undergone a change of ownership/control within six months of the effective date of the change of ownership/control. The Council will not consider the final reinstatement of an institution’s grant of accreditation until this visit has been conducted. In addition, the Council may require the new owner(s) or the chief on-site administrator must provide evidence of attending an ACICS Accreditation Workshop within one year of the change of ownership or attend an Accreditation Workshop before the quality assurance monitoring visit. final reinstatement of an institution’s grant of accreditation will be considered.

(c) Effect. Until either temporary or final approval is granted, the accreditation of the institution remains in abeyance. If approval of the application for reinstatement is withheld, the matter will be treated procedurally as a deferral or denial, as the case may be. (See Title II, Chapter 3, Council Actions, for further information.)

C. BRANCH-TO-MAIN RECLASSIFICATION

Explanation of Final Changes

The Council approved final language to include the removal of the requirement for an onsite visit.

2-2-201. Additional Location Branch-to-Main Campus Reclassification. An additional location A branch is eligible for evaluation as the freestanding main campus of a separately accredited, single campus institution only if it has been operating as an approved location branch for at least two years. Additional locations Branches seeking main campus status must submit the appropriate application, and audited financial statements certified by an independent certified public accountant for the institution’s most recent fiscal year, and undergo an on-site evaluation visit. The visit will not occur until audited financial statements are received. The Council reserves the right to conduct an on-site quality assurance monitoring visit at any time as it deems necessary.

D. TRANSLATION OF FACULTY TRANSCRIPTS

Explanation of Final Changes

The Council approved final changes to remove the requirement of all transcripts in languages other than English to be translated into English and to add language
concerning documentation and validation of faculty credentials at international institutions.

3-1-541. Faculty Preparation. Preparation of faculty members shall be academically and experientially appropriate to the subject matter they teach. Faculty members shall be competent to teach the subject matter offered and shall have reasonable latitude in their choice of teaching methods.

U.S. based institutions must provide evidence that all faculty members are graduates of institutions accredited by agencies recognized by the United States Department of Education. Credentials of faculty who are graduates from institutions outside the United States must be graduates of institutions recognized by their respective governments as institutions of higher education or be evaluated by a member of the Association of International Credentials Evaluators (AICE) or the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES) to determine the equivalency of the credentials awarded by institutions in the United States.

Internationally based institutions must provide evidence that all faculty members are graduates of institutions recognized by their respective governments as institutions of higher education or be evaluated by a member of the Association of International Credentials Evaluators (AICE) or the National Association of Credential Evaluations Services (NACES) to determine the equivalency of the credentials awarded by institutions in the United States. ACICS, if unable to determine qualifications, may require the translation and/or evaluation of transcripts in languages other than English. Transcripts, in languages other than English, must be translated into English.

3-3-302. Assignments.

(b) Instructors teaching general education shall hold a minimum of a master’s degree. Instructors shall have a minimum of 18 semester or equivalent hours of coursework in their teaching discipline. At internationally based institutions, transcripts in languages other than English for general education instructors must be translated into English.

3-4-302. Assignments. During any academic term, a faculty member shall not be assigned to teach in more than three fields of instruction. The size of the faculty shall be appropriate to the total student enrollment.

Instructors teaching general education shall hold a minimum of a master’s degree. Instructors at a minimum shall have earned 18 semester or equivalent hours of coursework in the area of their teaching discipline. At internationally based institutions, transcripts for
general education instructors, in languages other than English, must be translated into English for general education instructors must be translated into English.

3-5-302. Assignments. During any academic term, a faculty member shall not be assigned to teach in more than three fields of instruction and preferably in not more than two fields. The size of the faculty shall be appropriate for the total student enrollment.

Instructors teaching general education shall hold a minimum of a master’s degree. Instructors at a minimum shall have earned 18 semester or equivalent hours of coursework in the area of their teaching discipline. At internationally based institutions, transcripts for general education instructors, in languages other than English, must be translated into English for general education instructors must be translated into English.

3-4-401. Staff. A professionally trained individual shall supervise and manage library and instructional resources, facilitate their integration into all phases of the institution’s curricular and educational offerings, and assist students in their use. A professionally trained individual is one who holds a bachelor’s or master’s degree in library or information science or a comparable program, or state certification to work as a librarian, where applicable, or, for foreign institutions, who holds a bachelor’s or master’s degree recognized as appropriate for the position by its government or higher education authority. The institution must provide evidence that the degree is from an institution accredited by an agency recognized by the United States Department of Education. If the degree is from an institution outside of the United States, the institution must be recognized by its government as an institution of higher education or be evaluated by a member of the Association of International Credentials Evaluators (AICE) or the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES) to determine the equivalency of the degree to degrees awarded by institutions in the United States. Transcripts, in languages other than English, must be translated into English. ACICS, if unable to determine qualifications, may require the translation and/or evaluation of transcripts in languages other than English. The professionally trained individual must participate in documented professional growth activities.

3-5-401. Staff. A professionally trained individual shall supervise and manage library and instructional resources, facilitate their integration into all phases of the institution’s curricular and educational offerings, and assist students in their use. A professionally trained individual is one who holds a bachelor’s or master’s degree in library or information science or a comparable program, or state certification to work as a librarian, where applicable, or, for foreign institutions, who holds a bachelor’s or master’s degree recognized as appropriate for the position by its government or higher education authority. The institution must provide evidence that the degree is from an institution accredited by an agency recognized by the United States Department of Education. If the degree is from an institution outside of the United States, the institution must be recognized by its
government as an institution of higher education or be evaluated by a member of the Association of International Credentials Evaluators (AICE) or the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES) to determine the equivalency of the degree to degrees awarded by institutions in the United States. Transcripts, in languages other than English, must be translated into English. ACICS, if unable to determine qualifications, may require the translation and/or evaluation of transcripts in languages other than English. The professionally trained individual must participate in documented professional growth activities.

3-6-701. Staff. A professionally trained individual shall supervise and manage library and instructional resources, facilitate their integration into all phases of the institution’s curricular and educational offerings, and assist students in their use. A professionally trained individual is one with special qualifications to aid students in research and who holds a M.L.S. degree or the equivalent, or, for foreign institutions, who holds a master’s degree recognized as appropriate for the position by its government or higher education authority. The institution must provide evidence that the degree is from an institution accredited by an agency recognized by the United States Department of Education. If the degree is from an institution outside of the United States, the institution must be recognized by its government as an institution of higher education or be evaluated by a member of the Association of International Credentials Evaluators (AICE) or the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES) to determine the equivalency of the degree to degrees awarded by institutions in the United States. Transcripts, in languages other than English, must be translated into English. ACICS, if unable to determine qualifications, may require the translation and/or evaluation of transcripts in languages other than English. The professionally trained individual must participate in documented professional growth activities.

3-7-701. Staff. A professionally trained individual shall supervise and manage library and instructional resources, facilitate their integration into all phases of the institution’s curricular and educational offerings, and assist students in their use. A professionally trained individual is one with special qualifications to aid students in research and who holds a M.L.S. degree or the equivalent, or, for foreign institutions, who holds a master’s degree recognized as appropriate for the position by its government or higher education authority. The institution must provide evidence that the degree is from an institution accredited by an agency recognized by the United States Department of Education. If the degree is from an institution outside of the United States, the institution must be recognized by its government as an institution of higher education or be evaluated by a member of the Association of International Credentials Evaluators (AICE) or the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES) to determine the equivalency of the degree to degrees awarded by institutions in the United States. Transcripts, in languages other than English, must be translated into English. ACICS, if unable to
determine qualifications, may require the translation and/or evaluation of transcripts in languages other than English. The professionally trained individual must participate in documented professional growth activities.

E. CHANGE OF ADDITIONAL LOCATION NAME AND DEFINITION

Explanation of Final Changes

The Council approved final changes to the name of the campus classification from Additional Location to Branch with a modification to its definition.

1-3-102. Additional Location Branch Campus. An additional location A branch campus is any a location of an institution that is geographically apart and independent of the main campus of that institution, other than the main, but under the same corporate structure as the main campus (i.e., part of the main campus corporation or a wholly owned subsidiary) that offers educational activities. The branch campus is permanent in nature, offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized educational credential, and has its own budget, faculty, administrative staff and supervisory organization.

Full disclosure must be made in the catalogs of the main campus and/or additional locations branch campus as to the credentials and programs offered at each location. An additional location A branch campus may publish its own catalog.

GLOSSARY OF DEFINITIONS

Campus, Additional Location Branch. An additional location A branch campus is any a location of an institution that is geographically apart and independent of the main campus of that institution, other than the main, but under the same corporate structure as the main campus (i.e., part of the main campus corporation or a wholly owned subsidiary) that offers educational activities. (See Section 1-3-102). The branch campus is permanent in nature, offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized educational credential, and has its own budget, faculty, administrative staff and supervisory organization.

F. CHANGE OF CAMPUS ADDITION NAME

Explanation of Final Changes

The Council approved final changes to the name of the campus classification from Campus Addition to Learning Site with a modification to its definition. Please see Section A under...
Proposed Criteria Revisions (page 19) for recommended modification to the definition of a Learning Site.

G. DIRECT ASSESSMENT COMPETENCY-BASED PROGRAMS

Explanation of Final Changes

In recent months, the Council has been engaged in the development of policies and procedures for the assessment and approval of Direct Assessment Competency-based Programs. The Council approved final changes to add new entries to the Glossary of Definitions and new criteria which would meet Council standards that are supportive of the requirements of the Department of Education for financial aid eligibility. Effective January 1, 2015.

Several institutions have expressed an interest in developing competency-based programs. ACICS invites members to contact staff for any preliminary guidance on policies and procedures even prior to the effective date of January 1, 2015. Contact Person: Dr. Joseph E. Gurubatham, Senior Vice President for Accreditation and Institutional Development: jgurubatham@acics.org.

GLOSSARY OF DEFINITIONS

**Competency-based Program:** See also Direct Assessment Competency-based Programs. A competency-based program clearly defines the skills, knowledge and professional behavior (“soft skills”) that are required for a student or a graduate to perform at a level considered to be “competent” by practitioners and employers in the field. It focuses on direct, not indirect, assessment methods to measure student learning in lieu of in-class seat time, credit hours or clock hours. It utilizes a robust curriculum development process and comprehensively specifies how qualified faculty and/or other eligible experts in the field would directly assess the achievement of required competencies and student learning.

**Direct Assessment Competency-based Program.** A program that clearly defines the skills, knowledge and professional behavior (“soft skills”) that are required of a student or a graduate to perform at a level considered to be “competent” by practitioners and employers in the field. Only “direct” assessment of student learning and competencies are acceptable. Direct assessment measures must apply to the course competencies required for the program. Examples of “direct assessment” measures are as follows: acceptable scores on industry-recognized licensure or certification examinations; standardized tests; pre- and post-tests; examinations and quizzes; research projects; case study analysis; criterion-based rating scale or rubric scores; course-embedded questions; observation of clinical experience, internships, or field work; and capstone projects, theses, exhibits or performances. (For a federal definition and for Council standards, see Appendix H, Section 1).
(“Indirect assessment” measures of student learning, while deemed valuable for institutional program evaluation and enhancement, are not included in the consideration for approval of a competency-based program. Examples of indirect measures are: course evaluations; hours spent in classes or on out-of-class educational activities; graduate or employer satisfaction surveys; graduate placement rates; student retention rates; and student perception surveys.)

TITLE II, CHAPTER 2 Institutional Changes

2-2-100 SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES

2-2-101. List of Substantive Changes. The following institutional changes will be considered substantive and require Council approval before they can be included in the institution’s scope of accreditation:

....

(1) The proposed addition of a direct assessment competency-based program as described in Standards 2-2-111, 3-1-505, and Appendix H, Section 1.

Add the following new section on Direct Assessment of Competency-based Programs:

2-2-111. Addition of a Direct Assessment Competency-based Program. It is the responsibility of the institution to submit the required application for Council review and approval. The initial Council approval allows the institution to apply for submission of an application for approval of that competency-based program to the United States Department of Education for Title IV Federal student financial aid. See also Standard 3-1-505 and Appendix H, Section 1.

TITLE III, CHAPTER 1 General Standards

3-1-500 – EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES (See pages 20-22 of this Memorandum for a proposed reorganization of the section on Educational Activities.)

....

3-1-505. Direct Assessment Competency-based Programs. Competency-based programs utilize direct assessment of student learning by faculty and other experts in the field serving under the supervision of the institution for academic progression in lieu of clock or credit hours. The institution must demonstrate that it has utilized a robust and structured process for identifying the required knowledge, skills and professional behavior (“soft skills”) to be considered “competent” in the field. The syllabus for each course must clearly define the competency standards and how the direct assessment of student learning will be conducted.
The institution must demonstrate to the Council its methodology for determining the equivalent number of credit hours or clock hours required for the program.

The institution is required to maintain, as part of the permanent academic record, student work submitted for direct assessment along with the institution’s assessment of student achievement.

Specific standards and requirements are described in Appendix H Principles and Requirements for Nontraditional Education, Section 1.

**APPENDIX C- Institutional Publications Requirements**

....

At a minimum, the catalog must contain the following items:

....

23. If the institution is approved by the Council to offer direct assessment competency-based program(s), the catalog must include the following information:

(a) a clear identification and listing of direct assessment competency-based program(s);
(b) a concise and clear description of how such programs are structured and administered; any special admissions requirements; how students will be expected to demonstrate achievement of competency goals; the types of academic and student services offered to assist students to pass the assessments; and how student achievements will be shown on the academic transcript;
(c) disclosure of the number of equivalent credit hours or clock hours and the general methodology the institution uses to determine the equivalencies;
(d) a clear description of how financial aid will be administered and disbursed for eligible students enrolled in such programs;
(e) disclosure of other entities or qualified individuals, in addition to the institution’s faculty, engaged in the direct assessment process; and
(f) disclosure of the consequences or options available to students if they fail to demonstrate achievement of competency goals within a prescribed period of time.

**APPENDIX D - Standards of Satisfactory Progress**

....

17. If the institution is approved to offer direct assessment competency-based program(s), the institution must demonstrate that it has implemented appropriate policies that describe how it will measure whether a student enrolled in a competency-based program is making satisfactory academic progress. Policies and procedures must be implemented to identify in a timely manner when a student enrolled in such a program has withdrawn or changed
enrollment status. The institution must maintain for Council review evidence that financial
aid officers and others assigned to monitor satisfactory academic progress have been
trained and are adequately monitored for implementing policies affecting competency-
based programs.

APPENDIX H—Principles and Requirements for Nontraditional Education

SECTION 1 – DIRECT ASSESSMENT COMPETENCY-BASED PROGRAMS

Programs that are designed to prepare students for a specific profession or career are
especially suited to be offered as direct assessment competency-based programs because
such programs focus on what the students need to know, understand, or be able to do. The
process utilized for the development of the curriculum, expected competencies, ways to
directly assess such competencies and equate them to credit hours or clock hours (as
required by the United States Department of Education as well as by the Council) demands
active involvement of employers, as appropriate, and other experts in the discipline.
Potential benefits gained by such programs are as follows:

- Allow students to progress at their own pace, but in compliance with the
  institution’s satisfactory academic progress policy;
- Allow flexibility to motivated students;
- May potentially shorten the time for completion of the program;
- May potentially reduce overall cost of education; and
- May foster creativity for the institution, faculty and students in exploring cost-
  effective pathways to complete a program.

Federal Definition of Direct Assessment Competency-based Programs

A direct assessment program is an instructional program that, in lieu of credit hours or
clock hours as a measure of student learning, utilizes direct assessment of student learning,
or recognizes the direct assessment of student learning by others. The assessment must be
consistent with the accreditation of the institution or program utilizing the results of the
assessment.

Direct assessment of student learning means a measure by the institution of what a student
knows and can do in terms of the body of knowledge making up the educational program.
These measures provide evidence that a student has command of a specific subject, content
area, or skill or that the student demonstrates a specific quality such as creativity, analysis
or synthesis associated with the subject matter of the program. Examples of direct
measures include projects, papers, examinations, presentations, performances, and
portfolios.

ACICS Glossary of Definitions

Using the Federal definition as a guide, the Council has developed expanded definitions
for Competency-based Programs and Direct Assessment Competency-based
Programs. A longer list of examples of “direct” assessment measures is given in the Glossary. “Indirect” assessment measures, while deemed valuable for assessing institutional and program effectiveness, are not included in the consideration for the approval of competency-based programs.

For consideration of eligibility to participate in Title IV Federal Student Aid Programs, the Department of Education will consider only direct assessment competency-based programs.

Process for Review, Approval and Quality Monitoring Visits

Proposed initiation of a direct assessment competency-based program is classified as a substantive change and requires Council review and approval.

Institutions must submit Part I of the Application for Direct Assessment Competency-based Program, along with required supporting documents, for a preliminary review and Council action. A separate application is required for each program. The guidance document and instructions accompanying Part I of the application are designed to guide the institutions in gaining an idea of the types of direct assessment methods that are strongly recommended for professional and career-focused programs. The principles and requirements included in this Appendix will be applied in reviewing the application.

In considering the application, the Council will determine if the institution has demonstrated that it has used a rigorous process to identify what the student or graduate must know and be able to do to be considered “competent” by employers and experts in the field or discipline. In addition, the institution has demonstrated that it has developed robust direct assessment techniques and has explicitly described how it determines the equivalent number of credit or clock hours for the program.

Upon approval of Part I of the application by the Council, the institution will apply to the U. S. Department of Education for Title IV approval of the proposed direct assessment competency-based program.

Part II of the Application for Direct Assessment Competency-based Programs must be submitted to ACICS at least three months prior to the effective start date of the program. The approval letter will provide instructions on at least two quality monitoring on-site visits to the institution—the first visit will be conducted within six months of start of the program and a second follow-up visit will be conducted between 12 to 18 months of start of the program, depending upon the credential level of the program.

Institutional Mission and Institutional Readiness

(a) The basis for the introduction of direct assessment competency-based programs must support the mission and objectives of the institution.

(b) The structure and objectives of the program must clearly demonstrate that a systematic process was utilized in identifying and defining specific competencies
related to the program. The process shall include participation of representation from employers, experts in the field, faculty, alumni and faculty.

(c) The Campus Effectiveness Report must include a discussion of the proposed direct assessment competency-based programs—the rationale, overall structure, anticipated direct assessment methods engaged, plans for assessment and continuous improvement of the program, and adoption of best practices in competency-based education.

Admissions Requirements and Enrollment

Eligibility requirements for admission to direct assessment competency-based programs must be clearly defined, published and consistently applied. The institution is expected to develop objective mechanisms and standards for determining the potential characteristics of students who are best suited to pursue and complete the program.

Curriculum Development and Direct Assessment Measures

(a) In the development of the curriculum, institutions must organize each course to enable students to clearly understand measurable learning objectives. Whenever possible, the Council encourages institutions to utilize standardized tests and industry-recognized licensure or certification examinations as direct assessment of student learning. Multiple direct assessment methods, which are student-centered, must be utilized where appropriate.

(b) The syllabus for each course must be expanded to include clear learning objectives, student competency expectations, direct assessment techniques utilized by the faculty, criterion-based rating scales or rubric scores where appropriate, and the institution’s systematic methods for determining credit hour or clock hour equivalencies. The syllabus must also clearly state how the student’s progress will be monitored and how the final grades will be recorded.

Faculty and Instructional Support

Maximum support of the program faculty is essential to develop and implement this student-centered program. The institution must demonstrate that the faculty members are provided proper training, in-service and professional development activities to support this program. A rationale for faculty-student ratios must be developed. Adequate technology support must be provided as appropriate for faculty to monitor student progress and competency achievements.

Student Support Services

(a) The institution must demonstrate that it offers strong student support services to assist students in achieving their competency goals. Mentors and student counselors must be trained to provide suitable support.
(b) The institution must have a definite pathway for competency-based program students who may be advised to transition to a traditional fixed-schedule, teacher-directed format.
(c) Academic advisors, registrars, career counselors, and financial aid counselors must be provided special training to provide support to the direct assessment competency-based program students.

Utilization of External Entities and Experts

(a) If appropriate, the institution may utilize external entities and experts in providing a portion of the direct assessment competency-based program. The scope and nature of their involvement must be clearly outlined in a formal contract. The institution must demonstrate that it has sufficient academic control for the development and monitoring of the program. The contract must be approved by the Council prior to implementation.
(b) If external entities and experts are utilized, the institution’s faculty must provide more than 50 percent of the direct assessments of the competency-based program.

Continuous Program Assessment and Improvement

The institution must have adequate plans for the continuous assessment of the effectiveness of the program and provide for continuous improvement. These plans must be described in the Campus Effectiveness Plan.

Publications

Full and accurate disclosure of an approved direct assessment competency-based program must be provided in the institution’s catalog and Web site. The catalog disclosure must follow the requirements as described and outlined in Appendix C, Item 23.

SECTION II – DISTANCE EDUCATION

...

SECTION III – SELF-PACED INSTRUCTION

...

****

2. Proposed Criteria Revisions

At its August 2014 meeting, the Council reviewed the specific areas of the ACICS Accreditation Criteria outlined in this section and approved the revisions as proposed (new
Public comment on these revisions is requested on the Comment Form provided at the end of this memorandum.

A. LEARNING SITE

Explanation of Proposed Changes

The Council proposes to change the standards pertaining to a Learning Site and the definition.

1-3-103. Campus Addition **Learning Site**. A location-learning site is a classroom extension of a main campus or additional location branch campus that is within reasonable and commutable distance from the managing location, and is apart from the managing location and is capable of providing sufficient academic and administrative oversight, providing access to all student services and instructional resources and maintaining academic quality. Learning sites used for delivery of distance education activity or collaborative arrangements with other entities for specific on-site educational activity must be approved by the Council on a case by case basis and are subject to a quality assurance visit as specified by the Council, which is under the direct control of the on-site administration of that campus but at a site that is apart from the primary location of that campus. (See Sections 2-2-101(b) and 2-2-102(b)).

GLOSSARY OF DEFINITIONS

**Campus Addition Learning Site**. A location-learning site is a classroom extension of a main campus or additional location branch campus that is within reasonable and commutable distance from the managing location, and is apart from the managing location and is capable of providing sufficient academic and administrative oversight, providing access to all student services and instructional resources and maintaining academic quality. Learning sites used for delivery of distance education activity or collaborative arrangements with other entities for specific on-site educational activity must be approved by the Council on a case by case basis and are subject to a quality assurance visit as specified by the Council, which is under the direct control of the on-site administration of that campus but at a site that is apart from the primary location of that campus. (See Sections 2-2-101(b) and 2-2-102(b)).

B. EDUCATION ABROAD ACTIVITIES

Explanation of Proposed Changes
The Council proposes to create a new Appendix of the Criteria prescribing requirements for international education activities, including study abroad activities; revise definitions in the glossary pertaining to home institutions and host institutions; and to re-organize Section 3-1-500 to enumerate the discrete set of education activities covered under the requirements of this section.

As ACICS colleges and schools have responded to the demand for greater presence and service to international locations and students, legacy standards have proven to be insufficient to memorialize and articulate the Council’s expectations regarding quality and integrity. Council has developed a new standards that apply to international education activities and proposes to adopt it as Appendix J of the Criteria. The proposed changes reflect conforming editorial revisions to other sections of the Criteria that are intended to reduce contradictory or duplicative language and provide consistent guidance throughout the standards document regarding international education activities.

A previous iteration of the proposed education abroad policy was shared with the field in February 2014; commentary from various stakeholders was considered by Council at its April 2014 meeting; Council subsequently directed further revisions to the proposed policy which were shared with commenters in June 2014; Council considered those additional recommendations and adopted a revised proposal in August 2014 for review by the field.

The most significant features of the revised proposal are:

1. Rather than adopting its own set of comprehensive quality standards for study abroad activities, ACICS will require that study abroad activities conducted by member institutions be subject to a review by the independent study abroad quality assurance entity, “The Forum on Education Abroad (The Forum).”

2. In addition to requirements derived from The Forum’s review of an institution’s study abroad activities, the Council has established and will apply standards for academic residency before and after the study abroad activity, as well as a maximum amount of academic credit that can be derived from study abroad activities and applied to fulfillment of a credential requirements at a campus holding an ACICS grant of accreditation.

3. The standards for International Partnership Agreements (IPAs) were left intact; the Council proposes no changes to IPA standards and requirements at this time.

3-1-500 – EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES (Please note that the contents of the newly numbered Sections 3-1-501, 3-1-502 and 3-1-503 remain unchanged. A new section on 3-1-504 Education Abroad Activities is added below for public comment.)

The major index of an institution’s quality is the effectiveness of its educational program. The educational program must be consistent with the stated mission, be adequate in breadth and context to achieve it, and produce measurable results. Its educational activities, whether residential or otherwise and whether group or individually oriented, shall include definable instruction, interaction, and evaluation. A second index of Institutional quality is the resources available to instructors and students.
The third index of an institution’s quality is the competence of its faculty. The effectiveness of any institution depends upon contemporary teaching strategies and practices and upon the knowledge, ability, and commitment of its faculty. The selection, orientation, guidance, stimulation, and evaluation of the teaching staff are among the most significant responsibilities of the administration. The faculty should actively participate in developing the total educational program of the institution.

3-1-501. Faculty Involvement in Academic Governance. The faculty shall have a clear responsibility, distinct from that of developing institutional policy, to participate in administering and implementing policy, especially as it pertains to academic affairs. The institution shall adopt and publish a policy on the responsibility and authority of faculty in matters of academic governance. At a minimum, the policy should address the role of faculty in:
- the development of the educational program of the institution;
- the selection of course materials, instructional equipment and other educational resources;
- systematic evaluation and revision of the curriculum;
- assessment of student learning outcomes; and
- planning for institutional effectiveness.

3-1-502. Programs Requiring Certification or Licensure. For institutions offering programs in which state certification, licensing, or registration is mandatory in order to become employed in a specific career field, curriculums must contain the necessary course work to afford students the opportunity to obtain the minimum skills and competencies in order to become certified, licensed, or registered in that career field.

3-1-503. Specialized/Programmatically Accredited Programs. Where accreditation of a program by a specialized or programmatic accreditor is required for students to obtain entry-level employment in the state where the institution is licensed or otherwise approved, the institution must obtain such accreditation in a timely manner. The institution must provide and document notification to students as to:
- which programs hold specialized or programmatic accreditation;
- whether successful completion of a program qualifies a student to receive, apply to take, or take licensure exams in the state where the institution is located. For on-line programs, this information must be provided for all states from which the institution enrolls students; and
- any other requirements that are generally required for employment.
The institution shall assess the curriculum and/or the need for specialized accreditation and update it as needed to reflect current requirements for employment.

3-1-504. Education Abroad Activities. An institution may enter into formal study abroad relationships with eligible institutions outside its home country in accordance with the requirements outlined in Appendix J.

3-1-505. Direct Assessment Competency-based Programs. Competency-based programs utilize direct assessment of student learning by faculty and other experts in the field serving under the supervision of the institution for academic progression in lieu of clock or credit hours. The institution must demonstrate that it has utilized a robust and structured process for identifying the required knowledge, skills and professional behavior (“soft skills”) to be considered “competent” in the field. The syllabus for each course must clearly define the competency standards and how the direct assessment of student learning will be conducted.

Appendix J: Principles and Guidelines for Program Enhancement Education Abroad Activities

International demands for post-secondary education provide opportunities for member institutions to expand the geographic footprint of their education delivery infrastructure, through on-line, on-ground and combinations of those and other modalities. Regardless of the education delivery infrastructure utilized at an international location, the institution is expected to operate in compliance with ACICS standards as demonstrated through direct monitoring of administrative operations, instruction, student services and the comparable full array of processes that apply to all institutions accredited by ACICS.

The standards and guidelines below will be applied to institutions that offer education activities at international locations under the ACICS grant of accreditation. They are designed to apply Council expectations for effectiveness and integrity to programs that primarily lead to employment in professional, technical and occupational fields, regardless of the geographic location of the education activity, or the modality with which the education is delivered. Council acknowledges education abroad may serve to enhance the interpersonal and developmental aspects of the student, including an improved ability to relate to and work with people from different cultures and ethnic, linguistic and national backgrounds. Council also acknowledges that education abroad, as part of a comprehensive career education program, may be directly applicable to the workplace and contribute to a graduate’s success in finding placement in an organization with a multinational employee profile that utilizes multinational vendors and suppliers. Finally, the Council authorizes the utilization of education abroad, under the parameters prescribed in this section, in recognition that structured education abroad may enhance the graduate’s ability to compete for job placement with international employers.
A key principle of ACICS standards regarding study abroad is that the accredited institution must demonstrate that the quality of the education derived from locations outside of a student’s home country is comparable to that received at its domestic accredited locations. The burden of proof lies with the institution, regardless of the form of education abroad.

1. **Education Abroad Activities:** For all education abroad activities, other than those performed through a formal partnership agreement with an international institution, the institution is required to demonstrate compliance with the “Standards for Good Practice of Education Abroad (SGPEA)”, published by the Forum on Education Abroad (http://www.forumea.org/standards-standards.cfm); the requirements for maximum length of study as defined in #2 (below), and the academic residency requirement as described in #3 (below). For those education abroad activities performed through a formal partnership agreement, the IPA requirements apply. (Section 2-2-507; Appendix I).

2. **Maximum of Length of Study Abroad Activity:** No more than 50 percent of a program’s coursework may be completed through education abroad activities, including transfer credit, challenges exams and other sources. An education abroad program may not exceed an equivalent of two semesters in length.

3. **Academic Residency:** Students admitted to a study abroad program are those who must have satisfactorily completed a minimum of one full-time equivalent semester or quarter or trimester, on-line or on-site through the home institution. Additionally, study abroad students are required to complete a minimum one full-time equivalent semester or quarter or trimester on-line or on-site through the home institution following completion of the study abroad activity and prior to completion of the credential.

****

3. **For Information Only**

A. **ACICS WEB SITE**

Please visit the ACICS Web site. It continues to be revised and updated based on Council activities. The site contains revised and detailed information about accreditation, accredited institutions, applications, publications, workshops and special events. New features are now available.
NOTE: All institutions were mailed eight digit IDs and passwords to access the new ACICS web site. The information was sent via U.S. postal mail and addressed to the campus director or president of each institution. The institution and corporate username (unless changed by the account holder) is the eight-digit ID. This ID should be used on all future correspondence to and from ACICS. If you have questions about your ID code or our new website, please send an email to ebiz@acics.org.

B. 2014 WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INITIAL ACCREDITATION WORKSHOP</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial Accreditation Workshop</td>
<td>October 14, 2014</td>
<td>Monterey, CA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RENEWAL ACCREDITATION WORKSHOP</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Renewal Accreditation Workshop</td>
<td>November 3, 2014</td>
<td>New Orleans, LA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C. PUBLIC COMMENT

The Council encourages institutions to provide feedback regarding Council operations and procedures. Comments on the proposed Criteria revisions are due by Friday, November 14, 2014.

D. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

ACICS has given high priority to promoting and defending ACICS accreditation, and the quality of education delivered by member institutions. Schools play an important role acting as the eyes and ears of ACICS: that is, looking and listening for opportunities to promote ACICS accreditation, and to correct misinformation that may lead to negative perceptions and attitudes among policy makers, the post-secondary education community and the general public. As you identify those opportunities in communities where you operate, please let us know about them. Send an email to Mr. Quentin Dean at qdean@acics.org and let him know the source of the information and when it appeared.

E. ACICS AWARE WEBINARS
The AWARE webinar will be held on **Monday, September 15, 2014**. This webinar will focus on information presented in the September 2014 Memorandum to the Field. If there are any topics of interest in addition to those in this memorandum that you would like to be addressed during the webinar, please send an email to Ms. Terron King at tking@acics.org.

F. **2014 CAMPUS ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT (CAR) SUBMISSIONS**

Significant changes to the online submission of the 2014 CAR were communicated to institutions several weeks ago. The last day for submission of the 2014 CAR is **Monday, November 3, 2014**. You are urged to allow sufficient time to submit your data ahead of this deadline.
4. Comment Form—Proposed Criteria Revisions

ACICS ID Code: ______________________   Date: ______________________________
Name of Organization: _______________________________________________________
Address: ___________________________________________________________________

Please check (as appropriate):

Proposed Accreditation Criteria revisions:

- Learning Site
  [ ] Accept as Written       [ ] Modify (please explain)

- Study Abroad Activities
  [ ] Accept as Written       [ ] Modify (please explain)

Prepared by: ________________________________________________________________
Title: _____________________________________________________________________
Signature: __________________________________________________________________

Please respond by Friday, November 14, 2014 to:

Ms. Terron King
Senior Manager, Policy & Institutional Review
Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools
750 First Street, NE, Suite 980
Washington, DC  20002-4241
Fax (202) 842-2593
fieldcomments@acics.org