Table of Contents

List of Acronyms ........................................................................................................................................ 6
INTRODUCTION ......................................................................................................................................... 7

TITLE I      GENERAL POLICIES.................................................................................................................. 8

Chapter 1   An Overview of the Council ........................................................................................................ 8

STATEMENT OF MISSION .......................................................................................................................... 8
DEFINITION OF ACCREDITATION.................................................................................................................. 8
DEFINITION OF ACADEMIC QUALITY .......................................................................................................... 8
1-1-100 − BYLAWS ........................................................................................................................................ 8
1-1-200 − RECOGNITION ......................................................................................................................................... 8
1-1-300 − PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ................................................................................................................. 9

Chapter 2   Eligibility Criteria ...................................................................................................................... 9

INTRODUCTION ..................................................................................................................................... 9
1-2-100 − MINIMUM ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS .................................................................................... 9

Chapter 3   Classification of Campuses and Institutions ........................................................................... 10

INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................................................... 10
1-3-100 − CLASSIFICATION OF CAMPUSES .......................................................................................... 10
1-3-200 − CLASSIFICATION OF INSTITUTIONS ......................................................................................... 11

TITLE II      GENERAL PROCEDURES ...................................................................................................... 12

Chapter 1   Gaining and Maintaining Accreditation ..................................................................................... 12

INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................................................... 12
2-1-100 − ACCREDITATION WORKSHOP REQUIREMENTS ........................................................................ 12
2-1-200 − INITIAL ACCREDITATION .......................................................................................................... 12
2-1-300 − RENEWAL OF ACCREDITATION .................................................................................................. 13
2-1-400 − VISITING TEAMS, SELECTION AND COMPOSITION ..................................................................... 14
2-1-500 − TEAM FUNCTIONS AND PROCEDURES ................................................................................... 15
2-1-600 − POST-VISIT PROCEDURES .......................................................................................................... 15
Chapter 2  Institutional Changes ................................................................. 17
INTRODUCTION ......................................................................................... 17
2-2-100 – SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES .............................................................. 17
2-2-120 – INITIATION AND EVALUATION OF CHANGES WITHIN CURRENT SCOPE ........... 21
2-2-200 – REDESIGNATION OF CAMPUSES ................................................. 22
2-2-300 – CLOSING OF A CAMPUS ............................................................. 22
2-2-400 – OWNERSHIP OR CONTROL ...................................................... 24
2-2-500 – PROGRAMS OF STUDY REGULATIONS ..................................... 28
2-2-600 – OTHER CHANGES ..................................................................... 30
2-2-700 – VOLUNTARY WITHDRAWAL .................................................... 31

Chapter 3  Council Actions ...................................................................... 31
INTRODUCTION ......................................................................................... 31
2-3-100 – ACCREDITATION GRANTED ...................................................... 32
2-3-200 – ACCREDITATION DEFERRED OR CONDITIONED ......................... 32
2-3-300 – ACCREDITATION DENIED ......................................................... 33
2-3-400 – ACCREDITATION WITHDRAWN ................................................ 33
2-3-500 – COUNCIL REVIEW OR HEARING PROCEDURES ......................... 35
2-3-600 – REVIEW BOARD APPEAL PROCESS ......................................... 35
2-3-700 – COMPLAINTS AND ADVERSE INFORMATION ............................ 37
2-3-800 – SPECIAL AND FACT VISITS ..................................................... 38
2-3-900 – DEBARMENT ........................................................................... 38

TITILE III  EVALUATION STANDARDS ..................................................... 40
Chapter 1  General Standards Applicable to All Institutions ......................... 40
INTRODUCTION ......................................................................................... 40
3-1-100 – MISSION: PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES ..................................... 40
3-1-110 – CAMPUS EFFECTIVENESS ...................................................... 40
3-1-200 – ORGANIZATION ..................................................................... 41
3-1-300 – ADMINISTRATION .................................................................. 42
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3-1-400</td>
<td>STUDENT RELATIONS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-1-410</td>
<td>ADMISSIONS AND RECRUITMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-1-420</td>
<td>STANDARDS OF Satisfactory ACADEMIC PROGRESS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-1-430</td>
<td>TUITION AND FEES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-1-440</td>
<td>STUDENT SERVICES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-1-500</td>
<td>EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-1-510</td>
<td>PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION, PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT, AND EVALUATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-1-520</td>
<td>CREDENTIALS CONFERRED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-1-530</td>
<td>INSTRUCTION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-1-540</td>
<td>FACULTY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-1-600</td>
<td>EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-1-700</td>
<td>PUBLICATIONS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-1-800</td>
<td>LIBRARY RESOURCES AND SERVICES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter 2  Standards for Nondegree Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3-2-100</td>
<td>FACULTY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-2-200</td>
<td>INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES, MATERIALS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter 3  Standards for Occupational Associate’s Degree Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3-3-100</td>
<td>STATE AUTHORITY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-3-200</td>
<td>EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-3-300</td>
<td>FACULTY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-3-400</td>
<td>LIBRARY, INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES, AND TECHNOLOGY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter 4  Standards for Academic Associate’s Degree Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3-4-100</td>
<td>STATE AUTHORITY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4-200</td>
<td>EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4-300</td>
<td>FACULTY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4-400</td>
<td>LIBRARY, INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES, AND TECHNOLOGY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 5  Standards for Bachelor’s Degree Programs ................................................................. 62

INTRODUCTION .......................................................................................................................... 62

3-5-100 – STATE AUTHORITY .................................................................................................. 62
3-5-200 – EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES .................................................................................... 62
3-5-300 – FACULTY .................................................................................................................... 63
3-5-400 – LIBRARY, INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES, AND TECHNOLOGY ......................... 64

Chapter 6  Standards for Master’s Degree Programs .............................................................. 65

INTRODUCTION .......................................................................................................................... 65

3-6-100 – NATURE OF GRADUATE EDUCATION ................................................................... 65
3-6-200 – STATE AUTHORITY .................................................................................................. 65
3-6-300 – ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION ............................................................... 65
3-6-400 – EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES .................................................................................... 66
3-6-500 – FACULTY .................................................................................................................... 66
3-6-600 – ADMISSIONS ............................................................................................................. 67
3-6-700 – LIBRARY, INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES, AND TECHNOLOGY ......................... 67
3-6-800 – PUBLICATIONS ....................................................................................................... 69

GLOSSARY 70

Appendix A – Bylaws .................................................................................................................. 82

Article I: General Provisions and Definitions ............................................................................. 82
Article II: Board of Directors ........................................................................................................ 82
Article III: Council ....................................................................................................................... 84
Article IV: Terms, Vacancies, Removal, Resignations, and Compensation ............................... 84
Article V: Committees ................................................................................................................. 85
Article VI: Membership, Fees, and Meetings ............................................................................. 87
Article VII: Appeals Process ......................................................................................................... 88
Article VIII: Miscellaneous ......................................................................................................... 89
Article IX: Litigation, Jurisdiction and Venue, and Expenses .................................................... 90

Appendix B – Unannounced Visits ............................................................................................ 91
Appendix C – Institutional Publications ....................................................................................... 92
Appendix D – Standards of Satisfactory Academic Progress .................................................. 95
Appendix E – Institutionally Funded Student Aid.................................................................98
Appendix F – English as a Second Language Programs.........................................................98
Appendix G – Disclosure and Notification.............................................................................100
Appendix H – Distance Education..........................................................................................102
Appendix I – International Partnership Agreements...............................................................104
Appendix J – Program Enhancement Education and Study Abroad.......................................106
Appendix K – The Campus Effectiveness Plan ......................................................................107
Appendix L – Student Achievement and Campus Accountability Reports............................109
Appendix M – Occupational and Avocational Programs and Courses.................................114
INDEX ........................................................................115
List of Acronyms

AACRAO. American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers
ACICS. Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools
AFR. Annual Financial Report
AICE. Association of International Credential Evaluators
ATB. Ability to Benefit
CAO. Chief Academic Officer
CAR. Campus Accountability Report
CEO. Chief Executive Officer
CEP. Campus Effectiveness Plan
CGPA. Cumulative Grade Point Average
CPA. Certified Public Accountant
ESL. English as a Second Language
FACT. Fast Assessment and Compliance Team
GED. General Equivalency Diploma
HEA. Higher Education Act of 1965
HVAC. Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning
ILS. Integrated Learning System
IP. Improvement Plan
IPA. International Partnership Agreement
LMS. Learning Management System
NACES. National Association of Credential Evaluation Services
SAP. Satisfactory Academic Progress
SLO. Student Learning Outcome
TAP. Tuition Assistance Program
TOEFL. Test of English as a Foreign Language
TSE. Test of Spoken English
USDE. United States Department of Education
INTRODUCTION

The Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools (“ACICS” or “Council”) supports the concept that periodic evaluation entered into voluntarily by institutions and their peers enhances the quality of the educational process and demonstrates that self-regulation of a profession is superior to outside regulation. This has been the philosophy of ACICS since 1912 when the first association of business schools was formed.

ACICS is incorporated as a non-profit education organization in the Commonwealth of Virginia and maintains offices in the District of Columbia. It has been recognized by the USDE since 1956 as a national institutional accrediting body. For purposes of distributing institutional and student financial funds, the federal government lists ACICS as an accrediting body on which it relies in determining the quality of education and training offered at institutions that ACICS accredits.

To help institutions and peer evaluators meet their responsibilities in conducting the process, ACICS has developed and periodically has revised a set of policies, procedures, and standards governing the activity. Whether seeking new accreditation or wishing to renew, institutions must be in compliance with these criteria in order to receive ACICS accreditation. These criteria incorporate all changes agreed to by the institutions – as well as organizational modifications – since the last published edition.

Embodied in these criteria is ACICS’ belief that accredited institutions should at all times demonstrate a high standard of professional conduct involving educational practices and business ethics. Accreditation is not a regulatory process in the legal sense. More than simple conformity to standards, the Council encourages a continuous striving for excellence. Only those institutions that subscribe to this tenet should seek accreditation.
TITLE I  GENERAL POLICIES

Chapter 1  An Overview of the Council

STATEMENT OF MISSION

The mission of the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools is to advance educational excellence at independent, nonpublic career schools, colleges, and organizations in the United States and abroad. This is achieved through a deliberate and thorough accrediting process of quality assurance and enhancement as well as ethical business and educational practices.

DEFINITION OF ACCREDITATION

Accreditation is an independent appraisal of an institution during which the institution’s overall educational quality (including outcomes), professional status among similar institutions, financial stability, and operational ethics are self-evaluated and judged by peers. It is a voluntary activity separate and distinct from business licensing, authority to award educational credentials, and eligibility to administer student financial assistance.

DEFINITION OF ACADEMIC QUALITY

ACICS defines academic quality as the overall performance of the institution in the context of its mission and as measured by the extent to which the institution achieves its intended student learning and student success outcomes.

The evaluation of student learning outcomes involves the assessment of skill and competency attainment. Student success outcomes include student retention or persistence; employment or placement; and student, graduate, and employer satisfaction.

The effectiveness of the institution is demonstrated by its compliance with accreditation standards as well as its continuous striving for enhancement of quality. ACICS assesses academic quality in the following areas: mission and objectives; campus effectiveness planning; student outcomes; financial stability; recruitment and admission practices; organizational structure and administration; student services; academic program and curriculum; quality of faculty and instruction; physical facilities; library and learning resources; and publication and disclosure of student achievement.

1-1-100 – BYLAWS

The ACICS Bylaws are an integral part of the Accreditation Criteria. They are incorporated herein by reference and contained in Appendix A.

1-1-200 – RECOGNITION

The USDE has recognized ACICS as a national institutional accrediting agency that is a reliable authority regarding the quality of the education and training provided by the institutions that it accredits. Their recognition includes certain operational requirements. Any proposed change in the policies, procedures, or accreditation criteria that may alter ACICS’s scope of recognition or compliance with the recognition requirements will be submitted to the USDE, the membership, and other appropriate agencies.

The Council adopts the following statements regarding the manner in which it accredits:

(a) The Council grants accreditation for an established period of time, as described more fully in these criteria. Prior to the grant’s expiration, each institution must seek a renewal of accreditation. The Council maintains complete and accurate records that cover the current and the prior periods of accreditation for each accredited institution.
(b) The Council conducts ongoing and comprehensive reviews of its accreditation criteria and its policies and procedures to ensure their appropriateness and effectiveness. Proposed changes to the criteria or the Council’s policies and procedures may be initiated by the Council or submitted by member institutions or other interested parties. Substantive proposed changes approved by the Council will be circulated to member institutions, appropriate governmental agencies, and other interested parties for comment. The Council will consider all comments before it adopts any final changes.

1-1-300 – PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Visitors to Council policy meetings will be seated as space permits. They should notify the President or the Council Chair in advance if they wish to address specific agenda items. Visitors may request that items be placed on the agenda by writing to the President at least 45 days before each meeting.

Chapter 2  Eligibility Criteria

INTRODUCTION

The Council fulfills an evaluative and accrediting function for a particular sector of postsecondary education. This function has been deemed appropriate by the USDE through the recognition of ACICS.

1-2-100 – MINIMUM ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

An institution or entity must satisfy the following minimum eligibility requirements to be considered for accreditation:

(a) It shall be an institution of postsecondary education (as herein defined) primarily offering certificates or diplomas, associate’s, bachelor’s, or master’s degrees in programs designed to educate students for professional, technical, or occupational careers. The Council may consider, on a case-by-case basis, a noninstitutional entity which is approved by an agency authorized by the state agency or governing body, to evaluate such academic or occupational programs.

An institution is presumed to be an institution of postsecondary education if it (1) enrolls a majority of its students in one or more programs, the content of which is on a postsecondary academic level and which leads to a postsecondary academic credential (such as a certificate, diploma, or degree); (2) enrolls students who possess a high school diploma or its equivalent, or who are beyond the age of compulsory school attendance and demonstrate through valid assessment an ability to benefit from the educational experience; and (3) offers at least one postsecondary program which is a minimum of 300 clock hours in length.

A noninstitutional entity must enroll a majority of its students in one or more programs, the content of which is on the postsecondary level or at a level which prepares the student for immediate enrollment into a postsecondary program. A noninstitutional entity is ineligible to participate in federal student aid programs.

(b) It shall be licensed by (1) the appropriate state education agency for postsecondary institutions or (2) the appropriate state agency for authorizing the conduct of business in that state for noninstitutional entities. For non-US institutions in countries in which legal authority to award degrees is not available or required, evidence of acceptance as a reputable private institution with significant support from all key stakeholders must be provided. For all institutions, educational services must have been offered to the general public for at least two years immediately prior to consideration of the application by ACICS.
Its mission shall be to offer educational programs which help students develop skills and competencies to enhance their careers.

Its residential enrollment and enrollment in each program shall be sufficient both to support coursework and learning experiences that, separately or in combination, constitute measurable and defined educational programs, and to enable ACICS to assess the educational effectiveness of those programs.

Institutions that are considered distance education institutions may be considered on a case-by-case basis provided they require a residential component.

It shall have a sufficient number of graduates from a majority of its programs to enable ACICS to assess the educational effectiveness of those programs.

It shall demonstrate financial stability to sustain operations.

It shall be in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations.

It shall be legally organized as a corporation, as a limited partnership with a corporate general partner, or as a limited liability company. Non-US institutions under other legal structures may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Its evaluation for accreditation shall be authorized by the CEO.

Its owners or managers shall not have been debarred by ACICS (see Section 2-3-900).

These eligibility requirements must be continuously met in order to maintain accreditation.

Chapter 3 Classification of Campuses and Institutions

INTRODUCTION

ACICS is an institutional accrediting body that accredits entire institutions. It does not separately accredit individual campuses or programs. All approved locations and programs are included within the institution’s grant of accreditation. Therefore, all campuses must meet Council standards and be evaluated accordingly. The specific method by which compliance with these standards is evaluated and accreditation is conferred depends upon the classification of campuses and the institutions they comprise.

1-3-100 – CLASSIFICATION OF CAMPUS

The Council classifies campus activities into two categories: main campus and branch campus.

1-3-101. Main Campus. A main campus is the primary location of an institution accredited by ACICS. It is expected to meet all applicable standards set forth in the Accreditation Criteria.

1-3-102. Branch Campus. A branch campus is a location geographically apart from and independent of the main campus of that institution, but under the same corporate structure (i.e., part of the main campus corporation or a wholly owned subsidiary). 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 branch campus as to the credentials and programs offered at each location. A branch campus may publish its own catalog.

1-3-103. Learning Site. A learning site is a classroom extension of a main or branch campus that is within a five-mile radius of the managing campus and that maintains academic quality by providing sufficient academic and administrative oversight and access to all student services and instructional resources. Learning sites that are more than five miles from the managing campus and offer student transportation to the managing campus or are 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. All learning sites are subject to an on-site evaluation visit during the managing campus renewal of accreditation evaluation visit.

1-3-200 – CLASSIFICATION OF INSTITUTIONS

The Council classifies institutions into two categories: single-campus and multiple-campus.

1-3-201. **Single-Campus Institution.** A single-campus institution provides educational programs at one main campus. Accreditation is granted to the institution.

1-3-202. **Multiple-Campus Institution.** A multiple-campus institution provides educational programs at one main campus and one or more branch campuses. Compliance with the *Accreditation Criteria* of the main and branch campuses is reviewed separately. Accreditation is granted to the institution at the main campus, with the specific inclusion of each of the branch campuses.
TITLE II   GENERAL PROCEDURES
Chapter 1   Gaining and Maintaining Accreditation

INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the steps that institutions must follow, and the procedures utilized by ACICS leading to and following the award of accreditation status. Accreditation is a deliberate and thorough process and is entered into for purposes of quality assessment and institutional enhancement. When an institution applies for and receives a grant of accreditation, it is committing itself to operate in accordance with the standards and policies established by the Council throughout the term of the grant. The Council may take an action at any time it finds the institution to be operating out of compliance with these standards.

Inasmuch as accreditation is given for a specified period of time not to exceed six years, ACICS uses the term “initial grant” to denote the first time an institution is accredited. The term “renewal of accreditation” indicates a continuing status with ACICS after an institution has reapplied, has been reevaluated, and has been reaccredited.

2-1-100 – ACCREDITATION WORKSHOP REQUIREMENTS

The Council schedules accreditation workshops each year. Applicants for initial or renewals of accreditation are required to attend a workshop. During these workshops, Council representatives will consult with institutional representatives to help them understand and complete the process. Institutional representatives are required to attend an accreditation workshop within 18 months prior to the final submission of the evaluation visit materials, which are due two weeks prior to an on-site visit. The chief on-site administrator of each campus, as well as any other individual whose responsibility is to coordinate the accreditation process, is required to attend.

2-1-200 – INITIAL ACCREDITATION

All communications concerning initiation of the accrediting process for an institution should be sent to the ACICS office. The accrediting process proceeds in distinct phases, each of which must be satisfactorily completed by the institution before the next can occur. Each phase must be authorized by the institution’s CEO, who also can authorize voluntary withdrawal from the process at any time prior to final action by ACICS.

When considering whether to award an initial grant of accreditation to an institution, ACICS will take into consideration the actions of other recognized accrediting agencies that have denied accreditation to the institution, placed the institution on probationary status, or revoked the accreditation of the institution. If an institution’s accreditation was withdrawn or denied previously by ACICS, its initial application will be considered only after at least two years have elapsed.

2-1-201. Preliminary Review. The institution must request in writing a preliminary review and receive a determination as to whether it is eligible to apply for accreditation as a single campus institution or a multiple-campus institution. Such a preliminary review does not constitute an application.

To be eligible for accreditation, the institution must meet the criteria outlined in Title I, Chapter 2, and the definitions of campuses and institutional types outlined in Title I, Chapter 3. In addition, it must have graduated at least one class at each credential level it offers. Programs offered at any credential level from which there are not graduates will be reviewed as required in Section 2-2-107.

2-1-202. Application. The institution, after receiving a favorable preliminary review, shall submit a formal application for accreditation on forms supplied by ACICS. By submitting an application for an
initial grant of accreditation, the institution agrees to be bound by the standards contained herein, including the ACICS Bylaws contained in Appendix A.

The institution shall certify that the requirements covered in Title I, Chapter 2, “Eligibility Criteria” have been met. The application forms, eligibility certification, supporting documents required in the application form, and the nonrefundable application fee shall be submitted to ACICS.

Once an institution has been determined to be eligible for evaluation, filed a formal application, and remitted the application fee, the application is kept active for a period of one year.

2-1-203. Resource Visit. Once staff has determined the application materials are complete, a resource visit will be made to the institution, at the institution’s expense, to determine if it is ready to begin the self-evaluation. ACICS, at its discretion, may waive a resource visit if that institution has maintained a satisfactory standing with another recognized accrediting agency. A report of the resource visit will be made available to the school and to ACICS and will be used for advisory purposes only.

Initial applicants must submit audited financial statements certified by an independent certified public accountant for the institution’s most recent fiscal year before a resource visit will be scheduled.

2-1-204. Self-Evaluation. Self-evaluation is the most important part of the accreditation process, requiring full involvement by administration, staff, and faculty. The Council publishes separate guidelines and materials to help institutions with the process.

2-1-205. Scheduling the Evaluation Visit. Council staff will schedule dates for the visit or visits to evaluate compliance of an institution at all of its locations. It is the responsibility of the institution to agree to dates for the visit(s) when classes are in session, faculty is teaching, administrative staff is available, and other operations are functioning normally.

2-1-300 – RENEWAL OF ACCREDITATION

It is the responsibility of the institution to file an application and remit the appropriate fees for a renewal of accreditation three months prior to the start of the assigned review cycle. This also involves submission of the institution’s renewal self-study, with supporting documents. Institutions that have not submitted a renewal self-study at least two months prior to the start of the assigned review cycle, and have not requested and received an appropriate extension or notified the Council of intent to voluntarily withdraw its accreditation, will be subject to late fees and may be issued a show-cause directive. The accreditation previously granted to an institution expires automatically with the passage of time unless extended by an action taken by ACICS. An extension of the previous grant cannot exceed one year, and not more than one extension may be given except for extraordinary circumstances over which the institution has no control.

2-1-301. Application. The process of application for a renewal of accreditation is the same as for initial accreditation except that institutions are not required to undergo another resource visit. No substantive changes shall be made to the institution once the application has been submitted, leading up to the campus site visit. Multiple-campus institutions applying for renewals of accreditation will be required to submit a separate self-study for each branch campus.

The Council will not consider an application for a renewal of accreditation unless all reports are current, and all fees are paid (see Sections 2-1-801 and 2-1-802).

2-1-302. Withholding of Accreditation. A decision by ACICS, based upon the application and evaluation for a renewal of accreditation, not to award accreditation for a new period is considered to be the withholding of accreditation, not the withdrawal of the previous grant of accreditation. The previous grant expires automatically with the passage of time unless the Council affirmatively extends the
previous grant while it is considering the renewal of accreditation application. The Council always will
give written reasons for withholding accreditation, and the matter from that point will be governed by
procedures later described in Title II, Chapter 3.

ACICS will not award a renewal of accreditation to an institution that is subject to an interim action by
another recognized institutional accrediting agency or a state agency that could lead to the suspension,
revocation, or termination of that institution’s accreditation or authority to provide postsecondary
education. Further, a renewal of accreditation will not be awarded to an institution that has been
notified by its state licensing agency of a threatened suspension, revocation, or termination by the state
of the institution’s legal authority to provide postsecondary education, and the due process rights
required by the action have not been exhausted.

2-1-400 – VISITING TEAMS, SELECTION AND COMPOSITION

When an institution has submitted a satisfactory self-study and other required documentation, the
office of the President will appoint a team to visit and evaluate the institution. The institution is notified
of the composition of the visiting team and may request that team members be replaced for cause.

2-1-401. Selection of Team Members. Evaluators are selected from among educators, executives, and
practitioners in business, administrative, and technical fields, and from state departments of education
and other evaluation and approval bodies. The person designated as chair of the team is experienced in
management and is responsible for assuring that the visit is conducted fairly and thoroughly.

Appropriate state licensing and approval bodies are routinely notified of forthcoming visits and invited
to participate in the visits as observers. They do not participate in team deliberations or in preparing the
team report.

2-1-402. Composition of Teams. The size and qualifications of the team are determined at the discretion
of the Council based on the type and size of the institution, type and number of programs being offered,
mode of educational delivery, campus location, student enrollment, credentials offered, and other
special circumstances. Full-team on-site evaluation visits will consist of persons serving as academic,
administrative, public, or member representatives as defined in Appendix A.

The application forms and the completed self-study will be supplied to members of the visiting team for
review prior to the visit and for use during the visit.

2-1-403. Evaluation of Separately Accredited Programs. If, in compliance with Section 3-1-515, ACICS
has been provided an attestation and documentation that a program at an institution has been
separately accredited by a specialized accreditor recognized by the USDE, or the Council for Higher
Education Accreditation (CHEA), or, for foreign institutions, the government or appropriately recognized
organization providing specialized accreditation, ACICS, at its sole discretion, may accept those
documents as evidence that the accredited program meets an acceptable level of quality.

2-1-404. Staff Member on Visit. An ACICS staff member accompanies teams on visits. In the event that
this person is unable to accompany a team on a visit, a qualified and trained contractor may be used as
the ACICS staff representative on the visit. This person is responsible for ensuring consistency from visit
to visit and from institution to institution. The ACICS staff member who accompanies a team also is
available when the Council deliberates and may be asked questions about what was observed and
reported by the team during the visit.

2-1-405. Fees. A fee will be assessed for this visit. Failure to remit payment may result in an adverse
action.
2-1-500 – TEAM FUNCTIONS AND PROCEDURES

An institution is expected to be performing according to what it reported in its self-study and to be in compliance with the Accreditation Criteria at the time of the visit.

2-1-501. Scope of Visit. The scope of a visit depends on the location, operation, size, program offerings, and classification of the institution. For a multiple-campus institution, the main campus and all branch campuses are subject to evaluation either in conjunction with the main campus or separately.

2-1-502. Functions. The functions of the evaluation team are to verify information in the institution’s self-study and to report all facts observed during the visit as to how the institution is accomplishing its stated mission, or failing to do so, in compliance with the Accreditation Criteria.

2-1-503. Procedures. Institutions are provided in advance with a checklist of materials and documents that should be current and readily available for the team’s review. Prior to the visit, institutions are required to update the Self-Study where significant changes have occurred since its submission to ACICS. During the visit, institutions are expected to make provisions for adequate consultation between team members and the faculty, administrative staff, students, and chief on-site administrative officer. The team prepares a written report that covers each area reviewed at the institution and includes other information pertinent to an accurate evaluation. The team chair subsequently sends the report to ACICS. An exit conference is conducted at the conclusion of the visit and is attended by the institution’s CEO or CAO and any others designated by the CEO. During the session, the chair of the team will summarize the evaluation team’s findings. Members of the team also may append to the report recommendations for institutional improvement. The visiting team is not a decision-making body.

2-1-600 – POST-VISIT PROCEDURES

After the evaluation visit, the following post-visit procedures and reviews occur.

2-1-601. Opportunity to Respond. The ACICS office sends a copy of each evaluation team report to the designated representative at the main campus or to the chief on-site administrator of the respective multiple- or single-campus institution. These persons are invited to respond in writing within the specified time frame.

2-1-602. Intermediate Review. All materials pertinent to an institution’s accreditation are reviewed by experienced persons before being reviewed by the Council. These materials include, but are not limited to, the institution’s self-evaluation report(s), the visiting team report(s), the institution’s response(s) to the team report, financial records of the institution (which are not examined by the evaluation team), and any official reports from state or federal regulatory bodies. Upon intensive review of institutional files, the Intermediate Review Committee (IRC), recommends possible accreditation action to the Council.

2-1-603. Council Review. The Council reviews all materials collected during the evaluation process. Only the Council can take a final accreditation action.

2-1-700 – COUNCIL ACTIONS

Action by ACICS to accredit or renew accreditation or not to do so, or to limit or otherwise condition the grant of accreditation, is determined only following review of the self-evaluation report prepared by the applicant institution, the report of the visiting team, the response of the institution to that report, the institution’s financial condition, and the recommendations (if any) of the interim reviewers. At each level of review, the number and seriousness of any deficiencies are taken into account, as well as the institution’s indicated willingness and capability to overcome them. The Council may, at its discretion,
direct an institution to submit a teach-out agreement, as described in Section 2-2-303. Specific Council actions are discussed in Title II, Chapter 3.

2-1-701. Maximum Length of Grants of Accreditation. The Council determines the grant lengths of each ACICS-accredited institution. The maximum length of an initial grant of accreditation is three years. If an institution can demonstrate a record of having been in good standing with another accrediting agency recognized by the USDE, the Council may award an initial grant of up to four years. The maximum length of a renewal of accreditation is six years.

2-1-800 – MAINTAINING ACCREDITATION

By successfully completing the process, an institution inherently agrees to keep ACICS fully informed of activities at the institution. The Council requires an annual report from each main and branch campus, where appropriate. Institutional changes that must be reported to ACICS are described in Title II, Chapter 2.

2-1-801. Campus Accountability Reports. The Campus Accountability Report (CAR) must be submitted on Council forms and comply with Council guidelines. Data must be submitted separately on the CAR for each main and each branch campus. These reports are due on or before November 1 annually. Failure to submit the CAR in a timely manner subjects the member to a withdrawal of accreditation by suspension.

2-1-802. Annual Financial Report. The Annual Financial Report (AFR) must be submitted on Council forms and be certified by an officer or stockholder of the corporation. Data reported must align with an institution’s fiscal year and must be submitted separately for each campus included in the institution’s grant of accreditation. The report is due no more than 180 days after the end of the institution’s fiscal year. Failure to submit the AFR in a timely manner subjects the member to a withdrawal of accreditation by suspension.

2-1-803. Compliance Audits and Audited Financial Statements. Title IV compliance audits and audited financial statements certified by an independent CPA are essential instruments in ACICS’ determining an institution’s compliance with Title IV requirements and financial stability. All institutions are required to submit audited financial statements within 180 days of the end of their fiscal year, and the statements must represent the institution’s fiscal year. All institutions that participate in the Title IV program are required to submit the compliance audit within 180 days of the end of their fiscal year. This audit must also represent the institution’s fiscal year, as required by USDE regulations.

2-1-804. Payment of Fees. Institutions are required to pay all annual sustaining fees, user fees, evaluation visit deposits and expenses, and other assessed costs by the established deadlines. Non-payment of any fees or expenses subjects the member to a withdrawal of accreditation by suspension (see Appendix A, Article VI, Section 5).

2-1-805. Unannounced Visits. The Council, at its discretion, may direct an unannounced visit at an institution at any time. Procedures for unannounced visits are described in Appendix B.

2-1-806. Denoting Accreditation. Only after ACICS grants accreditation may an institution so denote its status in official publications or in advertising. The form of notice is prescribed by ACICS, and specific permissible language is set forth in Appendix C.

2-1-808. Financial Review. The Council reviews the AFR, audited financial statements, and other relevant information to monitor each institution’s financial condition. When this review indicates that an institution’s financial condition may be weak or deteriorating, the Council will require the institution to furnish Quarterly Financial Reports, a Financial Improvement Plan, or other interim narrative reports that demonstrate the actions the institution is taking to improve its financial condition. If the Council determines the institution no longer complies with Council requirements for financial stability, it may
issue a compliance warning or issue a show-cause directive and require the institution to demonstrate compliance within the time frames described in Title II, Chapter 3. These time frames may be extended at the sole discretion of the Council for good cause, including evidence that there has been significant improvement in the deficient area(s) and the applicable time frame does not provide sufficient time to demonstrate full compliance, e.g., significant improvement in financial stability. Institutions that are required to submit interim financial reports or that are determined to be out of compliance with the Council’s standards for financial stability are considered to be on financial review and are subject to additional restrictions regarding the initiation of branches and learning sites. At its discretion, the Council may take an adverse action at any time.

2-1-809. Student Achievement Review. The Council reviews the CAR to monitor student achievement at both the campus and program levels. Measures include retention, placement, and licensure or certification examination pass rates, if applicable. When this review indicates that an institution’s student achievement is below benchmark, the Council, at its discretion, will take action consistent with the guidelines outlined in Appendix L.

2-1-810. Student Loan Cohort Default Rates Review. The Council will monitor an institution’s student loan cohort default rates. An institution may be subject to additional reports or actions based upon these rates.

Chapter 2    Institutional Changes

INTRODUCTION

ACICIS approval is required before substantive changes are published, advertised, and implemented, and institutions must notify ACICS of other changes. The material in this chapter explains the evaluation procedures that ACICS follows for approving substantive and non-substantive 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:

(a) any change in the established mission or objectives of the institution (see Section 2-2-103);  
(b) any change in the legal status, form of control, or ownership of the institution (see Section 2-2-400);  
(c) the addition of programs that are considered to be out of scope, i.e., those that represent a significant departure from existing programs that were offered when ACICS last evaluated the institution (see Section 2-2-105);  
(d) the addition of courses or programs that represent a significant departure from the existing delivery method used when ACICS last evaluated the institution (see Section 2-2-106);  
(e) the addition of programs of study at a degree or credential level different from that which is included in the institution’s current scope of accreditation (see Section 2-2-107);  
(f) a change from clock hours to credit hours (see Section 2-2-108);  
(g) a 25 percent or greater change in the number of clock or credit hours awarded for successful completion of a program (see Section 2-2-109);  
(h) the acquisition of any other institution (see Sections 2-2-104(a) and 2-2-400) or any program (see Sections 2-2-105 and 2-2-107) or location of another institution;  
(i) the addition of a permanent location at a site at which the institution is conducting a teach-out for students of another institution that has ceased operating before all students have completed their program of study;
(j) the entering into a contract under which an institution or organization not certified to participate in Title IV, HEA programs offers more than 25 percent of one or more of the accredited institution’s educational programs (see Section 2-2-505); and

(k) the establishment of a branch campus or learning site geographically apart from the main campus at which the institution offers at least 50 percent of an educational program (see Section 2-2-104).

It is required that the change occur within one year of approval. If the institution does not implement the change in this time frame, it shall notify the Council, and reapply for the change if it still seeks implementation. Requests to extend the proposed start date beyond one year of the initial date must be submitted to the Council.

2-2-102. Effect of Extensive Substantive Changes. The Council shall conduct a comprehensive on-site evaluation of the institution if substantive changes that have been made or are proposed are sufficiently extensive that the institution’s capacity to maintain compliance with accreditation standards requires an immediate assessment. Substantive changes are defined by Council as “extensive” when the types and/or number of changes are so substantial that the nature and scope of the accredited institution will no longer be the same since last evaluated and in its place a new institution has evolved.

2-2-103. Change of Institutional Mission. It is the responsibility of the institution to secure approval from the Council prior to implementing any change in the mission or objectives of the institution.

2-2-104. Initiation of Additional Campus Activity. An additional activity includes any ongoing instructional activity offered at a site away from an institution’s main facility. For activity at a site that meets the Council definition of “Branch” see Section 1-3-100. Activity at a site that does not meet the definition of a branch campus is referred to below as a “learning site.” Reporting requirements are as follows:

(a) Branch Campus. It is the responsibility of the institution to secure approval from ACICS of the intention to initiate a branch campus before the branch begins classes. If approved, activity must be initiated at the branch campus within one year of the proposed start date. A branch campus must be approved by the Council before advertising, recruiting, and enrollment may take place. Failure to secure ACICS approval prior to the initiation of a branch campus may call into question the accreditation of the institution.

The institution shall provide, on Council forms, the rationale for initiation of the branch and other information about the educational programs, credentials to be awarded, faculty, learning resources, physical and financial resources, strength in supporting fields, admission and graduation requirements, compliance with state law and authority to operate, number of students, and administrative arrangements. An acceptable catalog which identifies the branch campus also shall be included as part of the application.

The Council will monitor the number of branch applications submitted for each main campus and main campuses under common ownership based on a demonstration of sound administrative and financial capabilities. The Council reserves the right to limit the number of branches based on its review of demonstrated administrative and financial capabilities.

Any institution which (1) is required to submit a financial improvement plan to the Financial Review Committee, or which (2) is under a deferral action by the Council must request and receive prior permission from ACICS for the initiation of any branch campuses. An institution under a show-cause directive or an adverse action will not receive approval from ACICS for the initiation of any branch campus while the action is in effect.
(b) **Learning Site.** It is the responsibility of the institution to secure ACICS approval prior to initiation of any new educational activity which is under the direct control of the on-site administration of a main or branch campus and at a site that is apart from the primary location of that campus. In addition, if that activity involves 50 percent or more of an academic program, the learning site must be approved by the Council before advertising, recruiting, and enrollment may take place. If approved, activity must be initiated at the learning site within one year of the proposed start date. The institution shall provide, on Council forms, the location of the activity, its educational purpose, the programs offered, the number of students involved, and any additional information ACICS may request. A catalog for the campus which identifies the learning site also shall be included as part of the application.

Any institution which has a campus that (1) is under review by the Financial Review Committee of ACICS, (2) shows either a net loss or a negative net worth on its most recent financial report, (3) is required to report placement and/or retention data to the Institutional Effectiveness Committee, or (4) is under a deferral action by the Council must request and receive prior permission from ACICS for the initiation of any additional campus activity at which 50 percent or more of an academic program is provided. An institution under a show-cause directive or an adverse action will not receive approval for the initiation of any such additional campus activity while the action is in effect.

2-2-105. **Addition of Programs Out of Scope.** It is the responsibility of the institution to secure Council approval of the intention to initiate the addition of programs that represent a significant departure or are out of scope from existing educational programs that were offered when ACICS last evaluated the institution. The institution or campus must initiate the approval process by submitting a new program application and required documents for Council review and approval before being included in the institution’s scope of accreditation.

2-2-106. **Initiation of Distance Education (Online) or New Instructional Delivery Method.** It is the responsibility of the institution to secure Council approval of the intention to initiate online delivery if all courses and programs within the institution are currently approved for residential or face-to-face instructional delivery method. Any significant change in instructional delivery method requires prior Council approval.

The institution or campus must initiate the approval process through the submission of a distance education application for Council review and approval before being included into the institution’s current scope of accreditation. Once the institution receives Council approval to initiate online delivery, a new program application can be submitted to offer a new program in that mode of delivery. If current, residentially offered programs wish to use the newly approved online mode of delivery, notification per program is required.

2-2-107. **Expansion of Program Offerings to Higher Credential Level.** It is the responsibility of the institution to secure Council approval of the intention to initiate a program at a higher credential level.

The institution or campus must initiate the approval process by submitting a new program application and required documentation for Council review and approval before being included into the institution’s scope of accreditation.

2-2-108. **Initiation of Change from Clock to Credit Hour Offering.** It is the responsibility of the institution to secure Council approval of the intention to initiate a change from clock to credit hours in its program offering by submitting an application and required documentation.
2-2-109. Changing the Number of Clock or Credit Hours. It is the responsibility of the institution to secure Council approval of the intention to initiate a change of 25 percent or greater in the number of clock or credit hours awarded for successful completion of a program. If the change is less than 25 percent, but it changes the credential level, the resulting credential level will be evaluated within the institution’s scope of accreditation.

The institution or campus must initiate the approval process by submitting a new program application and required documentation for Council review and approval before being included into the institution’s scope of accreditation. The institution shall notify the Council if it does not implement the changes within one year of approval. Requests to extend the proposed start date beyond one year of the initial date must be submitted to the Council.

2-2-110. Evaluation, Approval, and Monitoring of Substantive Change Activity. All activity for which approval is sought will be evaluated by ACICS before approval is granted. Following is a description of those evaluations.

(a) Branch Campus. Initial inclusion of a branch campus within the scope of the accreditation of the institution may be granted upon receipt of all required information. An institution proposing the initiation of a new location must follow the procedures as outlined by the Council and disclosed on its website. A new location must receive initial inclusion before advertising, recruiting, or enrolling students at the proposed location. The Council reserves the right to require a preliminary visit to any potential branch campus prior to the granting of initial inclusion.

A branch campus that is granted initial inclusion will be required to undergo a verification visit within six months after the initial class start date. Following this visit, the Council may require the institution to submit additional information to satisfy areas of concern identified during the evaluation.

Only after a determination of acceptability and notification to the institution of the decision, may the institution consider a branch campus to be included within the scope of the institution’s grant of accreditation. Approval being withheld may be treated as a deferral or a denial, based on circumstances, and the institution may exercise its due process rights as outlined in Title II, Chapter 3.

(b) Learning Site. The Council must evaluate and approve additions to a main or branch campuses that are apart from the primary location of that campus. Educational activities at a learning site are eligible to be evaluated for inclusion within the scope of the accreditation of the managing campus provided that the learning site has been established to meet a specific educational need or condition and is authorized by the appropriate governmental education authority, if applicable.

The managing campus proposing the initiation of a learning site must submit a Learning Site Application and assure the Council that the educational activities at the learning site complement the overall objectives of the institution. Based on its review of the application materials, ACICS may (1) grant inclusion of the learning site or (2) deny the application.

A learning site that is granted inclusion will be required to undergo a verification visit within six months after the initial class start date if 50 percent or more of a program will be offered at the site. Following this visit, the Council may require the institution to submit additional information to satisfy areas of concern identified during the evaluation.

All additions to the campuses of an institution are evaluated during an institution’s regular evaluation for a renewal of accreditation.
(c) New Programs of Study. Council must approve changes to an institution’s scope of accreditation resulting from the proposed initiation of a new program of study following a comprehensive review of supporting materials specific to the substantive change. Only upon approval of the substantive change to the institution’s scope of accreditation is the institution or campus authorized to advertise, recruit, and enroll students for the new program.

To further monitor the institution or campus which initiated the substantive change to the institution’s scope of accreditation, an on-site evaluation visit will be conducted as directed by the Council. Following this visit, the Council may require the institution to submit additional information to satisfy areas of concern identified during the evaluation.

2-2-120 – INITIATION AND EVALUATION OF CHANGES WITHIN CURRENT SCOPE

All programs and delivery methods must be within the institution’s scope of accreditation and receive ACICS approval before recruiting or enrolling students. Programs offered by the institution are appropriately evaluated during the institution’s initial grant of accreditation and renewal of accreditation evaluations.

The initiation of a new program, or a change in the overall objective of a currently approved program or in the credential level of an existing program, requires approval prior to implementation. The initiation of courses and programs offered via an online modality also requires approval prior to implementation. An application form and any additional documentation specified by ACICS must be submitted. Programs and distance education that have not started within one year of the proposed start date and programs that have been inactive for at least two years must be surrendered (see Section 2-2-503). Institutions or campuses must have demonstrated compliance with ACICS standards at a lower credential level before requesting the addition of a new program at a higher credential level.

Any institution or campus on interim reporting to the FRC may be required to obtain prior permission from ACICS to initiate any new program. Any institution or campus under a compliance warning or a show-cause directive must obtain prior approval from the Council to apply for a new program. Any institution or campus subject to a comprehensive on-site evaluation as a result of extensive substantive changes must obtain prior permission from ACICS to initiate any new program.

2-2-121. Changes to Existing Programs. Changes to existing or currently approved programs fall under (a) substantive changes and (b) non-substantive changes.

(a) Substantive Changes. A substantive change to existing program application process must be initiated and approval received prior to implementation. The following changes will be considered substantive changes to the institution’s scope of accreditation and require approval per Section 2-2-100:

(i) a 25 percent change in the number of clock or credit hours awarded for successful completion of an existing program; and

(ii) a change from clock hours to credit hours.

(b) Non-Substantive Changes. These include minor changes to existing programs which do not substantially alter the scope, objectives, and nature of the programs as described in Section 2-2-151.

2-2-122. Substantial Changes to Nonmain Campus Operations. Prior notification to ACICS is required when an institution decides to make substantial changes to the operation of a nonmain campus. Notice shall be made in writing to the President, who is authorized to act on behalf of ACICS in approving such
changes. Failure to notify and receive approval prior to substantial change of activity may call into question the accreditation of the institution, and further evaluation may be required.

2-2-151. Non-Substantive Program Changes. Institutions and campuses are required to notify the Council of all non-substantive changes to existing program prior to implementation. The following non-substantive changes will be acknowledged:

(a) less than 25 percent change in existing contact hours; credits awarded, curriculum content (courses offered), or program length of a currently approved program within a 12-month period;
(b) a change in the name of an existing program that does not change the overall objective of the program; and
(c) a change from semester to quarter credit hours or vice versa.

If the institution applies for acknowledgment of non-substantive program changes prior to implementation but chooses not to implement the changes within one year of approval, it must notify the Council. Requests to extend the proposed start date beyond one year of the initial date must be submitted to the Council.

2-2-152. Non-Substantive Changes to Campus Operations. As a condition for maintaining its accreditation status, the institution is expected to keep ACICS informed of changes affecting campus operations.

2-2-200 – REDESIGNATION OF CAMPUSES

2-2-201. Branch-to-Main Campus Reclassification. 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 branch for at least two years. 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. The Council reserves the right to conduct an on-site quality assurance monitoring visit at any time as it deems necessary.

2-2-202. Reassignment of Campuses. Institutions seeking to reassign the classification of campuses within an institution must submit the appropriate application and documentation, including the rationale, to the Council for approval prior to reassignment. The Council reserves the right to assign an on-site evaluation visit at either the main campus or branch campuses at any time it deems necessary.

2-2-300 – CLOSING OF A CAMPUS

In all instances of termination of activity at either main or nonmain campuses, ACICS must be assured that provision is made for presently enrolled students to complete the program of instruction for which they have enrolled, either at that institution or at another acceptable institution. In addition, ACICS must be assured that student academic transcripts are safely stored and protected and that the transcripts will be accessible to students and alumni indefinitely. ACICS and the appropriate regulatory agency must be notified of the arrangements made in this regard.

2-2-301. Closing of a Main Campus. An institution is required to notify ACICS as far in advance as possible when it plans to cease operation. It must complete the appropriate forms describing its plans for teaching out its students and for storing and servicing its records and other information necessary for effecting the cessation of operations as smoothly as possible. The institution’s grant of accreditation will be revoked effective its final date of academic activity.

When ACICS receives information from any source that an institution has ceased to operate, it shall immediately take steps to verify the information. If the Council believes that the institution, in fact, has
ceased operations, the grant of accreditation is summarily suspended. Such action is authorized without prior notice or hearing and with immediate public notice.

The institution shall be notified of the summary suspension in writing at its address of record. Within 10 days after receipt of the suspension notice, the institution may petition ACICS for an expedited determination of whether such suspension should be withdrawn. If no petition is filed within 10 days, the suspension automatically shall become a revocation effective as of the date of notice of suspension. Alternatively, should the closed institution provide ACICS with information regarding its final date of academic activity, the suspension shall become a revocation effective as of the date provided by the institution.

2-2-302. Closing of a Nonmain Campus. An institution is required to notify ACICS as far in advance as possible when it plans to close a nonmain campus. It must complete the appropriate forms describing its plans for teaching out its students and for storing and servicing its records and other information necessary for effecting the cessation of operations as smoothly as possible. The nonmain campus will cease to be included in the institution’s grant of accreditation effective its final date of academic activity.

2-2-303. Teach-out.

The Council will require an institution to provide a teach-out plan in the following instances:

(a) The Secretary of Education notifies ACICS of a determination by the institution’s independent auditor expressing doubt about the institution’s ability to operate as a going concern or indicating an adverse opinion or a finding of material weakness related to financial stability.
(b) The Secretary notifies ACICS that the institution is participating in Title IV, HEA programs under a provisional program participation agreement and the Secretary has required a teach-out plan as a condition of participation;
(c) ACICS acts to place the institution on show-cause;
(d) ACICS is notified of adverse information, high cohort default rate(s), low retention and/or placement rate(s), financial instability, or other concerns that may call into question the institution’s ability to continue to serve the educational needs and objectives of its students or to continue as an on-going concern.

At the discretion of the Council, the teach-out plan may include a formal teach-out agreement with another institution.

The Council will require an institution to provide a teach-out plan and, if practicable, teach-out agreements in the following instances:

(a) The Secretary notifies ACICS that it has placed the institution on the reimbursement payment method or the heightened cash monitoring payment method requiring the Secretary’s review of the institution’s supporting documentation;
(b) The Secretary notifies ACICS that the Secretary has initiated an emergency action against an institution, or an action to limit, suspend, or terminate an institution participating in any title IV, HEA program;
(c) The Council acts to deny or withdraw the accreditation of an institution;
(d) The institution notifies ACICS that it intends to cease operations or close a location that provides 100 percent of at least one program, including if the location is being moved and is considered by the Secretary to be a closed school; or
(e) A state licensing or authorizing agency notifies ACICS that an institution’s license or legal authorization to provide educational programs has been or will be revoked.
If an institution closes or announces its intent to close, the Council will work with the USDE and the appropriate state regulatory agencies to the extent feasible to ensure that students are given reasonable opportunities to complete their education without additional charge. An institution that closes without completing its contractual training obligations to students must refund all unearned revenue.

Should an institution enter into a teach-out agreement with another accredited institution, the signed agreement must be submitted to and approved by the Council prior to implementation. Teach-out agreements must include the following:

(a) A complete list of students currently enrolled in each program at the institution and the program requirements each student has completed;

(b) A plan to provide all potentially eligible students with information about how to obtain a closed school discharge and, if applicable, information on state refund policies;

(c) A record retention plan to be provided to all enrolled students that delineates the final disposition of teach-out records (e.g., student transcripts, billing, financial aid records);

(d) Information on the number and types of credits the teach-out institution is willing to accept prior to the student’s enrollment; and

(e) A clear statement to students of the tuition and fees of the educational program and the number and types of credits that will be accepted by the teach-out institution.

Teach-out agreements will be approved only if the teach-out institution

(a) has the necessary experience, resources, and support services to provide an educational program that is of acceptable quality and reasonably similar in content, delivery modality, and scheduling to that provided by the institution that is ceasing operations either entirely or at one of its locations; however, while an option via an alternate method of delivery may be made available to students, such an option is not sufficient unless an option via the same method of delivery as the original educational program is also provided;

(b) has the capacity to carry out its mission and meet all obligations to existing students; and

(c) demonstrates that it

(i) can provide students access to the program and services without requiring them to move or travel for substantial distances or durations; and

(ii) will provide students with information about additional charges, if any.

2-2-400 – OWNERSHIP OR CONTROL

The Council must know at all times who is in control of an accredited institution. Transfer of ownership or change in control of an institution is a substantial change that must be approved by Council before accreditation can continue. Any institution or owning corporation contemplating a transaction that may result in a change of ownership/control must submit the appropriate application and supporting documentation to the Council for approval 30 days prior to effectuating the proposed change. Failure to notify the Council in a timely manner may 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 the two.
(a) *Privately held corporation.* A privately held corporation 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 U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. 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 operates for profit in which a majority of the voting stock is traded on public markets overseen by governmental agencies such as the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. 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 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 U.S. Internal Revenue Code. 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 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 (LLC) has been granted a certificate of approval under the laws of the state corporation office or other appropriate regulatory body in its home jurisdiction. An LLC may or may not issue certificates of ownership. The control of an LLC is vested in the members, whose ownership interests are defined in the LLC operating agreement or other such governing document, and who are in control of a majority of the direct or beneficial ownership interest in the company.

2-2-401. **Change of Ownership or Control.** A change of ownership or control generally means that a transaction has occurred whereby a new person, combination of persons, or entity can exercise control of a corporation or LLC (see Section 2-2-400). The following subsections outline the typical changes of ownership or control of the three types of corporations that own accredited institutions, including corporate general partners in limited partnerships and LLCs. Transactions other than those outlined below, however, may constitute a change of ownership or control, and the Council reserves the right in its discretion to make the determination of whether a change of ownership or control has occurred in all cases. Therefore, institutions must keep the Council informed of all substantive changes in ownership of stock and the composition of the board of directors.

The Council, for purposes of determining ownership or control, views couples in a legally recognized marriage or partnership as a single entity, and it views closely related family groups as a single entity in most cases where all of the present and future relevant stockholders actively participate in the management of the corporation.

In addition to the transactions outlined below, any change from one type of entity to another as defined in Section 2-2-400 constitutes a change of ownership or control. Institutions also are reminded that nonmain campuses cannot be bought or sold independently of their main campus.

(a) *Privately held corporation.* A change of ownership of a privately held corporation occurs as a result of any of the following transactions:

(i) the transfer of 50 percent or more of the total outstanding voting stock from one party or parties to another party or parties;

(ii) a transfer of voting stock that results in the ownership of 50 percent or more of the total outstanding voting stock by any party other than any previous owner of 50 percent or more of the total outstanding voting stock;
(iii) a transfer of voting stock whereby a stockholder’s ownership of outstanding voting stock decreases from more than 50 percent to 50 percent or less, or from 50 percent to less than 50 percent; or

(iv) any other transaction whereby a stockholder or group of stockholders who previously could not exercise control of the corporation as described in Section 2-2-400(a) now can exercise control.

(b) Privately held corporation. A change of control of a privately held corporation occurs as a result of a transfer of ownership interest within an immediate family.

(c) Publicly traded corporation. A change of ownership of a publicly traded corporation occurs as a result of any of the following transactions or events:

(i) the change of 50 percent or more of the voting members of the board of directors in any rolling, 12-month period;

(ii) a change in the number of voting members of the board of directors in any rolling, 12-month period that will allow a group of directors to exercise control who could not exercise control before the change;

(iii) the acquisition of outstanding voting shares by any entity whereby that entity owns 50 percent or more of the total outstanding voting shares; or

(iv) any other transaction that is deemed by an appropriate governmental agency to constitute a change of control, including but not limited to a transaction that requires the corporation to file Form 8-K with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission.

(d) Publicly traded corporation. A change of control occurs as a result of any change of 25 percent or more of voting stock.

(e) Not-for-profit corporation. A change of control of a not-for-profit corporation occurs as a result of any of the following occurrences:

(i) the change of 50 percent or more of the voting members of the board of directors in any rolling, 24-month period; or

(ii) a change in the number of voting members of the board of directors in any rolling, 24-month period that will allow a group of directors to exercise control who could not exercise control before the change; or

(iii) a fundamental change to its governance structure.

(f) Limited liability company. A change of ownership or control of a limited liability company occurs as a result of any of the following transactions:

(i) the transfer of 50 percent or more of the direct or beneficial ownership interest from one member or members to another member or members;

(ii) a transfer of direct or beneficial ownership interest that results in the holding of 50 percent or more of the total direct or beneficial ownership interest by any member other than any previous member who owned 50 percent or more of the total direct or beneficial ownership interest;

(iii) a transfer of direct or beneficial ownership interest whereby a member’s direct or beneficial ownership interest decreases from more than 50 percent to 50 percent or less, or from 50 percent to less than 50 percent; or

(iv) any other transaction whereby a member or group of members who previously could not exercise control of the company as described in Section 2-2-400(e) now can exercise control.

A change of ownership or control, however, has not occurred when there is a transfer of assets among wholly owned subsidiary corporations or between a wholly owned subsidiary corporation and its parent corporation; a transfer of assets from a subsidiary corporation to its parent corporation where the
parent corporation owns a majority of the outstanding stock of the subsidiary corporation; or a transfer of assets among subsidiary corporations where the common parent owns a majority of the outstanding stock of the subsidiary corporations.

2-2-402. Contingent Sales. The Council will not grant reinstatement of accreditation after a change of ownership or control if the sale of the stock or assets triggering the change of ownership is contingent on approval of the transaction by the Council. If the transaction is rescinded as a result of a condition subsequent to the change of ownership or control of an institution, then the previous owner must apply to the Council for reinstatement.

2-2-403. Change of Ownership or Control Review Procedures.

(a) Not-for-Profit. Institutions that are controlled by a not-for-profit entity and are seeking a change in control must receive Council approval prior to the change. If the institution fails to receive Council approval prior to the change in control, the institution will be directed to show cause why its grant should not be withdrawn by suspension. The following procedures govern the Council’s review of the change of control:
   (i) The institution must submit the Change of Ownership/Control application, including all requested materials, for consideration and approval by the Council.
   (ii) The institution will be required to host a Quality Assurance Monitoring (QAM) visit to evaluate its ongoing compliance with the Accreditation Criteria no later than six months following the implementation of the change.

The Council, at its discretion, may require the institution’s new chief on-site administrator and/or chairperson of the board to attend an ACICS accreditation session prior to, or following, the visit.

(b) All Other Entities. Institutions that are controlled by a privately held, public traded, limited liability corporation, or any other legal structure and are considering a change of ownership or control, must submit Part I of the Change of Ownership/Control application 30 days prior to the transfer of ownership. 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 the change of ownership/control:
   (i) Automatic Discontinuation. Any change of ownership or control results in the immediate and automatic discontinuation of an institution’s grant of accreditation, which may be reinstated only upon application to and approval by the Council. Because discontinuation results without Council action or prior approval, this change in status does not constitute withdrawal of accreditation and is not an adverse action.
   (ii) 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. 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. The Council will conduct a quality assurance monitoring visit within six months of the approval date of a change of ownership/control. The new owner(s) and the chief on-site administrator may be directed to attend an ACICS Accreditation session within one year of the change of ownership or prior to the quality assurance monitoring visit.
   (iii) Effect. Until the Council approves a reinstatement of the grant of accreditation, 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 a denial (see Title II, Chapter 3).
2-2-501. Evaluation of Programs for Purposes of Federal Financial Aid. As part of its evaluation of an institution for initial accreditation or renewal of accreditation, ACICS will review the institution’s policies and procedures for determining credit hour assignments for purposes of awarding federal financial aid. ACICS will evaluate the reliability and accuracy of the institution’s assignment of credit hours, as defined by federal requirements, to courses and programs and will determine whether this assignment conforms to commonly accepted practice in higher education.

(a) Credit Hours for Credit-Hour Programs. The evaluation of credit-hour programs, as defined by federal requirements, for purposes of financial aid is based on the following federal definition of a credit hour:

Except as provided in federal regulations, a credit hour is an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutionally established equivalency that reasonably approximates not less than (1) one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or ten to twelve weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time; or (2) at least an equivalent amount of work as required in item (1) of this definition for other academic activities as established by the institution, including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

(b) Credit Hours for Programs that are neither Credit-Hour nor Clock-Hour Programs. Clock-hour programs as defined in federal regulations may not assign credit hours for the purpose of awarding federal financial aid. However, undergraduate degree programs less than two years in length and non-degree programs that are not fully transferrable to degree programs at least two years in length (with at least two graduates) at the same institution are eligible to convert clock hours to credit hours for purposes of awarding federal financial aid. In doing so, these programs may seek to combine a minimum number of hours in a range of hours of student work outside of class with a required minimum number of hours of instruction alone to meet or exceed a total number of clock hours of instruction. The evaluation of these clock-to-credit-hour programs is based upon the following federal conversion formulas:

(i) The institution’s student work outside of class combined with the clock hours of instruction meet or exceed the following numeric requirements:

(1) A semester hour must include at least 37.5 clock hours of instruction;

(2) A trimester hour must include at least 37.5 clock hours of instruction; and

(3) A quarter hour must include at least 25 clock hours of instruction; and

(ii) The clock hours of instruction alone meet or exceed the following numeric requirements:

(1) A semester hour must include at least 30 clock hours of instruction;

(2) A trimester hour must include at least 30 clock hours of instruction; and

(3) A quarter hour must include a least 20 hours of instruction.

2-2-502. Program Show-Cause or Compliance Warning. When the Council determines that a program at a campus of the institution has fallen below the compliance standard for retention, placement, or licensure or certification examination pass rates, the institution will be issued in writing a show-cause or compliance warning regarding the alleged deficiency in accordance with the guidelines in Appendix L.

2-2-503. Termination of Programs. The withdrawal of approval for a program following the issuance of a program show-cause or compliance warning or a decision by an institution to voluntarily terminate
any program must be appropriately communicated to all interested publics. These publics include, but
are not limited to, students, governmental agencies, the local community, and ACICS.

All institutions subject to the withdrawal of approval for a program or who voluntarily terminate an
approved program will be directed to submit a program termination plan that conforms to the following
requirements. New students may not be enrolled in any program which cannot be completed prior to
the termination date for which public notice has been given. Moreover, the institution is obligated to
continue to offer appropriate courses, including prerequisites, so that currently enrolled students will be
able to complete the program and receive the credential that was their designated educational
objective. For this purpose, the period of time need not extend beyond that sufficient for students
already enrolled and maintaining normal academic progress to complete the program.

Council-directed withdrawal of approval for a program conditions the institution’s grant of accreditation
with respect to the inclusion of the program and therefore is appealable to the Council. Due to the
limited nature and narrow scope of the withdrawal of program approval, the appeal to the Council may
be in writing only. An institution may not initiate the new program application process for a program it
was directed to teach-out until after it has requested and received approval from the Council to do so,
no sooner than the completion of the program’s teach-out. To reinstate a voluntarily terminated
program, the institution must initiate a new program application process.

To maintain approval, an institution must demonstrate active enrollment in each program of study. If an
approved program is inactive for at least two years, the program will be considered discontinued and
will be removed from the institution’s list of approved programs. To reinstate the program, the
institution must initiate the new program application process. Programs that have not started within
one year of the proposed start date will be surrendered. To reinstate the program, the institution must
initiate the new program application process. Requests to extend a new program’s proposed start date
beyond one year of the initial date must be submitted to the President.

2-2-504. Contracts or Agreements with Accredited Institutions. A written arrangement between one
institution eligible to participate in Title IV HEA financial aid programs and another eligible institution, or
with a consortium of such institutions, permits the institution to arrange for a portion of its approved
program to be delivered by another accredited institution. Contracts or consortium agreements
describing these arrangements must be in writing and must be disclosed in the catalog. Institutions are
advised that specific state and federal regulations may apply.

(a) The entire consortium agreement must be submitted to and approved by the Council prior to
the institution’s participation in the arrangement. The institution seeking approval of such an
agreement must submit documentation that demonstrates that the other institution or the
members of the consortium that will deliver instruction hold institutional accreditation from an
accrediting agency recognized by the USDE and that the portion of the program to be delivered
by any other institution has been approved by that institution’s accrediting agency.

(b) The consortium agreement must identify how the curriculum and instruction will be monitored,
how curriculum revisions will be undertaken, and how student grievances will be addressed. The
institution seeking approval of a consortium agreement must acknowledge in writing that it
retains ultimate responsibility for its program delivery and students’ satisfaction.

(c) More than 50 percent of the program must be delivered by the institution that awards the
academic credential.

2-2-505. Contracts with Unaccredited Institutions or Entities. An institution may enter into a contract
with an unaccredited institution or entity for the delivery of up to 25 percent of a program of study.
The institution must submit the contract and provide the following information to ACICS for review and approval prior to the contract’s initiation:

(a) a full catalog description of the program and the services to be provided by the contractor;
(b) a systematic plan for administrative and student evaluations of instructors provided by the contractor;
(c) evidence of the qualifications of faculty to teach the contracted courses;
(d) a description of the instructional facilities provided by the contractor; and
(e) plans for the completion of the program should the contractor fail to provide contracted services.

2-2-506. Articulation Agreements with Secondary Schools. An institution may enter into an articulation agreement with a secondary school to transfer credit for courses taken at the secondary level that are equal to courses offered in a postsecondary institution. Articulation agreements must be in writing, periodically reviewed, signed, and dated. The institution must maintain a file consisting of the following:

(1) a Letter of Intent to Articulate signed by both institutions, specifying the numbers and titles of courses to be articulated,
(2) a written description of the standards for acceptable transfer of credit, and
(3) a comparison of the course objectives of the secondary and postsecondary courses(s) with signed approvals of both institutions. The credits appear on both the secondary and postsecondary transcripts.

2-2-507. International Partnership Agreements. An ACICS-accredited institution may enter into an International Partnership Agreement (IPA) with an institution of higher education in a geographic location other than that of the United States or its territories. At least 25 percent of the program must be delivered by the institution that awards the academic credential.

The ACICS-accredited institution must submit an IPA and provide the following information to ACICS for review and approval prior to the initiation of the IPA:

(a) evidence provided by the institution or agency that the international partner and the programs to be delivered are recognized by an educational approval agency equivalent to an accrediting agency recognized by the USDE;
(b) a full catalog description of the program and the services to be provided through the IPA;
(c) a plan that describes recruitment, admission, and standards of SAP;
(d) a plan that describes student financial relations, including tuition and fees, and refund policies;
(e) a description of the program(s) of study or courses offered;
(f) a systematic plan for administration and student evaluations of instructors provided in the IPA;
(g) evidence of the qualifications of faculty to teach;
(h) a description of the instructional facilities at the international site;
(i) a plan for the completion of the program(s) should the international partner fail to provide agreed upon services;
(j) a plan for the safety and security of students, faculty, and staff; and
(k) specify which programs or portions are to be delivered via distance education and how the institutions will monitor growth.

2-2-600 − OTHER CHANGES

2-2-601. Change of Name. The Council must be notified and grant approval when an institution decides to change its name. Forms are supplied for the institution to explain and justify the change. The President has the authority to review and approve a change of name. The following limitation applies: “university” may be used only by institutions that offer a master’s degree. This limitation is effective for all Change of Name applications received after January 1, 1997. All institutional names approved prior to that date may be retained.
2-2-602. Change of Location. The Council must be notified and grant approval when an institution decides to change its physical location or its address and prior to the initiation of classes at any new location. Forms are supplied for the institution to explain and justify the change. The President has the authority to review and approve a change of location. In addition, the President may require an on-site evaluation visit as part of its review in order to determine compliance with Council standards.

2-2-700 – VOLUNTARY WITHDRAWAL

If an institution seeks to voluntarily withdraw from its grant of accreditation by ACICS, or the inclusion of one or more of its nonmain campuses from within its grant of accreditation, it must submit written notice to ACICS of its request. The notice must be signed by the CEO or CAO of the institution and indicate the requested date of effect. The institution’s grant of accreditation will be revoked as of the effective date, or retroactive to the date that all outstanding obligations, including payment of fees, had previously been fulfilled by the institution.

Chapter 3 Council Actions

INTRODUCTION

When the Council has considered all of the information and reports submitted as a result of the accrediting process, it will make a judgment as to an institution’s compliance with the Accreditation Criteria. The Council’s decision is based on the extent of an institution’s compliance. The judgment made is referred to as a “Council action.” The actions which the Council may take are described in this chapter. Procedures available to institutions to challenge those actions and the maximum time frames for achieving final disposition of those actions by the Council also are explained. There are four general areas of Council actions: accreditation granted, accreditation deferred, accreditation denied, and accreditation withdrawn.

If the Council determines that an institution is not in compliance with the Accreditation Criteria, it will take prompt adverse action against the institution, or require the institution to take appropriate action to bring itself into compliance within a specified time frame after the institution has been notified that it is not in compliance. That time frame will not exceed and may be less than the following:

(a) twelve months, if the longest program is less than one year in length;
(b) eighteen months, if the longest program is at least one, but less than two years in length; and
(c) two years, if the longest program is at least two years in length.

Similarly, if the Council determines that a campus’s program is not in compliance with the Accreditation Criteria, it will take prompt adverse action on the program, or require the campus to take appropriate action to bring the program into compliance with the Accreditation Criteria within a specified time frame after the campus has been notified that its program is not in compliance. That time frame will also not exceed and may be less than the following:

(a) twelve months, if the program is less than one year in length;
(b) eighteen months, if the program is at least one year, but less than two years in length; and
(c) two years, if the program is at least two years in length.

The above time frames may be extended at the sole discretion of the Council for good cause, including evidence that there has been significant improvement in the deficient area(s) and that the applicable time frame does not provide sufficient time to demonstrate full compliance, e.g., significant improvement in completion or placement rates. In no event will such extension exceed one year.
2-3-100 – ACCREDITATION GRANTED

If an institution is found in compliance with the Accreditation Criteria, ACICS may grant accreditation for a specific period of time from a minimum of one year to a maximum of six years. The length of the grant shall be at the discretion of ACICS. A grant of accreditation for less than six years is not an adverse action and, therefore, is not appealable. The Council will not grant accreditation for a full six-year term if the grant is awarded following any hearing resulting from a previous action to deny accreditation.

2-3-200 – ACCREDITATION DEFERRED OR CONDITIONED

The Council, upon review of relevant information concerning an institution, may take any of the following actions at any time in accordance with the procedures described, up to and including a final adverse action.

2-3-210. Deferral. When Council determines there is insufficient evidence available to make a decision, it may defer action until a later date, pending receipt of additional information. In such cases, the Council will provide in writing the reasons for the deferral, state what the institution needs to provide with sufficient time for the institution to respond, and specify the response date. Based on the nature and/or number of identified deficiencies, the Council may require attendance of key administrators at a workshop and/or consultation.

Deferral is, in effect, “no action at this time” and is not an adverse action. Therefore, deferral is not an appealable action. Neither is deferral a final action. In all cases of deferral on renewal of accreditation of accredited institutions, the Council will extend the present grant of accreditation for a period sufficient for the institution to provide the information needed.

2-3-220. Compliance Warning. When the Council determines that an institution is not in compliance with the Accreditation Criteria, it may issue a compliance warning. The institution will be provided in writing with the areas of noncompliance and will be required to demonstrate corrective action for ACICS review.

As described in Sections 2-3-230 and 2-3-402, the Council may issue a show-cause directive or a denial action as the result of reviewing a compliance warning. Following receipt of a compliance warning, the institution must bring itself into compliance within the time frames specified in Title II, Chapter 3, or it will be subject to a final adverse action.

2-3-230. Show-Cause Directive. The Council may direct an institution to show cause when it determines that the institution or one of the campuses within the institution does not materially operate in accordance with the Accreditation Criteria. The Council will provide a written summary of the areas of noncompliance to the institution, which will be required to provide evidence of corrective action for ACICS review. Following receipt of a show-cause directive, the institution must bring itself into compliance within the time frames specified in Title II, Chapter 3, or be subject to an adverse action.

The issuance of a show-cause directive may be considered the basis for an institutional review (see Section 2-3-500). A suspension order or denial action may be issued by ACICS as the result of Council review of the institution’s response; such action is considered a final action that may only be appealed to the Review Board of Appeals (see Section 2-3-600). All institutions that are issued a show-cause directive by the Council will be directed to submit a school closure plan and may be required to submit a teach-out agreement (see Section 2-2-303).

2-3-231. Result of Show-Cause. The Council will not accept any applications for new programs or new campuses from any institution directed to show-cause unless approval is received in advance to submit such an application.
2-3-232. Vacate Show-Cause. If the institution demonstrates it has addressed the Council’s concerns and is operating in compliance with the Accreditation Criteria, ACICS may vacate the show-cause. The Council may also order a special visit at the institution’s expense before vacating the show-cause.

2-3-233. Notification of Show-Cause. The Council will notify the U.S. Secretary of Education, appropriate state regulatory agencies, other appropriate accrediting agencies, and the public of its decision to direct an institution to show-cause. The institution must immediately notify current and prospective students and the public of its show-cause status through appropriate means, including posting a prominent notice on its website.

2-3-300 – ACCREDITATION DENIED

Denial of accreditation is characterized by the Council as a “withholding” action and is differentiated from suspension of accreditation, which is a “withdrawal” action. There are two levels of denial. One totally withholds accreditation of the institution or a branch; the other denies approval of a requested substantive change. Denial at either level constitutes an adverse action; it can be challenged by the institution. The process of challenge, however, is different for each level of denial (see Sections 2-3-301, 2-3-302, and 2-3-303). In all cases, the Council will give the institution written reasons for the denial, which are subject to modification through the appeals processes as later described and explained. Denial actions that are not appealed in accordance with the procedures provided by the Council are considered final actions.

2-3-301. Denial of Initial Grant. An institution that objects to a Council decision to deny an application for an initial grant has the right to present its case and will be given the opportunity to be heard by a panel of the Review Board of Appeals. At such a hearing, the institution may not present new evidence for consideration and must follow the procedures in Section 2-3-600.

2-3-302. Denial of Renewal of Accreditation or Denial of Reinstatement of Accreditation Following Change of Ownership/Control. An institution that objects to a Council decision to deny an application for a renewal of accreditation or reinstatement of accreditation following a change of ownership or control has the right to appeal the decision to the Review Board of Appeals (see Section 2-3-604). Additionally, in cases of affirmed denial of an application for renewal of accreditation, the Council may revoke the institution’s current grant of accreditation (see Section 2-3-401).

2-3-303. Denial Actions Not Affecting Overall Accreditation. An institution that objects to a Council decision to deny an application for the addition of a program within the institution’s current scope of accreditation or any substantive change addressed in Section 2-2-101 will be given the opportunity to present its case in writing to the Council.

2-3-304. Subsequent Action Following Denial. If the denial not affecting overall accreditation is affirmed, the denial action becomes final and no further remedy is available to the institution. In all cases of denial, the Council retains discretion to specify whether and under what conditions the institution may initiate a request for consideration of the same type of application.

2-3-400 – ACCREDITATION WITHDRAWN

“Withdrawal of accreditation” differs from “denial of accreditation” in that denial rejects an institution’s application for an initial grant of accreditation or for a renewal of accreditation to take effect upon the expiration of an existing grant of accreditation; withdrawal takes away a current grant of accreditation before its expiration. Accreditation may be withdrawn from an institution or inclusion withdrawn from a branch campus through two types of Council action: “revocation of accreditation” or “suspension of accreditation.”

2-3-401. Revocation. Revocation occurs without a hearing for any of the following reasons:
(a) An institution, campus, state authority, the USDE, Ministry of Education, or similar body notifies the Council that the institution has closed and/or ceased operation.
(b) An institution notifies the Council that it is voluntarily withdrawing its grant of accreditation or the inclusion of one or more of its nonmain campuses from within its grant of accreditation.
(c) An institution is denied a renewal of accreditation and does not appeal the action, or the action is affirmed by the Review Board of Appeals.
(d) An institution or campus fails to submit a written response to a show-cause directive by the indicated due date.
(e) An institution or campus whose accreditation has been summarily suspended does not challenge or appeal the suspension within 10 days of receipt of the suspension notice (see Section 2-2-301).

A revocation action is not appealable. It requires an institution to start anew and to undergo the entire accreditation process to regain accreditation.

2-3-402. Suspension. Accreditation may be suspended when, in the judgment of ACICS, an institution or one of the campuses within the institution no longer complies with the Accreditation Criteria. By way of illustration, ACICS may issue an order of suspension for reasons such as the following:

(a) The institution or any of its components (e.g., a branch or new program), is evaluated as directed by ACICS and is determined not to be in compliance with the Accreditation Criteria.
(b) Periodic required reports filed by the institution or campus fail to conform to Council reporting requirements.
(c) The institution or campus makes substantial or significant change, without notice to ACICS, in its operation, structure, governance, ownership, control, location, facilities, or programs of study.
(d) The institution or campus fails to respond to or cooperate with attempts by the Council to make arrangements for a site evaluation.
(e) The institution or campus has deviated from the Accreditation Criteria or other ACICS directives.
(f) The institution or campus fails to disclose any agreements, options, or other contractual arrangements between the institution and other parties which bear on the management or control of the main campus or its non-main campuses.

In all cases of suspension, the Council retains discretion to specify whether and under what conditions the institution may apply for an initial grant of accreditation or inclusion of a branch campus.

2-3-403. Procedural Guarantees for Withdrawal by Suspension. In all cases where accreditation is subject to withdrawal by suspension under Section 2-3-402, the institution is afforded the following procedural guarantees:

(a) Opportunity for a review or hearing before ACICS on all material issues in controversy.
(b) Written prior notice of the proceedings, the charges levied, and the standards by which the institution/campus ultimately is to be judged.
(c) A decision on the record alone and a statement of reasons for the ultimate decision.
(d) A right of appeal as provided in Section 2-3-600.
(e) If the Review Board of Appeals affirms the withdrawal of accreditation by way of suspension, the appeal shall be deemed to be finally disposed of upon issuance of the decision and publication will be made (see Section 2-3-607).
2-3-500 – COUNCIL REVIEW OR HEARING PROCEDURES

All institutional reviews will be in writing unless the Council exercises its sole discretion to require a hearing in person before the Council. The following procedures will govern reviews to be conducted by and hearings to be held before the Council:

(a) The institution shall have the right to respond with evidence and facts concerning the areas of noncompliance with which it has been charged, to raise all reasonable questions, and to present evidence in opposition to or extenuation of the charges of noncompliance. Such written evidence must be submitted by the date prescribed by the Council unless the institution can show that such information was not available before the submission date and that failure to make a timely submission was outside of the institution’s control.

(b) In the event that the Council requires a hearing in person, the acceptance of an in-person hearing must be made by a date determined by the Council, which will not be less than 10 days from the date of receipt of the letter of notification of show-cause directive. The acceptance of the in-person hearing must be in writing and signed by the institution’s CEO. Upon receipt of the acceptance of the hearing, the Council will notify the institution of the procedures to follow to prepare for the hearing. The institution may send one or more representatives, including legal or financial counsel, to present its argument in opposition to or extenuation of the Council action. The Council transcribes all such hearings for its records. A copy of the transcript is available to the institution upon request.

2-3-501. Institutional Review or Hearing Format. Institutional reviews conducted by and hearings before the Council resulting from a show-cause directive and involving areas of noncompliance other than or in addition to financial concerns will take place before a panel of commissioners.

The Council will designate a review or hearing panel of at least three commissioners to review the written response or hear the presentation of the institution, if applicable. The panel will present its findings and its recommended action to the full Council, which will make the final decision within the time frames specified in Title II, Chapter 3.

2-3-502. Financial Reviews or Hearings. All reviews conducted by or hearings before the Council for financial concerns only will be deliberated or heard by a panel of at least three commissioners, which will include at least one representative of the Financial Review Committee. The panel will present its findings and its recommended action to the full Council, which will make the final decision within the time frames specified in Title II, Chapter 3.

2-3-600 – REVIEW BOARD APPEAL PROCESS

For institutions that appeal a denial action (see Sections 2-3-301 and 2-3-302) or a suspension action (see Section 2-3-402) to the Review Board of Appeals, the Council has established procedures designed to provide due process.

2-3-601. Purpose and Authority of Review Board. The Review Board of Appeals is a separate, independent body established by the Council for the purpose of hearing appeals by institutions for actions specified in Sections 2-3-301, 2-3-302, and 2-3-402.

2-3-602. Appointment of Members. The Review Board of Appeals shall consist of a pool of 15 persons, all of whom have had experience in accreditation, who are appointed to three-year terms. An appointed person shall not have been a commissioner within one year prior to appointment. The Review Board of Appeals shall consist of at least two academic representatives, two administrative representatives, and three public members, as defined in Appendix A.
Depending on the scope and complexity of the matter or institution being reviewed, the Council will designate a Review Board panel of three to seven persons from the entire Review Board to hear an appeal from an institution. The Council also will designate one member of the Review Board panel to serve as chair. The selection and actions of the panel are subject to ACICS conflict of interest policies. A Review Board panel will consist of at least one academic, one administrative, and one public representative as defined in Appendix A.

2-3-603. Jurisdiction and Authority. The Review Board of Appeals is empowered to review, upon notice of appeal timely filed, actions specified in Sections 2-3-301, 2-3-302, and 2-3-402. The Review Board panel has the authority to:

(a) affirm the decision of the Council;
(b) amend the decision of the Council;
(c) remand the case to the Council with recommendations for further consideration.

The Review Board panel may amend the decision of the Council or remand the case to the Council for further consideration only if it finds the decision to be one of the following:

(a) arbitrary, capricious, or otherwise in substantial disregard of the Accreditation Criteria; or
(b) not supported by substantial evidence in the record on which the Council took the negative action.

The Review Board panel cannot amend the decision of the Council or remand the decision based on argument by the appellant that the Council action was disproportionate to the violations cited. The Review Board panel is further limited in that it has no jurisdiction or authority concerning the reasonableness of the Accreditation Criteria.

A determination by the Review Board panel to affirm the Council’s decision is effective immediately upon the Review Board panel’s action. A determination by the Review Board panel to amend or remand the Council’s decision will be referred to the Council for implementation and further action.

Except as noted below, Review Board panels will not consider any evidence that was not in the record before the Council. Documents reviewed by or available to evaluation teams are not considered to be part of the record unless they are appended to the team report or the institution submits them to the Council as part of the institution’s response to the evaluation team report.

An exception to the policy on evidence will be made where a final adverse action is based solely on the failure of an institution to comply with the standards of financial stability. In that case, the institution on one occasion may seek review of significant financial information that was unavailable to the institution prior to the determination of the adverse action and that bears materially on the financial deficiencies identified by the Council. The Financial Review Committee (FRC) will determine if the new financial information submitted by the institution is significant and material. If these criteria are met, the FRC will provide a report of its review to the Council, which then will reconsider its adverse action in light of the new information. If the Council reaffirms the adverse action, the FRC report and the result of the Council’s recommendation will become part of the record under review before the Review Board.

The panel acts on behalf of the entire Review Board. Therefore, a decision of a Review Board panel is final and will not be considered further by the full Review Board. In cases remanded to the Council for reconsideration, the Review Board panel will identify specific issues that the Council must address. With respect to a Review Board panel decision that is implemented by or remanded to the Council, the Council will act in a manner consistent with the Review Board panel’s decisions or instructions.

2-3-604. Request for Appeal. To exercise its right of appeal, the institution must file a request for a hearing before the Review Board of Appeals and submit the appropriate fee within a time frame
determined by the Council, normally not more than 10 business days from date of receipt of notification of the denial or suspension action. The request for a hearing must be in writing and signed by the institution’s CEO. Upon receipt of the request for a hearing and the appropriate fee, pursuant to the Schedule of Fees, the Council will notify the institution of procedures to follow in preparing for it.

2-3-605. Hearing of Appeal. The hearing will be held at a time and place designated by the chair of the Review Board panel. Three members will constitute a quorum.

If the appealing institution intends to submit a written appeal brief or statement of points, it must be received by the Review Board panel and the Council at least 15 business days prior to the hearing date. The Council’s reply brief must be received by the panel and the appealing institution at least seven business days prior to the hearing. The Review Board panel chair will preside at the hearing and rule on all procedural matters. There will be no right to cross-examine the opposing party or its representatives.

The Council transcribes all Review Board hearings for its own records. A copy of the transcript is available to the institution upon request.

The hearing shall be as informal as may be reasonable and appropriate under the circumstances. Both the Council and the institution may appear by or with counsel or other representative. The institution may waive a personal appearance, in which case the matter will be handled solely on briefs.

The chair of the Review Board panel may promulgate such additional rules of procedure for the scheduling and conduct of hearings as are consistent with these procedures.

2-3-606. Decision of the Review Board. Every decision must have the concurrence of the majority of the Review Board panel. Within a reasonable time after the conclusion of the hearing, the hearing panel shall issue in writing its decision to the Council with a statement of its reasons and recommendation, if any.


If the Review Board panel affirms the prior decision of the Council, there is no further remedy available within these procedures. The Council’s decision is final, and immediate publication is automatic. If the Review Board panel remands the matter, the case shall be deemed to be finally disposed of when the Council takes final action on remand.

2-3-700 – COMPLAINTS AND ADVERSE INFORMATION

Procedurally apart from Council actions heretofore described and explained, ACICS receives and is obligated to investigate legitimate complaints about an institution from any source, that in any way pertain to ACICS criteria.

Also, ACICS periodically receives and may investigate information from federal or state agencies or other accrediting agencies, or through public media sources, which may indicate possible criteria violations. Adverse information may include, but is not limited to, low completion rates, low placement rates, high default rates, tuition refund problems, negative audits or program reviews, and governmental agency investigations.

When ACICS staff, with delegated authority to do so, determines that a complaint or adverse information warrants investigation, it will notify the institution’s CEO in writing of the complaint or adverse information, and a copy of the information will be provided. The institution is requested to submit to the Council office its version of the conditions or circumstances which led to the complaint or adverse information. The complainant also will be informed in writing that the institution has been contacted and has been requested to provide information. Any governmental agency providing adverse
information to the Council may be informed at the discretion of the Council of the action taken on the adverse information.

The role of the Council in resolving complaints and investigating adverse information is to determine whether the institution is out of compliance with one or more accrediting standards to which the complaint is addressed or to which the adverse information applies. After such determination, ACICS may do one of the following:

(a) dismiss the complaint or terminate further investigation of the adverse information;
(b) postpone a final action on the complaint or adverse information if there is evidence that the institution is making progress to rectify the situation or if more investigation is necessary; or
(c) notify the institution that, on the basis of information available, ACICS has determined that the institution is failing to comply with the Accreditation Criteria and that the institution is:
   (i) issued a compliance warning
   (ii) directed to show cause why its accreditation should not be suspended, revoked, or otherwise conditioned;
   (iii) directed to submit a report to ACICS detailing plans for rectifying the area(s) of noncompliance; or
   (iv) directed to undergo a special on‐site evaluation.

The Council will inform the complainant of its determination and the disposition of the complaint.

2‐3‐800 – SPECIAL AND FACT VISITS

The Council reserves the right to initiate special on‐site evaluation visits to or request specific reports from an institution at any time, both of which are to be completed under conditions and within a time frame determined by ACICS. Refusal of an institution to respond to or cooperate with such requests shall be grounds for suspension of its grant of accreditation.

At any time ACICS has substantive evidence or information that an institution is in jeopardy of having its eligibility status with a federal or state agency or its accreditation status with another accrediting agency conditioned, ACICS may direct a special on‐site evaluation visit to that institution. The purpose of the visit will be to ensure that the students in the institution are not being harmed educationally because of the institution’s alleged noncompliance with federal or state statutes or regulations or another accrediting agency’s standards and criteria.

The Council also may direct a Fast Assessment and Compliance Team (FACT) visit to investigate and report on alleged improper practices at ACICS institutions.

The Council retains discretion to determine the size and composition of special and FACT visit teams and the length and breadth of the evaluation. In making these decisions, the Council will consider the issues and factors that prompted the visit, the size of the institution, and the nature of the institution’s offerings.

2-3-900 – DEBARMENT

The Council may bar a person or entity, including spouses and closely related family groups as defined in Section 2-2-401, from being an owner, senior administrator, or governing board member of an ACICS-accredited institution if that person or entity was found guilty of fraudulent or criminal behavior; was debarred by a government agency or an accrediting agency; or was an owner, senior administrator, or governing board member of an institution that lost its accreditation as a result of a denial or suspension action or that closed without providing a teach-out or refunds to students matriculating at the time of closure.
The Council will notify the persons or entities whom it intends to bar as the result of denial or suspension action within four months following the loss of the institution’s accreditation. It will notify the persons or entities whom it intends to bar as the result of the closing of an institution within a reasonable period of time following the closure. In each case, the Council will forward an intent to bar notice by email to the last address known to the Council, unless the Council has received updated email information following the institution’s closure or loss of accreditation. Those individuals or entities will be considered notified when the Council has forwarded the intent to bar notice in accordance with these procedures.

The intent to bar notice will inform the persons or entities that they are entitled to present information and materials in writing to appeal the intent to bar at the next scheduled meeting of the Council. The notice will stipulate that if they intend to appeal the intent to bar, they must inform the Council office in writing within ten business days of receipt of the notice as to whether they will appeal the intent to bar in writing or in person; an in-person hearing is subject to such fees as contained in the ACICS Schedule of Fees. The Council’s decision is final if the person or entity elects not to appeal within 10 business days of the Council notification.

A debarment order may be issued by the Council as a result of its consideration of the facts presented in the appeal. The Council’s decision is final. It will be sent to the persons or entities by email and certified mail following their appeal before the Council.

The Council retains final discretion to establish the terms and length of the debarment. The length of debarment will be for a period of at least three years; however, it may vary depending on the circumstances that led to the debarment decision. Individual circumstances may justify a longer period of debarment.
TITLE III  EVALUATION STANDARDS

Chapter 1  General Standards Applicable to All Institutions

INTRODUCTION

This section of the Accreditation Criteria comprises the most heavily weighted part of the accrediting process. Chapter 1 states and explains the minimum operational and educational practices expected of all institutions, whatever methodology and mode of educational delivery is used and wherever the institution provides educational activities. Inasmuch as these are minimum expectations, extreme deviation from them is not permitted. The Council, while encouraging innovation at institutions and attempting to be somewhat flexible in its interpretation of these standards, does not grant waivers on criteria pertaining to good educational practice.

Chapters 2–6 contain additional criteria which are applicable to institutions offering nondegree programs and programs culminating in occupational associate’s, academic associate’s, bachelor’s, and master’s degrees. The Council recognizes that some requirements of these standards may not be appropriate for entities, and it may waive specific standards on a case-by-case basis.

3-1-100 – MISSION: PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

Every institution must have a mission which is its specific purpose for existing. The mission must include a mission statement and a set of objectives which together accomplish the purpose of the institution. The objectives should be devoted substantially to career-related education and should be reasonable for the program of instruction, mode of delivery, and facilities of the institution.

Institutions may exhibit a variety of missions, ranging from those which have a singleness of purpose to those which are multi-purpose.

3-1-101. Disclosure. The mission statement of the institution, its purpose, and its supporting objectives must be stated in the catalog and in other publications readily available to the public. The mission statement must be expressed in terms readily understandable by a prospective student, parents, the public, and other educational institutions.

3-1-102. Implementation. The institution is measured both in terms of its stated purpose and in terms of its conscientious endeavor to fulfill this purpose. The faculty, financial resources, physical plant, administration, management, and educational activities shall be appropriate and committed to successful implementation of the stated mission of the institution.

3-1-110 – CAMPUS EFFECTIVENESS

An important indication of the overall effectiveness of an ACICS-accredited institution is the degree to which it meets the mission, objectives, and educational goals it has identified. Each ACICS-accredited main and branch campus shall develop and implement a Campus Effectiveness Plan (CEP) that is consistent with its mission and objectives. The CEP shall identify how a campus plans to assess and continuously improve its overall educational operations and how it plans to meet the educational and occupational objectives of its programs, taking into consideration its review of all critical organizational functions such as admissions, recruitment, financial aid, and student services.

For the CEP, the following elements, at a minimum, shall be evaluated and reported for achievement of outcomes, at both the campus and program levels:

1. retention rates;
2. placement rates;
3. graduation rates;
4. current student satisfaction;
5. graduate satisfaction;
6. employer satisfaction; and
7. student learning outcomes.

3-1-111. Development of the CEP. The effectiveness plan for each campus shall be described in a written CEP document that complies with Appendix K.

3-1-112. Implementation and Monitoring of the CEP. Each campus shall establish a process for developing, reviewing, and monitoring the CEP. Each campus shall document that progress reports, completed at least biannually, related to completion of activities and changes in data and information for each of the elements identified in the CEP are prepared.

3-1-113. Evaluation of the CEP. Each campus shall evaluate the CEP, its goals, and the effectiveness of activities completed at least annually. The annual evaluation will involve comparison of outcomes with baseline rates and goals for each of the elements measured after completion of planned activities. Data for historical outcomes shall be maintained and included in the report to provide a basis for evaluating the achievement of goals for the various elements of operations and campus and program effectiveness over time.

3-1-200 – ORGANIZATION

Each institution should have an organizational structure designed to promote among all staff and faculty a spirit of understanding, cooperation, and responsibility. Performance standards and monitoring controls need to be employed to insure adequate administrative functioning. The annual budget expenditures should be adequate to properly carry out the stated educational objectives of the institution.

3-1-201. Disclosure. The governance, control, and corporate organization of the institution shall be stated in appropriate publications, including the catalog, together with the names of the trustees, directors, administrators, and officers.

3-1-202. Institutional Integrity and Capability. The integrity and capability of an institution is manifested by the professional competence, experience, personal responsibility, and ethical practices demonstrated by all individuals comprising the ownership, control, or management.

An institution must assume full responsibility for the actions, statements, and conduct of its representatives and must, therefore, select each of them with the utmost care, provide them with adequate training, and arrange for constant and proper supervision and evaluation of their work. The Council considers the following to be important:

(a) Emphasis shall be placed upon the efficiency and effectiveness of the overall administration of the institution. Attention shall be given to educational activities, admissions, student financial aid, financial operations, plant and equipment, student services, and compliance with applicable local, state, and federal laws. The degree of institutional compliance with the criteria in these areas is a measure of the administrative capability of the chief on-site administrator of a main campus or branch campus.

(b) The institution must maintain written evidence that faculty and staff members clearly understand their duties and responsibilities, know the person to whom they report, and understand the standards by which the success of their work is measured. A copy of the document describing these terms and conditions shall be given to the faculty and staff member...
and a copy maintained by the institution. The administration must maintain documentation of the evaluation of the faculty and staff.

(c) In the administrative organization of the institution, the professional integrity of the faculty and staff shall be respected. Administrative decisions shall not inhibit the academic freedom of the faculty. The institution shall adopt a policy assuring academic freedom and communicate the policy to all faculty.

(d) An institution shall establish, publish, and implement appropriate grievance policies and procedures for considering complaints received from students, employees, and other interested parties. The grievance procedure for students shall be published in the institutional catalog or student handbook and shall include the name and address of ACICS.

3-1-203. Data Integrity. All data reported to ACICS for any purpose are expected to reflect an accurate and verifiable portrayal of institutional performance and are subject to review for integrity, accuracy, and completeness.

3-1-204. Financial Stability. The financial well-being of an institution requires constant oversight by competent managers.

The institution shall have adequate revenues and assets to meet its responsibilities, to ensure continuity of service, and to accomplish its mission. Budgetary practices should reflect a balanced application of resources to operations; the amount of expenses and debt must not burden the educational objectives of the institution; the proportion of the budget allocated to instructional programs must be adequate; and the financial profile of the institution must support the intent of its objectives.

3-1-300 – ADMINISTRATION

Each institution must coordinate its administrative functions to best serve its educational mission. All staff should be well trained to carry out administrative functions. Detailed recordkeeping enhances the management of the institution.

3-1-301. Management. Each institution shall have a CEO. Moreover, each institution also shall have a qualified on-site administrator at the main campus and at all branches. This person must be made known to ACICS and shall be responsible for the implementation of the stated mission as determined by the institution’s governing body. The staff continuously shall evaluate the programs of study, student activity program, guidance services, financial aid services, instructional procedures and resources, and other aspects of the educational program of the institution. The CEO shall seek to improve the educational program as a result of such evaluation. A current copy of the Accreditation Criteria shall be maintained by each main and branch location and shall be available to faculty and staff.

3-1-302. Evidence of Degrees. Institutions listing degrees of staff members in the catalog shall have on file appropriate evidence of the degrees. Copies of either transcripts or diplomas are acceptable.

3-1-303. Records. Careful recordkeeping is crucial to the smooth day-to-day operation of an institution. The data from these records are important to the institution for future planning, to students for informational purposes, and to evaluation teams during school visits. All such records should be maintained at each institutional site or shall be available at each site during evaluation visits. The Council expects at least the following:

(a) Adequate records shall be kept by each institution relative to administrative operations. These include financial aid activities, admissions, curriculum, accreditation and licensure, guidance, instructional resources, supplies and equipment, school plant, faculty and staff, student activities, and student personnel.
(b) For all students admitted under an ATB determination, the institution shall maintain records of the validated test scores, initial and periodic academic and career advising, and any other factors used by the institution to support its admissions determination.

(c) For institutions admitting students under an ATB determination, documentation shall be maintained to evidence the relationship between test cut-off scores from one of the USDE Federal Student Aid approved admissions test and successful academic or employment outcomes.

Such records could include such data as admissions rate (acceptances versus rejections), completion rate of those enrolled, general placement rate, or specific career placement rate.

The test score should predict successful completion of the program. Institutions must develop longitudinal data comparing the test cut-off score(s) utilized for acceptance with the eventual success of students.

An institution admitting a high percentage of applicants based on testing and losing a comparably high percentage of those students before completion (even allowing for factors other than ability) may not be using the appropriate test to measure aptitude, or the cut-off score for admission is too low, or both. The use of the minimum cut-off scores determined by the USDE will not, in and of itself, satisfy the requirements of this section.

(d) For high school graduates or those with high school equivalency, the institution shall have on file evidence that the student has received a high school diploma or its equivalent. The student’s record also may include personal background information, evidence of other educational experiences (including certificates, diplomas, or degrees earned), or information about the ability of the student to benefit from the education offered, including any aptitude testing information or recommendations from other sources.

(e) A permanent academic record (transcript) of the student’s progress shall be maintained. Compatible with the institution’s mission, the transcript shall indicate student accomplishment in terms of clock hours, units of credit, or some other recognized system. The grading system used shall be fully explained on the transcript and must be consistent with that appearing in the institutional catalog.

(f) All records pertaining to students shall be safely protected. Records shall be stored consistently in a manner that provides protection against misuse, misplacement, damage, destruction, or theft. Acceptable methods of protecting records from theft, fire, water damage, or other possible loss include electronic records management systems and software appropriately fire-rated file cabinets (that can be and are locked when not being used); a central location such as a vault, the entirety of which is protected; and printout records or other hard copies of records protectively stored off the premises.

(g) Certain records shall be maintained by the institution for a specified period of time. The institution shall adopt and publish a policy on the responsibility and authority of the institution to properly maintain and retain such records. At a minimum, the policy should address the following document retention requirements:

(i) Academic records shall be maintained permanently (see Glossary: Record, Permanent Academic);

(ii) Admissions and advisement records shall be kept for at least five years from graduation or the last date of attendance (see Glossary: Record, Admissions and Advisement); and

(iii) Financial aid records shall be maintained according to the record retention policies and guidelines established by the funding source (see Glossary: Record, Financial Aid).
The institution shall comply with its published policy on records maintenance and retention.

**3-1-400 – STUDENT RELATIONS**

Each institution should strive to ensure that its relations with students always reflect the highest ethical standards and conform to all applicable laws and regulations. Each institution also is required to develop a program of student services that is consistent with its stated mission, including services provided for students attending branch campuses and learning sites. Such services should support the educational program and reflect the institution’s concern for the welfare of the student.

**3-1-410 – ADMISSIONS AND RECRUITMENT**

It is up to an institution to establish its own admissions criteria. It is the responsibility of ACICS to ensure that all who are enrolled are accorded equal educational opportunity.

The monitoring of the activities of an institution’s employees, vendors, contractors, or agents in the referral, recruiting, evaluation, and admissions processes is the responsibility of the institution. The activities of these persons must be supervised by the institution, which may not delegate these activities to anyone whose economic incentives are to recruit prospects through means that are unethical or subject to public criticism or to admit ill-prepared applicants. The institution may not contract, directly or indirectly, with third parties who are generally unfamiliar with the institution. “Non-employees” are independent contractors who are not considered “employees” under the U.S. Internal Revenue Code. Institutions participating in Title IV programs must be aware of regulations imposed by the USDE as they apply to recruiting practices.

**3-1-411. Admissions.** The admissions policy shall conform to the institution’s mission, shall be publicly stated, and shall be administered as written. The following minimums apply:

(a) The requirements for students admitted to programs leading to a certificate, diploma, or degree shall include graduation from high school or its equivalent. Foreign transcripts of international students seeking admission must be evaluated by AACRAO International Education Services (prior to 2016), a member of the Association of International Credential Evaluators (AICE), or a member of the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES) for equivalency with graduation from high school and eligibility to enter college or university in the U.S. Students admitted under the ATB classification (see Section 3-1-303(b)(c)), may only be admitted by passing an independently administered USDE-approved ATB test.

(b) It is the responsibility of the institution to maintain student records which reflect the requirements for admission of all students.

(c) Institutions are not precluded from admitting, under different requirements, students who are beyond the age of compulsory school attendance or who may be otherwise specially circumstanced, such as:

(i) having financial sponsorship through contractual arrangements with public or private organizations;

(ii) having identifiable needs requiring remedial instruction as a supplement to the regular curricula;

(iii) participating in innovative postsecondary programs specially described to ACICS;

(iv) being enrolled in individual courses not leading to an academic credential.

**3-1-412. Recruitment.** Recruiting shall be ethical and compatible with the educational objectives of the institution. The allocation of an institution’s financial resources for purposes of recruitment shall be consistent with the stated mission of the institution. The following minimums apply:
(a) An institution shall ensure that any person or entity engaged in admissions or recruitment activities on its behalf is communicating current and accurate information regarding courses and programs, student achievement disclosures (see Section 3-1-704), services, tuition, terms, and operating policies. The institution must maintain documentation that demonstrates that it systematically monitors its recruitment activities.

(b) No prospective student names obtained as a result of a survey, canvass, promise of future employment or income while a student, or other marketing activity by an institution may be used for recruitment purposes unless the name of that institution is clearly identified and purposes of such activity are communicated to the respondent. This does not preclude the use of surveys or other studies to determine the employment needs and the educational desires of the local community.

(c) An institution shall conform to the laws and regulations of each of the states in which it operates and shall ensure that each of its representatives is properly licensed or registered as required by the laws of that state.

(d) Representatives of an institution shall use only those titles which accurately reflect their actual duties and responsibilities. Recruitment and enrollment personnel may not be designated as counselors or advisors and may not make final decisions regarding financial aid eligibility, packaging, awarding, and disbursement.

(e) Referrals are permitted, and the referrer may be paid a fee so long as the referrer provides full disclosure and does not misrepresent the purposes of soliciting a prospective referral and such payments do not violate state or federal laws.

(f) All recruiters must be supervised by the institution’s administration to ensure that their activities are in compliance with all applicable standards.

3-1-413. Transfer of Credit. An institution shall evaluate and consider awarding proper academic credit for credits earned only at institutions that are either accredited by agencies recognized by the USDE, or for internationally based institutions, recognized by the respective government as institutions of higher education. The institution shall establish and adhere to a systematic method for evaluating and awarding academic credit for those courses that satisfy current program course requirements, including an evaluation of all foreign transcripts by AACRAO International Education Services (prior to 2016), a member of Association of International Credential Evaluators (AICE), or a member of the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES) prior to the evaluation and award. Written policies and procedures must clearly outline the process by which transfer of academic credit is awarded. The institution shall disclose in its catalog its policies on transfer of credit, including a statement of the criteria established by the institution by which a determination is made with regard to accepting credits from another institution and if applicable, a list of institutions with which the institution has established articulation agreements. In addition, the institution shall disclose in its catalog the transferability of the credits in the programs that are offered.

3-1-414. Enrollment Agreements. All institutions must use an enrollment agreement for each enrolled student which clearly outlines the financial obligations of both the institution and the student. The agreement must outline all program-related tuition and fees as well as the scheduled month and year of expected graduation, and must be signed by the student and the appropriate school representative, and a copy provided to the student.

3-1-420 – STANDARDS OF SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS

Each institution shall establish and administer measures of Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) for all students as referenced in Appendix D.
3-1-421. **Compliance.** The institution complies with the requirements of Appendix D.

3-1-422. **Documenting Compliance.** The institution documents compliance with its SAP policy.

3-1-423. **Oversight.** The institution encourages and assists students who are experiencing difficulty making SAP in their programs.

### 3-1-430 – TUITION AND FEES

3-1-431. **Institutionally Financed Grants, Scholarships and Loans.** The Council recognizes that most accredited institutions offer or administer grants, scholarships, and loans for students. Institutions must meet appropriate guidelines for such programs in order to ensure their legitimacy. Participation in ethical institutional grant (see Appendix E), institutional loan, and scholarship programs requires adherence to the following:

(a) In addition to administering federal or state student aid programs, institutions may offer the following types of student financial aid:

   (i) grants funded by the institution and awarded to all students within a qualifying category or to all students who demonstrate a need in accordance with published standards;

   (ii) scholarships funded by the institution or a third-party and administered by the institution to provide aid to students who demonstrate academic achievement in accordance with published standards; and

   (iii) loans funded by the institution and available equally to all students.

(b) Institutionally financed or administered grants, scholarships and loans must be described in the current catalog with a description of the criteria for the award, the application procedures and deadlines, and amounts that may be awarded. All information must avoid false, misleading or exaggerated statements.

(c) Institutionally financed loans may vary in amount depending on the student’s need. The terms and conditions for loans, including forbearance and repayment, must be described in the current catalog. All institutionally financed loans must be collected in accordance with sound and aggressive business practices for the collection of student loans. Institutions must counsel students concerning their loan repayment obligations.

3-1-432. **Tuition and Charges.** Institutions may charge varying amounts of tuition and fees for different programs. All charges should be consistent for similarly circumstanced students enrolling at the same time and in the same programs, however, and detailed financial records should indicate at all times the financial obligation of the student to the institution. The following are minimum expectations:

(a) The tuition and other charges, including the period for which the student is financially obligated, shall be clearly stated in the catalog of the institution. The existence of any separate or comparable publication containing tuition rates must be referenced specifically in the catalog. The schedule of charges must be uniformly administered to similarly circumstanced students.

(b) The financial records of the students shall clearly show the charges and dates for the posting of tuition, fees, and other charges; the payments and dates of payment; and the balance after each transaction.

(c) Announcements of changes in tuition or fees must state the effective date of the change and be uniformly administered.

(d) Terms of payment may be varied by the institution so long as the tuition charges are uniformly administered.

3-1-433. **Refund Policy.** The institution must have a fair and equitable refund policy that is applicable to all students and that is published in the institution’s catalog. Specific federal or state policies may apply.
3-1-434. Administration of Student Financial Aid. Participation in state or federal student financial aid programs requires serious administrative responsibility. The Council expects all institutions participating in such programs to be knowledgeable of and in compliance with applicable laws and regulations. The following requirements govern how such activities are evaluated by ACICS:

(a) An institution participating in student financial aid programs shall designate at least one competent person at the site to administer student financial aid. The extent of this activity and the personnel needed shall be governed by the size and classification of the institution. The person who determines the amount of student awards cannot be responsible for disbursing those awards.

(b) The person or persons assigned to administer student financial aid programs must in all cases be a part of the administration. Administrative personnel involved in student recruitment as their major activity shall not have the final decision-making authority in the approval or awarding of student financial aid.

(c) There shall be professional awareness on the part of the financial aid administrator as shown by membership and participation in state, regional, or national financial aid associations and by other educational activities designed to keep the administrator up to date on procedures and changes in the field.

(d) Institutions shall document that students are counseled concerning their student loan repayment obligations.

3-1-435. Cash Discounts. Any institution providing discounts for cash received in advance of the normal payment schedule must have a written policy. That policy must be provided in writing to all student applicants prior to enrollment. The institution must demonstrate that the policy:

(a) is available to all students at the institution; and

(b) bases the size of the discount on the financial benefit the institution receives from the payment of cash earlier than otherwise would be required under the institution’s normal tuition payment schedule or applicable retail installment contract.

3-1-440 – STUDENT SERVICES

3-1-441. Advising. Each institution shall designate at least one person with experience to advise students on academic problems and employment opportunities. The extent of such activity, and the personnel assigned to it, shall be determined by the size, classification, and admissions standards of the institution, the characteristics and location of students, and the means of communication with them. Orientation activities shall assist new students in adapting to the institution. The following are minimum expectations:

(a) A system of educational and occupational advising shall be available to students and shall be provided on a periodic basis to ATB students enrolled (see Section 3-1-303(b)).

(b) Institutions shall emphasize retention and program completion for all students through activities that take into account their academic and socioeconomic characteristics.

(c) Institutions shall provide employment assistance and document activity. An institution shall not guarantee employment or the starting salary of its graduates. All institutions that use placement percentages or salary projections as part of their recruiting activities shall maintain data on all graduates, including the percentage receiving jobs and the percentage receiving jobs in the career field for which they were trained. Institutions also should keep data on students who do not graduate but who become employed on their own or with the institution’s assistance.

An institution is encouraged to provide placement assistance, when requested, to graduates of other ACICS-accredited institutions who are relocating to a new community.
3-1-442. **Extracurricular Activities.** Institutions that sponsor or conduct programs of extracurricular activities shall base such programs on well-defined purposes. These programs shall be designed primarily to serve the educational needs of the students, and the institution shall provide guidance and supervision for them.

3-1-500 – EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

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 some of 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:

(a) the development of the educational program of the institution;
(b) the selection of course materials, instructional equipment, and other educational resources;
(c) systematic evaluation and revision of the curriculum;
(d) assessment of student learning outcomes; and
(e) 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, curricula must contain the necessary course work to afford students the opportunity to obtain the minimum skills and competencies 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, such accreditation must be obtained by the institution in a timely manner. The institution must provide and document notification to students as to:

(a) which programs hold specialized or programmatic accreditation;
(b) 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 online programs, this information must be provided for all states from which the institution enrolls students; and
(c) 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 or Study Abroad Activities.** An institution may enter into formal education or study abroad relationships with eligible institutions outside its home country in accordance with the requirements in Appendix J.
3-1-505. **Distance Education Review.** Each institution engaged in the distance education mode of delivery must meet the requirements of Appendix H.

3-1-506. **Occupational and Avocational Programs.** The evaluation of these programs, as defined in the Glossary, will be consistent with the guidelines of Appendix M.

3-1-510 – PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION, PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT, AND EVALUATION

3-1-511. **Program Administration.** The administration of the academic programs shall be assigned to individuals whose academic or experiential qualifications are related to the programs of study. The amount of time devoted to the administration of the program(s) must be commensurate with the size and scope of the institution and its program offerings.

Within the administrative structure of the institution, program administrators or department heads shall have authority and responsibility for the development and administration of the programs and have adequate time and resources to fulfill these responsibilities.

3-1-512. **Program Planning.** Educational activities shall be consistent with the institution’s mission and objectives. The credibility and integrity of an institution shall be reflected by the manner in which its mission and objectives correlate with the educational opportunities made available to students.

The Council recognizes the legitimacy of various modes of educational delivery. An institution using various modes of delivery should demonstrate overall effectiveness and quality consistent with the criteria (see Appendix H and Glossary: Distance Learning and Independent Study). The following standards apply:

(a) The formation of policies and design of educational programs should involve students, graduates, administrators, faculty, and other interested parties such as advisory committees. This practice also should serve as an evaluation process to determine effectiveness and relevance when the institution relies upon curricula, courses, courseware, or coursework that is designed, leased, or owned by another entity or provided by or through a network of entities.

(b) Flexibility in organization and administration shall be provided to serve varying groups and situations. Provisions shall be made for individual differences among students in the learning applications, learning environments, and modes of instructional delivery available to students.

(c) The use of community resources shall be varied in each program and shall be utilized to enhance student enrichment and potential career opportunities (see Glossary: Community Resources).

3-1-513. **Program Development.** The educational programs shall evidence a well-organized sequence of appropriate subjects leading to an occupational objective, an academic credential, or both. The following apply:

(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 externships, institutions are required to develop a written and mutually signed agreement that outlines the arrangement between the institution and the site, including specific learning objectives, course requirements, and evaluation criteria. The Council’s expectations for detailed syllabi, independent study, and externships are outlined in the Glossary.

(b) The courses offered shall be available when needed by the student in the normal pursuit of a program of study. Prerequisites must be indicated. The prerequisite system must ensure proper
qualifications of students in any given class and provide an increasing level of difficulty as the student progresses.

Institutions may record student progress in clock hours or credit hours as defined in the Glossary. When appropriate, special consideration should be given to remediation and ESL programs (see Appendix F).

**3-1-514. Program Evaluation.** The faculty shall participate in a systematic process of continuous curriculum evaluation and revision. Institutions are encouraged to consider curriculum changes designed to serve students’ needs that may be determined by community surveys or other fact-finding procedures relating to educational or employer needs.

**3-1-515. Specialized Accreditation.** If a program is accredited by a specialized accreditor recognized by the USDE, or, for foreign institutions, the government or appropriately recognized organization providing specialized accreditation, the CEO of the institution shall attest to ACICS and provide documentation that it is in compliance with the standards of the specialized accreditor.

**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/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. Therefore, institutions 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. The formula for calculating the number of quarter credit hours for each course is \((\text{hours of lecture}/10) + (\text{hours of lab}/20) + (\text{hours of externship}/30)\); or

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

The syllabus for each course must provide appropriate content and out-of-class learning activities to support the academic credit awarded for the course. Many courses are a combination of lecture, lab, and practicum. Therefore, the institution should be very careful in allocating the number of hours of each in a particular course.

A “clock (contact) hour” includes a minimum instructional time of 50 minutes of supervised or directed instruction and appropriate break(s). Therefore, when calculating conversions from clock to credit hours or allocating credit for courses, institutions must take great care to ensure that scheduled breaks are educationally appropriate. Long periods of instruction with unusually short or no breaks are not acceptable. The institution has the burden of convincing the Council that the breaks are sufficiently long and frequent for the program being taught. Thus, it is rare for an institution to be able to divide by 50 in calculating the credit-hour equivalent of contact hours; usually, the denominator should be 60 or something between 50 and 60.

(b) 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/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.

Courses offered in nontraditional formats must be structured to ensure that students have
sufficient opportunity for preparation, reflection, and analysis concerning learned subject
matter. Institutions should be aware that federal law requires a minimum number of weeks per
academic year for Title IV eligibility purposes. The USDE uses eligibility criteria and definitions
for Title IV disbursements that may be different from those in the Accreditation Criteria.

(c) Institutions may award academic credit to students who demonstrate competency in a subject
area based on their academic, occupational, or personal experiences. The following expectations
apply:
(i) Institutions shall establish and adhere to a systematic method for evaluating and awarding
academic credit for those experiences (e.g., experiential learning, advanced academic
standing, credit by examination) that satisfy current program course requirements.
(ii) Institutions must maintain documentation to support that credit hours awarded are
appropriate based on the assessment of the knowledge, skills, or competencies acquired.

3-1-517. Course Scheduling. Courses must be scheduled in such a way as to be educationally
appropriate for the academic background of the students served, the type of the coursework involved,
and the method of educational delivery. The Council will review the number of minutes of instruction
provided, the appropriateness of the length of the breaks between classes, the number of classroom
hours per week, the expectation of outside preparation, and the educational needs of the students.

3-1-520 – CREDENTIALS CONFERRED

3-1-521. Conferring of Credentials. The conferring of certificates, diplomas, or degrees by an institution
shall be consistent with its mission and objectives and in compliance with applicable state laws.

3-1-530 – INSTRUCTION

3-1-531. Instructional Tools. Institutions shall:
(a) provide appropriate facilities, instructional equipment, resources, support for modes of
instructional delivery, and personnel;
(b) ensure academic freedom and other conditions favorable for effective classroom instruction;
(c) ensure that the quantity and type of instructional material and equipment is proportionate to
the size of the institution and the nature of the program; and
(d) comply with applicable copyright laws in the use of instructional materials.

3-1-532. Instructional Components. Required instructional components shall include the following:
(a) systematic planning;
(b) well-defined instructional objectives;
(c) the selection and use of appropriate learning materials;
(d) appropriate modes of instructional delivery;
(e) the use of appropriate assessment strategies; and
(f) the use of appropriate experiences.
3-1-540 – FACULTY

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.

US-based institutions must provide evidence that all faculty members are graduates of institutions accredited by agencies recognized by the USDE. Credentials of faculty who graduated from institutions outside the U.S. must be evaluated by AACRAO International Education Services (prior to 2016), a member of the Association of International Credential Evaluators (AICE), or a member of the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES) to determine their equivalency to credentials awarded by institutions in the U.S.

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 have faculty credentials evaluated by AACRAO IES (prior to 2016) or a member of AICE or NACES to determine their equivalency to credentials awarded by institutions in the U.S. ACICS, if unable to determine qualifications, may require the translation and/or evaluation of transcripts in languages other than English.

3-1-542. Verification of Credentials. Institutions must maintain official transcripts for credentials that qualify faculty members to teach their assigned courses and for those credentials that are listed in the catalog. All these credentials shall be on file in the administrative offices at the campus location nearest to where the faculty member is primarily employed. An official transcript is one sent from the registrar’s office at the institution where study was completed directly to an employing institution or downloaded electronically from a link provided to the employing institution from the institution where study was completed. Transcripts received electronically must bear an indication that it is an “official transcript” and the link provided must have information on how to verify the authenticity of the transcript. A transcript bearing the notation “issued to student” is not an official transcript for employment purposes.

3-1-543. Faculty Development. Institutions are required to establish faculty development plans including both in-service and professional growth activities to enhance faculty expertise. There shall be documented evidence on an annual basis of these development plans and their implementation. For those faculty who are trained in teaching methodology on the postsecondary level and who possess limited related outside employment, the plan should concentrate on content update, e.g., new software, equipment, techniques, etc. Institutions are responsible for demonstrating that these plans are appropriate given each faculty members’ training, education, and related work experience and that they provide the proper mix of in-service training and professional growth based on the academic and experiential background of the faculty (see Glossary: In-Service Training, Professional Growth, and Faculty Development).

3-1-544. Faculty Meetings. Regularly scheduled faculty meetings or department meetings, with participation by full-time and part-time faculty, shall be held. Discussions and attendance shall be recorded.

3-1-600 – EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES

Each institution must provide an environment that is conducive to good instruction and learning and that supports the educational programs offered by the institution. The adequacy of the environment is assessed against the demands made upon it by the curricula, faculty, and students.

3-1-601. Plant and Equipment. The buildings, classrooms, equipment, furniture, grounds, instructional tools, support systems, instructional facilities, machinery, and other physical requirements of the
An educational program shall be appropriate and shall contribute to the achievement of the institution’s objectives. Equipment, instructional tools, and machinery must be properly installed and maintained.

**3-1-602. Code Requirements.** The plant shall meet the general tests of safety, usefulness, cleanliness, maintenance, health, lighting, and compliance with any local or state laws governing physical facilities, particularly with respect to fire, safety, and sanitation.

**3-1-700 – PUBLICATIONS**

It is important for institutions to recognize the value of “truth in advertising” when promoting their operations. Publications must be prepared and presented in a professional manner to reflect favorably upon the institution. Information published must be accurate and factual and reflect the current status of the institution. Only the Council can accept or reject an institution’s catalog, and a final decision will not be made based on a draft.

**3-1-701. Catalog.** Each institution shall publish and provide to each enrolled student a catalog which complies with Appendix C.

**3-1-702. Multiple-School Catalog.** All institutions utilizing a common catalog must be of common ownership. Photographs of the physical facilities of any of the institutions must be captioned to identify the particular institution or campus depicted. The faculty and staff of each institution and the members of the general administration exercising supervisory responsibility for the group of institutions must be clearly identified with respect to each institution and the overall administration. Any information contained in the catalog that is not common to all institutions in the group should be presented in such a manner that no confusion, misunderstanding, or misrepresentation is possible (see Appendix C).

**3-1-703. Advertising.** Literature used by an institution must be presented in such a manner as to be factual with respect to services offered or benefits promised. An English translation for advertising that is in a language other than English must be available (see Appendix C).

If an institution publicly discloses incorrect or misleading information about its accredited status, the contents of an evaluation team report, or accreditation actions with respect to the institution, the institution must make a public disclosure of correction through the same media or means.

**3-1-704. Performance Information.** Each campus shall routinely provide reliable information to the public on its performance, including student achievement information, that includes, at a minimum, retention, placement, and licensure examination pass rates (where applicable). The information provided shall be for the entire campus and for each program as reported to ACICS in its most recent CAR.

**3-1-800 – LIBRARY RESOURCES AND SERVICES**

The adequate provision of library resources and information services, appropriate to the academic level and scope of an institution’s programs, is essential to teaching and learning. It is incumbent upon all member institutions to assess the level of library resources needed in relation to their programs and to provide a range of support to meet these needs. The size of collections and the budget allowed for library resources and services do not ensure adequacy. The quality, relevance, accessibility, availability, and provision of support services ultimately will determine the adequacy of an institution’s efforts. In assessing library resources and services, ACICS requires that an institution, at a minimum, shall:

1. develop an adequate core of library resources to support academic success and to meet instruction and research needs as appropriate;
2. ensure up-to-date means to access these resources;
(c) develop a continuous assessment strategy for library resources and information services that includes staff and faculty;
(d) provide adequate staff to support assessment, library development, collection, organization, and accessibility;
(e) ensure that library services are provided to all learners, including those at nonmain campuses and those online;
(f) provide training and encouragement for students and faculty to utilize library resources as an integral part of the learning process and as lifelong learners; and
(g) those campuses that have a residential component, must provide students a physical space on-site or within close proximity to the institution in order to allow for access to library resources and services.

Chapter 2 Standards for Nondegree Programs

INTRODUCTION

In addition to the general standards in Chapter 1, which apply to all institutions, the following standards apply specifically to nondegree programs.

3-2-100 – FACULTY

Teaching hours, assignments, and schedules will vary from field to field and from institution to institution but should in all cases allow time for adequate preparation and professional development. The institution shall devise a plan for the efficient use of faculty competence and time, including student-teacher ratios, number of teacher preparations, and number of teaching hours. Reasonableness may be defined by, but is not restricted to, the following expectations.

3-2-101. Teaching Load. Teaching loads shall be reasonable and shall be justified by factors such as the number of different preparations required; the type and method of instruction; the size of classes; the level of instruction; the qualifications of the instructor; the academic advising, committee membership, and guidance and student organizations assigned; and the other administrative, research, publication, and community relations responsibilities of the instructor.

3-2-102. Field Preparation. Assignments requiring more than three preparations in different fields (e.g., allied health, business, criminal justice) shall not be given to an instructor at any given time.

3-2-103. Subject Preparation. Not more than five preparations in different subjects within the same field (e.g., Accounting I, Accounting II, Keyboarding I, Business Mathematics, Business Law) shall be assigned to an instructor during one academic term.

3-2-104. Assignments. The requirements for full- and part-time faculty members teaching in the referenced subject areas are as follows:

(a) A bachelor’s degree and appropriate coursework in the assigned subject are required for faculty members teaching applied general education and other academic courses. 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.

(b) A bachelor’s degree is required for faculty members teaching business and business administration courses. If the bachelor’s degree is not in the assigned teaching field, at least two years of related work experience or evidence of specialized training or competency in the
assigned teaching field is required. The burden is on the institution to demonstrate and justify the qualifications of the faculty to teach their assigned courses.

(c) Faculty members teaching courses not referenced above must demonstrate competency in the assigned teaching field, such as academic or vocational training and credentials, related work experience, licensure, or certification. The burden is on the institution to demonstrate and justify the qualifications of the faculty to teach their assigned courses.

3-2-105. Stability. There shall be an adequate core of full- and/or part-time faculty to ensure sound direction and continuity of development for the educational programs. The institution shall demonstrate through outcomes, length of service, reasonable retention of faculty, and other measures that the core faculty ensures that the institution will meet its stated mission and objectives. The institution shall promote stability in the faculty through compensation, fringe benefits, professional growth opportunities, and other incentives.

3-2-106. Student-Teacher Ratio. The student-teacher ratio shall be reasonable at all times in keeping with generally accepted delivery modes and course content. In determining a reasonable ratio, the institution shall consider the following factors:

(a) the amount of lecture given by instructors in skills-building and practice classes;
(b) the level of existing skills of the students;
(c) the amount of direct supervision exercised by the instructor and the availability of instructional equipment in a lab setting where there is primary instruction in a specific skill; and
(d) the use of technology in providing alternative instruction or evaluation.

3-2-200 – INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES, MATERIALS

The instructional resources, audiovisual teaching equipment, and instructional materials shall be adequate to serve the needs of the institution’s educational programs. The resources shall be consistent with the institutional mission and include current print or digital titles, periodicals, professional journals, and/or full-text online resources appropriate for the institution’s educational programs. There shall be evidence that appropriate instructional resources, equipment, technology, and materials are utilized to support the educational objectives.

3-2-201. References. The institution shall have available and easily accessible to faculty and students standard print, digital, or online reference works appropriate to the curriculum. Major consideration will be given to the diversity of the collection including books, periodicals, online resources and information technology readily available to students and faculty; their currency; appropriateness; and relevance to the programs offered by the institution.

3-2-202. Distribution of Resources and Materials. The instructional resources and references may be consolidated or may be distributed throughout the educational facility, or they may be provided by the institution under contract with an external organization on behalf of its student body which ensures access to library resources and references pertinent to the programs offered by the institution; including resources that are available exclusively online. Easy access to and use of reference materials, periodicals, and information technology are of prime importance in determining if the institution is meeting the educational needs of its students and faculty. Availability and utilization of audiovisual equipment also are important.

3-2-203. Inventory. A current inventory of instructional materials and equipment shall be maintained by the institution.
3-2-204. **Budget.** Budget allocations and expenditures for instructional resources, equipment, and materials may be centralized and shall be sufficient to meet the needs and fulfill objectives of the institution’s programs.

**Chapter 3 Standards for Occupational Associate’s Degree Programs**

**INTRODUCTION**

In addition to the general standards in Chapter 1, which apply to all institutions, the following standards apply specifically to institutions offering occupational associate’s degree programs. Occupational associate’s degree programs are those programs which award associate’s degrees that contain less than 15 semester hours, 22.5 quarter hours, or their equivalent of general education.

3-3-100 – **STATE AUTHORITY**

The institution must be legally authorized by the appropriate state education agency, where such authority exists, to confer the associate’s degree.

3-3-200 – **EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES**

3-3-201. **Objectives.** The objectives of an occupational associate’s degree program are an extension of the institution’s awareness of its mission and its application to its constituencies. An institution applying for the inclusion of an occupational associate’s degree program shall demonstrate that its programs and courses are appropriate to its mission and to its specific goals and objectives.

Occupational associate’s degree programs should emphasize both achievement of vocational objectives and general education. This emphasis requires courses in general education that are relevant both quantitatively and qualitatively to the chosen degree.

3-3-202. **Education Requirements.** The minimum number of credits required for the occupational associate’s degree shall be 60 semester hours, 90 quarter hours, or 1800 clock hours, normally earned over a period of four semesters, six quarters, or their equivalent. Transfer and award of credit may be granted for appropriate work at other institutions.

There shall be a minimum of 10 semester hours, 15 quarter hours, or their equivalent in general education or applied general education courses. Any specializations within a program shall be a minimum of 9 semester hours, 13.5 quarter hours, or their equivalent, and shall not be considered part of the concentration coursework. The catalog must identify the courses that satisfy the general education and specialization requirements, and it must provide an explanation of the course numbering system (see Glossary: Applied General Education and General Education).

3-3-203. **Curriculum.** The curriculum shall quantitatively and qualitatively approximate the standards at other institutions offering occupational associate’s degrees, with due allowance for meeting special objectives. The primary purpose of the degree shall be technical in nature with courses designed to assist students in the application of these skills in the workplace. Instructional procedures, texts, materials, and technology shall be appropriate to the purposes, curricula, and standards of institutions offering occupational associate’s degrees. Evidence shall be provided that curricular offerings require appropriate use of library resources.

3-3-204. **Enrollment.** Enrollment in the second year of a two-year program must be sufficient to support regularly scheduled classes and laboratory work. Second-year work shall be based upon appropriate first-year prerequisites.
3-3-300 – FACULTY

3-3-301. Preparation. An institution offering occupational associate’s degrees shall have an adequate and competent faculty working under conditions that encourage the best efforts of each individual. In judging competence, consideration shall be given to the academic preparation and experience of each instructor.

3-3-302. Assignments. During any academic term, a faculty member shall not be assigned to teach in more than three fields of instruction (e.g., medical assisting, business administration, information technology). Not more than five preparations in different subjects (e.g., Accounting I, Accounting II, Keyboarding I, Business Mathematics, and Business Law) shall be assigned to an instructor during one academic term. Instructors shall be assigned based on their major and minor academic preparation and/or related experience. The size of the faculty shall be appropriate to the total student enrollment.

The requirements for full- and part-time faculty members teaching in the referenced subject areas are as follows:

(a) A bachelor’s degree and appropriate coursework in the assigned subject are required for faculty members teaching applied general education. Instructors at a minimum shall have earned 15 semester or equivalent hours of coursework through a combination of hours from an associate’s, bachelor’s, master’s, and/or doctoral level coursework in the area of their teaching assignment.

(b) Instructors teaching general education shall hold a minimum of a master’s degree with 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.

Instructors teaching courses other than general education shall hold bachelor’s degrees at a minimum and shall be assigned based on their major and minor academic preparation and/or related experience. However, exceptions to the bachelor’s degree requirement may be justified for instructors who have demonstrable current exceptional professional level experience in the assigned field, such as documented coursework in the field, professional certification(s), letters of recommendation or attestations from previous employer(s), letters attesting to this expertise from professional peers not connected to the college, real examples of previous success in the field such as published work, juried exhibits and shows, evidence of a professional portfolio accepted by the college and available for review, and other significant documented experience relevant to the courses to be taught. Minors or related degrees could be considered but will not be the sole determining factor. Duration of time associated with this alternative justification is dependent on the quality and significance of the work experience. The institution must be able to justify the assignment of any instructor who does not hold a bachelor’s degree in the assigned teaching field.

(c) A bachelor’s degree is required for faculty members teaching business and business administration courses. If the bachelor’s degree is not in the assigned teaching field, at least two years of related work experience or evidence of specialized training or competency in the assigned teaching field is required. The burden is on the institution to demonstrate and justify the qualifications of the faculty to teach their assigned courses.

(d) Faculty members teaching courses not referenced above must demonstrate competency in the assigned teaching field, such as academic or vocational training and credentials, related work experience, licensure, or certification. The burden is on the institution to demonstrate and justify the qualifications of the faculty to teach their assigned courses.
3-3-303. Teaching Load. Teaching loads shall be reasonable and shall be justified by factors such as the number of different preparations required; the type and method of instruction; the size of classes; the level of instruction; the qualifications of the instructor; the academic advising, committee membership, and guidance and student organizations assigned; and the other administrative, research, publication, and community relations responsibilities of the instructor.

3-3-304. Stability. There shall be an adequate core of full- and part-time faculty to ensure sound direction and continuity of development for the educational programs. The institution shall demonstrate through outcomes, length of service, reasonable retention of faculty, and other measures that the core faculty ensures that the institution will meet its stated mission and objectives. The institution shall promote stability in the faculty through compensation, fringe benefits, professional growth opportunities, and other incentives.

3-3-305. Student-Teacher Ratio. The student-teacher ratio shall be reasonable at all times in keeping with generally accepted delivery modes and course content. In determining a reasonable ratio, the institution shall consider the following factors:

   (a) the amount of lecture given by instructors in skills-building and practice classes;
   (b) the level of existing skills of the students;
   (c) the amount of direct supervision exercised by the instructor and the availability of instructional equipment in a lab setting where there is primary instruction in a specific skill; and
   (d) the use of technology in providing alternative instruction or evaluation.

3-3-400 – LIBRARY, INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES, AND TECHNOLOGY

3-3-401. Staff. An individual with the ability to maintain the resources and to assist students and faculty shall be designated to oversee the resources of the institution.

3-3-402. Budget. An annual library budget, appropriate to the size and scope of the institution and the programs offered, shall be established, may be centralized, and the allocation expended for the purchase of books, periodicals, library equipment, and other resource and reference materials.

3-3-403. Function. The library function is shaped by the mission and the educational programs of the institution. Appropriate reference, research, and information resources must be made available to enhance, augment, and support the curricular and educational offerings. The resources shall include the study, reading, and information technology facilities necessary to make the educational programs effective. The ultimate test of the library’s adequacy is determined by the extent to which its resources support all the courses offered by the institutions.

3-3-404. Use and Accessibility. In evaluating the use of library resources by students, consideration shall be given to accessibility and to methods used by the faculty to encourage the use of these resources by students. Records of physical and/or online circulation and inventory shall be current and accurate. Physical and/or online library materials and services must be available at times consistent with the typical student’s schedule in day, evening, and online programs. Easy access to and use of reference materials, periodicals, and information technology are of prime importance in determining if the institution is meeting the educational needs of its students and faculty. If online resources are utilized, an appropriate number of terminals and/or wireless access shall be provided for student use. Interlibrary agreements are not substitutes for an institution’s library, but rather a means to supplement the institution’s holdings in limited areas. In determining the appropriateness of such agreements, consideration will be given to the uniqueness of the lending library’s collection, provisions for interlibrary loans, and the degree of accessibility to the students.
**3-3-405. Holdings.** The institution shall have available and easily accessible standard physical and/or online reference works, professional journals, and current periodicals appropriate to the curriculum. Consideration also shall be given to supplementary library resources contracted by the institution and online resources available to its student body.

**3-3-406. Acquisitions.** Library acquisitions are the joint responsibility of the faculty and library staff, with the greater amount of input emanating from the faculty. Moreover, it is the faculty's responsibility to inspire, motivate, and direct student usage of the library resources.

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Chapter 4 Standards for Academic Associate’s Degree Programs

**INTRODUCTION**

In addition to the general standards in Chapter 1, which apply to all institutions, the following standards apply specifically to academic associate’s degree programs. All associate of art and associate of science degree programs are academic associate’s degree programs. Any other associate’s degree programs that include at least 15 semester hours, 22.5 quarter hours, or their equivalent of general education also are considered to be academic associate’s degree programs. Institutions that offer academic associate’s degree programs are collegiate institutions.

**3-4-100 – STATE AUTHORITY**

The institution must be legally authorized by the appropriate state education agency, where such authority exists, to confer the associate’s degree.

**3-4-200 – EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES**

**3-4-201. Objectives.** The objectives of an associate’s degree program reflect the application of an institution’s mission to its constituencies. An institution applying for the inclusion of an academic associate’s degree program shall demonstrate that its programs, courses, and services are appropriate to its mission and to its specific goals and objectives.

Programs at collegiate institutions should emphasize both the achievement of vocational objectives and general education. This emphasis requires courses in general education that are both quantitatively and qualitatively relevant to the chosen degree.

**3-4-202. Education Requirements.** The minimum number of credits required for the academic associate’s degree shall be 60 semester hours, 90 quarter hours, or their equivalent, normally earned over a period of four semesters, six quarters, or their equivalent. Transfer and award of credit for appropriate work at other institutions may be granted.

There shall be a minimum of 30 semester hours, 45 quarter hours, or their equivalent in courses within the areas of concentration; and a minimum of 15 semester hours, 22.5 quarter hours, or their equivalent in general education courses. Any specializations within a program shall be a minimum of 12 semester hours, 18 quarter hours, or their equivalent, and shall not be considered part of the concentration coursework. Courses within the area of concentration of the subject matter of the program shall not be considered general education courses. The catalog must identify the courses that satisfy the concentration, specialization(s), and general education requirements, and it must provide an explanation of the course numbering system.

General education and academic subject offerings, as distinguished from the professional or vocational offerings of a collegiate institution, shall place emphasis on principles and theory and not on practical applications associated with a particular occupation or profession. General education courses give
balance to the total program and must be appropriate for the program and the needs of the students. The Council’s expectations for general education, humanities, mathematics and the sciences, and social sciences are outlined in the Glossary section.

3-4-203. Curriculum. The curriculum shall quantitatively and qualitatively approximate the standards at other collegiate institutions offering academic associate’s degrees. It should help students acquire necessary skills such as reading, writing, communicating, critical thinking, and the basic use of computers. Instructional procedures, texts, materials, and technology shall be appropriate to the purposes, curricula, and standards of collegiate institutions. Evidence shall be provided that curricular offerings require appropriate use of library resources.

3-4-204. Enrollment. Enrollment in the second year of a two-year program must be sufficient to support regularly scheduled classes and laboratory work. Second-year work shall be based upon appropriate first-year prerequisites.

3-4-300 – FACULTY

3-4-301. Preparation. The institution shall have an adequate and competent faculty working under conditions that encourage the best efforts of each individual. In judging competence, consideration shall be given to the academic preparation and experience of each instructor.

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 in languages other than English for general education instructors must be translated into English.

Instructors teaching courses other than general education shall hold bachelor’s degrees at a minimum and shall be assigned based on their major and minor academic preparation and/or related experience. However, exceptions to the bachelor’s degree requirement may be justified for instructors who have demonstrable current exceptional professional level experience in the assigned field, professional certification(s), letters of recommendation or attestations from previous employer(s), letters attesting to this expertise from professional peers not connected to the college, real examples of previous success in the field such as published work, juried exhibits and shows, evidence of a professional portfolio accepted by the college and available for review, and other significant documented experience relevant to the courses to be taught. Minor or related degrees could be considered but will not be the sole determining factor. Duration of time associated with this alternative justification is dependent on the quality and significance of the work experience. The institution must be able to justify the assignment of any instructor who does not hold a bachelor’s degree in the assigned teaching field.

In addition to the degree requirements outlined above, at least one-half of the courses, including those core courses common to nonacademic degree or nondegree programs, shall be taught by faculty members holding graduate degrees, professional degrees such as JD or MD, or bachelor’s degrees plus professional certification. This calculation does not apply, however, to courses in fields in which graduate degrees, professional degrees, or professional certifications are not generally available.

3-4-303. Teaching Load. Teaching loads shall be reasonable and shall be justified by factors such as the number of different preparations required; the type and method of instruction; the size of classes; the level of instruction; the qualifications of the instructor; the academic advising, committee membership,
and guidance and student organizations assigned; and the other administrative, research, publication, and community relations responsibilities of the instructor.

3-4-304. Stability. There shall be an adequate core of full- and part-time faculty to ensure sound direction and continuity of development for the educational programs. The institution shall demonstrate through outcomes, length of service, reasonable retention of faculty, and other measures that the core faculty ensures that the institution will meet its stated mission and objectives. The institution shall promote stability in the faculty through compensation, fringe benefits, professional growth opportunities, and other incentives.

3-4-400 – LIBRARY, INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES, AND TECHNOLOGY

3-4-401. Staff. A professionally trained person 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 person 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, one 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 USDE. If the degree is from an institution outside of the U.S., that institution must be recognized by its government as an institution of higher education, or the degree must be evaluated by AACRAO International Education Services (prior to 2016), a member of Association of International Credential Evaluators (AICE), or a member of the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES) to determine its equivalency to degrees awarded by institutions in the U.S. ACICS, if unable to determine qualifications, may require the translation and/or evaluation of transcripts in languages other than English. The professionally trained person must participate in documented annual professional growth activities.

During library hours that are scheduled and posted, there shall be a trained person on-site who is assigned to oversee and supervise the library and to assist students with library and information services. This person shall be competent and technologically literate to use and to aid in the use of the online and computer-based library resources.

3-4-402. Budget. An annual library budget, appropriate to the size and scope of the institution and the programs offered, shall be established, may be centralized, and the allocation expended for the purchase of books, periodicals, library equipment, and other resource and reference materials.

3-4-403. Function. The library function is shaped by the mission and the educational programs of the college. Appropriate reference, research, and information resources must be made available to provide basic support for curricular and educational offerings and to enhance student learning.

3-4-404. Use and Accessibility. The faculty should inspire, motivate, and direct student usage of the library resources. The library’s adequacy ultimately is determined by the extent to which physical and/or online resources including full-text resources support all the courses offered by the institution.

For library resources, the Dewey Decimal System, Library of Congress classification system, or other appropriate system of classification should be used. Records of physical and/or online circulation and inventory shall be current and accurate and must be maintained to assist staff and faculty in evaluating the adequacy and utilization of the physical and/or online resources including full-text holdings.

Physical and/or online, full-text library materials and services must be available at times consistent with the typical student’s schedule in day, evening, and online programs. If online or computer-based resources are utilized on-site, a sufficient number of terminals and/or wireless access shall be provided
for student use. If interlibrary agreements are in effect, provisions for such use must be practical and accessible and use must be documented. In determining the appropriateness of such agreements, consideration will be given to the nature of the participating library’s collection, provisions for interlibrary loans, and the degree of accessibility to the students. A college’s library must contain, at a minimum, a core collection of physical and/or online resources including full-text reference materials appropriate for the offerings of the institution.

3-4-405. Holdings. A collegiate library shall contain up-to-date physical and/or online resources including full-text titles appropriate for the size of the institution and the breadth of and enrollment in its educational programs. The library collection shall include holdings on the Humanities, Arts, Social Sciences, and Sciences, including mathematics; magazines and essential professional journals and periodicals that support all of the course offerings of the institution.

3-4-406. Acquisitions. Library acquisitions are the joint responsibility of the faculty and library staff, with the greater amount of input emanating from the faculty.

Chapter 5 Standards for Bachelor’s Degree Programs

INTRODUCTION

In addition to the general standards in Chapter 1, which apply to all institutions, the following standards apply specifically to bachelor’s degree programs. Institutions that offer bachelor’s degree programs are considered to be collegiate institutions.

3-5-100 – STATE AUTHORITY

The institution must be legally authorized by the appropriate state education agency, where such authority exists, to confer the bachelor’s degree.

3-5-200 – EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

3-5-201. Objectives. The objectives of a bachelor’s degree program reflect the application of an institution’s mission to its constituencies. An institution applying for the inclusion of a bachelor’s degree program shall demonstrate that its programs, courses, and services are appropriate to its mission and to its specific goals and objectives.

Programs at collegiate institutions should emphasize both the achievement of vocational objectives and general education. This emphasis requires courses in general education that are both quantitatively and qualitatively relevant to the chosen degree.

3-5-202. Education Requirements. The minimum number of credits required for the bachelor’s degree shall be 120 semester hours, 180 quarter hours, or their equivalent, normally earned over a period of eight semesters, 12 quarters, or their equivalent. Transfer and award of credit for appropriate work at other institutions may be granted.

There shall be a minimum of 60 semester hours, 90 quarter hours, or their equivalent within the areas of concentration; and a minimum of 36 semester hours, 54 quarter hours, or their equivalent in general education courses. Any specializations within a program shall be a minimum of 12 semester hours, 18 quarter hours, or their equivalent, and shall not be considered part of the concentration coursework. Courses within the area of concentration of the subject matter of the program shall not be considered general education courses. The catalog must identify the courses that satisfy the concentration, specialization(s), and general education requirements and those that are upper-division courses, and it must provide an explanation of the course numbering system. The catalog must state the expectations
for all four years of the bachelor’s degree curriculum and comply with Appendix C. If the institution offers only the last two years of the bachelor’s degree program, the catalog and all advertising materials must clearly describe the requirements for admission, including requirements for the completion of necessary prerequisite courses and general education courses to ensure that the student will complete all of the requirements for the bachelor’s degree upon graduation.

General education and academic subject offerings, as distinguished from the professional or vocational offerings of a collegiate institution, shall place emphasis on principles and theory and not on practical applications associated with a particular occupation or profession. General education courses give balance to the total program and must be appropriate for the program and the needs of the students. The Council’s expectations for general education, humanities, mathematics and the sciences, and social sciences are outlined in the Glossary section.

3-5-203. Curriculum. The curriculum shall quantitatively and qualitatively approximate the standards at other collegiate institutions offering bachelor’s degrees. It should help students acquire necessary skills such as reading, writing, communicating, critical thinking, and the basic use of computers. Instructional procedures, texts, materials, and technology shall be appropriate to the purposes, curricula, and standards of collegiate institutions. Evidence shall be provided that curricular offerings require appropriate use of library resources.

3-5-204. Enrollment. Enrollment in upper-division courses must be sufficient to support regularly scheduled and conducted classes and laboratory work. Upper-division work shall be offered and shall be based upon appropriate prerequisites.

3-5-300 – FACULTY

3-5-301. Preparation. The institution shall have an adequate and competent faculty working under conditions that encourage the best efforts of each person. In judging competence, consideration shall be given to the academic preparation and experience of each instructor.

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 in languages other than English for general education instructors must be translated into English.

Instructors teaching courses other than general education shall hold bachelor’s degrees at a minimum and shall be assigned based on their major and minor academic preparation and/or related experience. However, exceptions to the bachelor’s degree requirement may be justified for instructors who have demonstrable current exceptional professional level experience in the assigned field, such as documented coursework in the field; professional certification(s); letters of recommendation or attestations from previous employer(s); letters attesting to this expertise from professional peers not connected to the college; real examples of previous success in the field such as published work, juried exhibits, and shows; evidence of a professional portfolio accepted by the college and available for review; and other significant documented experience relevant to the courses to be taught. Minor or related degrees could be considered but will not be the sole determining factor. Duration of time associated with this alternative justification is dependent on the quality and significance of the work experience. The institution must be able to justify the assignment of any instructor who does not hold a bachelor’s degree in the assigned teaching field.
In addition to the degree requirements outlined above, at least one-half of all lower-division courses and all upper-division courses, including those core courses common to nonacademic degree or nondegree programs, shall be taught by faculty members holding graduate degrees, professional degrees such as JD or MD, or bachelor’s degrees plus professional certification. This calculation does not apply, however, to courses in fields in which graduate degrees, professional degrees, or professional certifications are not generally available.

3-5-303. Teaching Load. Teaching loads shall be reasonable and shall be justified by factors such as the number of different preparations required; the type and method of instruction; the size of classes; the level of instruction; the qualifications of the instructor; the academic advising, committee membership, and guidance and student organizations assigned; and the other administrative, research, publication, and community relations responsibilities of the instructor.

3-5-304. Stability. There shall be an adequate core of full- and part-time faculty to ensure sound direction and continuity of development for the educational programs. The institution shall demonstrate through outcomes, length of service, reasonable retention of faculty, and other measures that the core faculty ensures that the institution will meet its stated mission and objectives. The institution shall promote stability in the faculty through compensation, fringe benefits, professional growth opportunities, and other incentives.

3-5-400 – LIBRARY, INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES, AND TECHNOLOGY

3-5-401. Staff. A professionally trained person 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 person 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, one 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 USDE. If the degree is from an institution outside of the U.S., that institution must be recognized by its government as an institution of higher education, or the degree must be evaluated by AACRAO International Education Services (prior to 2016), a member of Association of International Credential Evaluators (AICE), or a member of the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES) to determine its equivalency to degrees awarded by institutions in the U.S. ACICS, if unable to determine qualifications, may require the translation and/or evaluation of transcripts in languages other than English. The professionally trained person must participate in documented annual professional growth activities.

During library hours that are scheduled and posted, there shall be a trained person on-site who is assigned to oversee and supervise the library and to assist students with library and information services. This person shall be competent and technologically literate to use and to aid in the use of the online and computer-based library resources.

3-5-402. Budget. An annual library budget, appropriate to the size and scope of the institution and the programs offered, shall be established, may be centralized, and the allocation expended, for the purchase of books, periodicals, library equipment, and other resource and reference materials.

3-5-403. Function. The library function is shaped by the mission and the educational programs of the college. Appropriate reference, research, and information resources must be made available to provide basic support for curricular and educational offerings and to enhance student learning.
**3-5-404. Use and Accessibility.** The faculty should inspire, motivate, and direct student usage of the library resources. The library’s adequacy ultimately is determined by the extent to which physical and/or online resources including full-text resources support all the courses offered by the institution.

For library resources, the Dewey Decimal System, Library of Congress classification system, or other appropriate system of classification should be used. Records of physical and/or online circulation and inventory shall be current and accurate and must be maintained to assist staff and faculty in evaluating the adequacy and utilization of the physical and/or online resources including full-text holdings.

Physical and/or online, full-text library materials and services must be available at times consistent with the typical student’s schedule in day, evening, and online programs. If online or computer-based resources are utilized on-site, a sufficient number of terminals and/or wireless access shall be provided for student use. If interlibrary agreements are in effect, provisions for such use must be practical and accessible and use must be documented. In determining the appropriateness of such agreements, consideration will be given to the nature of the participating library’s collection, provisions for interlibrary loans, and the degree of accessibility to the students. A college’s library must contain, at a minimum, a core collection of physical and/or online resources including full-text reference materials appropriate for the offerings of the institution.

**3-5-405. Holdings.** A collegiate library shall contain up-to-date physical and/or online resources including full-text titles appropriate for the size of the institution and the breadth of and enrollment in its educational programs. The library collection shall include holdings on the Humanities, Arts, Social Sciences, and Sciences, including mathematics; magazines and professional journals and periodicals that support all of the course offerings of the institution.

**3-5-406. Acquisitions.** Library acquisitions are the joint responsibility of the faculty and library staff, with the greater amount emanating from the faculty.

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**Chapter 6 Standards for Master’s Degree Programs**

**INTRODUCTION**

In addition to the general standards in Chapter 1, which apply to all institutions, the following standards apply specifically to master’s degree programs.

**3-6-100 – NATURE OF GRADUATE EDUCATION**

The awarding of a master’s degree signifies that, in the judgment of the faculty, the student has attained specialized competence which qualifies the recipient for opportunities and additional responsibilities not ordinarily available to the baccalaureate degree recipient. To make a graduate program distinctive, a component designed to teach research skills should be included.

**3-6-200 – STATE AUTHORITY**

The institution must be legally authorized by the appropriate state education agency, where such authority exists, to confer the master’s degree.

**3-6-300 – ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION**

**3-6-301. Committee Oversight.** The responsibility for developing, modifying, and maintaining the graduate program shall be performed by a qualified designated committee to include, but not restricted to, students, faculty, administrators, and employers.

**3-6-302. Program Administration.** The administration of the graduate program shall be performed by a qualified person with appropriate administrative and educational background and experience for the
direction of a graduate program. The duties of this person may be full- or part-time with adequate staff support.

3-6-400 – EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

3-6-401. Objectives. The objectives of a master's degree program reflect the application of an institution’s mission to its constituencies. An institution applying for the inclusion of a master’s degree program shall demonstrate that its programs, courses, and services are appropriate to its mission and to its specific goals and objectives. Master’s degree programs should emphasize both mastery of subject matter and an understanding of related research and research methodology. This emphasis implies development of the student’s ability to integrate and apply the subject matter.

3-6-402. Program Development. Graduate faculty must be directly involved in the development and modification of master’s degree program policies, procedures, and curricula. Flexible instructional approaches and scheduling patterns are encouraged in developing innovative graduate programs in order to serve varying student groups and their special needs.

3-6-403. Education Requirements. The minimum number of credits required for the master’s degree shall be 30 semester hours, 45 quarter hours, or their equivalent of coursework plus a thesis at the graduate level; or 36 semester hours, 54 quarter hours, or their equivalent of coursework at the graduate level if a thesis is not required. Any specializations within a program shall be a minimum of 12 semester hours, 18 quarter hours, or their equivalent, in addition to the required coursework, and shall not be considered part of the required coursework. The master’s degree normally is earned over three semesters, five quarters, or their equivalent. The catalog must provide an explanation of the course numbering system.

3-6-404. Curriculum. The curriculum shall quantitatively and qualitatively approximate the standards at other institutions offering master’s degrees. Instructional procedures, texts, materials, and technology shall be appropriate to the purposes, curricula, and standards of collegiate institutions. Evidence shall be provided that curricular offerings require the appropriate use of library resources.

3-6-405. Enrollment. Enrollment in graduate-level courses must be sufficient to support regularly scheduled and conducted classes and laboratory work. Graduate-level courses shall be offered and shall be based on appropriate prerequisites.

3-6-500 – FACULTY

3-6-501. Preparation. The institution shall have an adequate and competent faculty working under conditions that encourage the best efforts of each person. In judging competence of faculty, consideration shall be given to the academic preparation and experience of each instructor.

3-6-502. Assignments. Instructors shall be assigned in terms of their major and minor areas of academic preparation and related experience. The size of the faculty shall be appropriate for the graduate enrollment. All master’s program faculty should have appropriate graduate degrees, and the number with terminal degrees should be appropriate for the graduate enrollment. At least one-half of the graduate-level courses are to be taught by faculty possessing terminal degrees. Professional certification is not a substitute for a terminal degree. The institution also should encourage graduate faculty members to engage in scholarly research and to publish in professional journals. Faculty who do not possess appropriate graduate degrees may be assigned to teach in master’s degree programs if they have exceptional practical or professional experience in the assigned field or if the assigned field is one in which graduate degrees are not widely available. In either case, the burden is on the institution to demonstrate and justify the qualifications of the faculty to teach their assigned
courses. Faculty assigned under this exception are not considered to have the equivalent of a terminal degree.

3-6-503. Teaching Load. Teaching loads shall be reasonable and shall be justified by factors such as the number of different preparations required; the type and method of instruction; the size of classes; the level of instruction; the qualifications of the instructor; the academic advising, committee membership, and guidance and student organizations assigned; and the other administrative, research, publication, professional activities and/or scholarship, and community relations responsibilities of the instructor.

3-6-504. Stability. There shall be an adequate core of full- and part-time faculty to ensure sound direction and continuity of development for the educational programs. The institution shall demonstrate through outcomes, length of service, reasonable retention of faculty, and other measures that the core faculty ensures that the institution will meet its stated mission and objectives. The institution shall promote stability in the faculty through compensation, fringe benefits, professional growth opportunities, and other incentives.

3-6-600 – ADMISSIONS

3-6-601. Enrollment Prerequisites. The threshold admission requirement to a master’s degree program is a baccalaureate degree.

If admission to a professional program is granted without a baccalaureate degree, the burden is on the institution to demonstrate and justify that the alternate admission requirement is accepted by a recognized licensing or specialized accrediting agency and is common practice among accredited institutions of higher education. In such cases, admission may be granted only to eligible students who have completed, at a minimum, an associate’s degree or equivalent. If the institution chooses to award a suitable baccalaureate degree upon completion of specified requirements or concurrently with the award of the professional master’s degree, the baccalaureate degree curriculum must be approved by the Council.

3-6-602. Evaluation of Applicants. Institutions should use appropriate techniques to evaluate applicants and to determine whether they have the academic qualifications to benefit from graduate study.

3-6-603. Transfer of Credit. Transfer of credit for appropriate master’s-level coursework from another institution may be granted according to the policy established by the institution. No more than one-half of the credits required for the master’s degree may be transferred from another institution.

3-6-604. Conformance to Institutional Objectives. Admissions procedures, transfer policies, and requirements for graduation shall be consistent with the overall philosophy and objectives of the institution.

3-6-700 – LIBRARY, INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES, AND TECHNOLOGY

3-6-701. Staff. A professionally trained person 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 person is one with special qualifications to aid students in research and who holds an MLS or the equivalent, or, for foreign institutions, one 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 USDE. If the degree is from an institution outside of the U.S., that institution must be recognized by its government as an institution of higher education, or the degree must be evaluated by AACRAO International Education Services (prior to 2016), a member of Association of International Credential Evaluators (AICE), or a member of the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES) to determine its equivalency to degrees awarded
by institutions in the U.S. ACICS, if unable to determine qualifications, may require the translation
and/or evaluation of transcripts in languages other than English. The professionally trained person must
participate in documented annual professional growth activities.

There shall be a professionally trained person on duty for sufficient hours, as published by the
institution, to support the programs and to assist students with library functions and research. This
person shall be competent both to use and to aid in the use of the physical, computer based, digital, and
online resources.

3-6-702. Budget. An annual library budget, appropriate to the size and scope of the institution and the
programs offered, shall be established, may be centralized, and the allocation expended, for the
purchase of books, periodicals, library equipment, and other resource and reference materials.

3-6-703. Function. The library function is shaped by the mission and the educational programs of the
institution. Institutions offering master’s degree programs shall provide access to substantially different
library resources in terms of their depth and breadth from those required for baccalaureate degree
programs. Students should discover information in a variety of formats with an appropriately supporting
information technology infrastructure.

These resources shall include bibliographic and monographic references, major professional journals
and reference services, research and methodology materials, and information technologies. The depth
and breadth of the accessible library holdings shall be such as to exceed the requirements of the
average student in order to encourage the intellectual development of superior students and to enrich
the professional development of the faculty.

Appropriate reference, research, and information resources must be made available to enhance,
augment, and support the curricular and educational offerings and to enhance student learning. The
resources shall include the study, reading, and information technology facilities necessary to enhance
the effectiveness of the educational programs.

3-6-704. Use and Accessibility. It is the faculty’s responsibility to inspire, motivate, and direct student
usage of the library resources. The library’s adequacy ultimately is determined by the extent to which
physical and/or online, full-text resources support all the courses offered by the institution.

For library resources, the Dewey Decimal System, Library of Congress classification system, or other
appropriate system of classification should be used. Records of physical and/or online circulation and
inventory shall be current and accurate and must be maintained to assist staff and faculty in evaluating
the adequacy and utilization of the physical and/or online, full-text holdings.

Physical and/or online, full-text library materials and services must be available at times consistent with
the typical student’s schedule in day, evening, and online programs. If online or computer-based
resources are utilized on-site, a sufficient number of terminals and/or wireless access shall be provided
for student use. If interlibrary agreements are in effect, provisions for such use must be practical and
accessible, and use must be documented. In determining the appropriateness of such agreements,
consideration will be given to the uniqueness of the lending library’s collection, provisions for
interlibrary loans, and the degree of accessibility to the students. A college’s library must contain, at a
minimum, a core collection of physical and/or on-line, full-text reference materials appropriate for the
offerings of the institution.

3-6-705. Holdings. The library shall support the academic programs and the intellectual and cultural
development of students, faculty, and staff; shall provide current and appropriate physical and/or
online, full-text resources for the size of the institution and the breadth of and enrollment in its
educational programs; and shall be capable of supporting an understanding of the methods and principles of scholarly research and how to use information ethically at the graduate level.

3-6-706. Acquisitions. Library acquisitions are the joint responsibility of the faculty and library staff, with the greater amount of input emanating from the faculty.

3-6-800 – PUBLICATIONS

There shall be a separate section in the institution’s catalog describing the master’s degree objectives, program requirements, admissions procedures, transfer policies, graduation requirements, regulations, and course descriptions.
GLOSSARY

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 drawn from no single source are offered by way of example rather than limitation. The Council recognizes the evolving and dynamic nature of American postsecondary education. 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.

A

Ability to Benefit (ATB). A determination made by the institution that, in the absence of a high school diploma or GED certificate, the student will be able to benefit, with or without remediation, from the program(s) offered at the institution. The determination should be made before the person is financially obligated or enrolled in a program.

Academic Credential. A certificate, diploma, or degree stating that the student has graduated from a certain curriculum or has passed certain subjects.

Academic Probation. Students placed on academic probation are subject to increased scrutiny of their academic achievements due to a previous history of academic difficulty. The probation policy must define the conditions of probation, including how long a student may remain on probation and the requirements for being removed from probation. The institution may establish additional policies as it desires.

Academic Year. A period of time generally divided into two semesters, three quarters, or their equivalent, in which a full-time student is expected to complete the coursework equivalent to at least two semesters, three quarters, or their equivalent.

Accreditation. The process whereby a nationally recognized agency or organization grants public recognition to a unit of an educational organization (such as a school, institute, college, university, or specialized program of study) indicating that it meets established standards of quality as determined through initial and periodic self-study and evaluation by peers. The essential purpose of the accreditation process is to provide a professional judgment as to quality of the educational institution or program(s) offered and to encourage continual improvement thereof.

Achievement Test. A test which measures a student’s existing skills and knowledge (that which has been taught to the student) in particular areas, such as reading, math, map skills, and grammar.

Additional Location. See Campus, Branch.

Applied General Education. Courses that involve applying principles and concepts in communications, humanities and fine arts, mathematics, natural and physical sciences, social and behavioral sciences, and technology to the practical affairs of a specific occupation or occupational cluster. Such courses enhance a person’s ability to apply academic and occupational skills in the workplace. Examples of applied general education courses include technical writing, business writing, business statistics, business mathematics, organizational behavior, and human relations.

Aptitude Test. Aptitude and its tests refer to the capacity/potential to do schoolwork in different areas, such as mechanics, art, clerical procedures, verbal, and numerical ability. Such important factors as home environment, familiarity with the English language, and physical and psychological well-being
at the time of the test all affect this kind of measure. Aptitude tests are often timed, multiple choice, and “normed” for cutoff score on a nationwide sampling of students.

**Area of Concentration.** Focus of study in a degree program, also known as the major. The requirements for the area of concentration are based upon clearly defined and articulated learning objectives, including a mastery of the knowledge, methods, and theories pertinent to a particular area of inquiry, discipline, or field. General education and other courses not related to the major do not qualify as concentration coursework.

**Articulation.** An understanding or agreement between institutions to accommodate the movement of students and the transfer of credits between institutions.

**Asynchronous Interactions.** Teaching/learning interactions between students and instructors which take place intermittently or non-simultaneously with a time delay.

**Audioconferencing.** Structured voice-only teaching/learning interaction among persons or groups in two or more sites.

**Avocational Short-term Courses/Programs.** Courses or programs that are less than 300 contact hours and do not lead to an academic credential; rather, they are for preparation, enhancement, or continuing education.

**Blended Course or Blended Learning.** A course or learning activity that combines online and face-to-face, in-class sessions. Also called “hybrid” course or learning.

**Bulletin Board System (BBS).** A computer-based online community that allows participants to interact through text messages.

**Calendar.** The system by which the institution structures its school (academic) year. The three common types of calendars are the semester, the quarter, and the trimester. The semester calendar is generally composed of two semesters of 15–17 weeks of classes each, including final examinations. The quarter calendar is generally composed of three quarters, usually with 10–12 weeks of classes each, including final examinations. The summer quarter is sometimes subdivided into terms of shorter length. The trimester calendar is composed of three 15-week terms, including final examinations. The third may be subdivided.

**Campus.** All facilities where educational activities take place that are under the direct control of the on-site administration.

**Campus, Branch.** A branch campus is a location that is geographically apart from and independent of the institution’s main campus but under the same corporate structure (i.e., part of the main campus corporation or a wholly owned subsidiary). 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.

**Campus, Main.** A main campus is the primary location of an institution accredited by ACICS. This campus is expected to meet fully all applicable standards set forth in the *Accreditation Criteria* (see Section 1-3-101).

**Campus Addition.** See Learning Site.
Category Grant. An institutionally financed award to all students who qualify by meeting the published standards for a grant to similarly circumstanced students, such as a grant to active members of the military.

Certificate. A document issued to evidence completion of a course, seminar, or academic program. An academic program awarding a certificate is usually shorter in length than a program resulting in a diploma (see Diploma).

Chat Room. An online or virtual meeting space for multiple learners to engage in real-time text-based discussions.

Clock (or Contact) Hour. A minimum of 50 minutes of supervised or directed instruction and appropriate break(s).

Community Resources. A variety of persons, organizations, or businesses that provide information, guidance, or support to a specific program of study or career opportunity, such as professional and trade associations, employers, and guest speakers.

Competency-based Program. A competency-based program clearly defines the skills, knowledge, and professional behavior (soft skills) 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 (see Direct Assessment).

Competency Test. A test with pre-established standards to measure performance. An example would be a spelling component consisting of ten questions where a score of seven or more is passing. The cutoff “pass-fail” point is referred to as criterion referenced. Usually used for promotion or graduation purposes, these tests are not standardized nationally.

Computer-Assisted Instruction (CAI). A type of self-paced instruction that uses the computer as the primary medium for tutorials, drills, repetitive practice, simulation, or games.

Connect Time. The amount of time that an online student has been logged on to the education provider’s computer or server for a particular session. The connect time may be used by a school to monitor an online student’s “attendance” and participation in a class session.

Course. A single subject described in an institutional catalog or bulletin.

Credit. (1) The quantitative measurement assigned to a course, generally stated in semester hours, quarter hours, or clock hours. (2) The recognition awarded upon successful completion of coursework.

Credit Conversion. The process of converting units of credit based on one kind of calendar to units based on another kind of calendar. For example, the three most common calendars convert as follows: quarter hours multiplied by two-thirds equal semester hours; semester hours multiplied by one and one-half equal quarter hours; and trimester hours are equal to semester hours unless the trimester is of less than 15 weeks’ duration, in which case the number of weeks and length of class sessions must be considered. While the institution may present itself as credit-without-term, one of the three traditional calendars must be used.

Credit Hour. A unit by which an institution may measure its coursework. 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, 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.

**Credit Hour, Quarter.** The number of credit hours assigned to a traditionally delivered course consists of a minimum of 10 classroom lecture periods of not less than 50 minutes each and assumes outside reading and/or preparation, 20 laboratory clock hours where classroom theory is applied and explored or manipulative skills are enhanced, 30 hours of external discipline-related work experience with indirect instructor supervision or employer assessment, or an appropriate combination of all three. The number of credit hours assigned to a nontraditionally delivered course must be determined and justified by the institution and approved by the Council.

**Credit Hour, Semester.** The number of credit hours assigned to a traditionally delivered course consists of a minimum of 15 classroom lecture periods of not less than 50 minutes each and assumes outside reading and/or preparation, 30 laboratory clock hours where classroom theory is applied and explored or manipulative skills are enhanced, 45 hours of external discipline-related work experience with indirect instructor supervision or employer assessment, or an appropriate combination of all three. The number of credit hours assigned to a nontraditionally delivered course must be determined and justified by the institution and approved by the Council.

**Credit Hour, Trimester.** A minimum 15-week term. Trimester credits are equivalent to semester credits.

**Curriculum.** A program of courses fulfilling the requirements for a certificate, diploma, or degree in a particular field of study (see Program).

**D**

**Degree.** Credential awarded as official recognition for the successful completion of an academic program.

**Degree, Advanced.** A degree beyond the bachelor’s degree (e.g., MA, MS, MBA, PhD).

**Degree, Associate.** The academic credential granted upon successful completion of an educational program of generally two but less than four years of full-time equivalent 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 four years of full-time equivalent college-level work, including a minimum number of credits as specified under Section 3-5-202.

**Degree, First Professional.** The first degree that signifies completion of the minimum academic requirements for practice of a profession. A first professional degree is most commonly a bachelor’s degree, but is sometimes a master’s or doctorate (e.g., MLS, JD, MD).

**Degree, Graduate.** (1) In general, any degree conferred by a graduate division or a graduate school of an institution of higher education. (2) More specifically, all advanced degrees, and also all first professional degrees which are conferred by graduate schools.

**Degree, Professional Doctoral.** The degree signifying completion of the advanced academic requirements for practice of a profession. A professional doctoral degree is most commonly a practitioner-based degree beyond the master’s degree level (i.e., JD, EdD, DFA, DBA, but not PhD).
Degree, Specialized. The credential granted upon successful completion of an educational program of at least two academic years or equivalent of college-level work which includes an emphasis on occupational and technical coursework.

Diploma. A document issued to evidence successful completion of an academic program. A diploma is awarded for programs varying in length from only a few months to those lasting several years and awarding degrees.

Direct Assessment. The use of tools or instruments which provide for the direct examination or observation of student knowledge or skills against measurable learning outcome. Techniques which measure what students know and/or can do and provide strong evidence of student learning. 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.

Distance Education or Distance Learning. A structured educational situation in which the students and instructors are physically separated. Distance education supports regular and substantive interaction synchronously or asynchronously between instructor and learner, among learners, and between learners and learning resources through one or more interactive technologies.

Electronic Learning or E-learning. Refers to a wide range of methodologies used in the delivery of instructional content via Internet, satellite broadcast, interactive TV, CD-ROM, etc.

Employer Satisfaction. Employer satisfaction and the level of satisfaction are defined by the campus based upon information collected, typically via a survey, on a regular basis from employers who have hired graduates of programs offered by the campus. Satisfaction questions should cover different aspects of career preparation in general (such as professionalism and foundational and soft skills) as well as specific skills in the particular field and the overall satisfaction of the employer with the preparation of graduates to perform tasks which utilize such skills.

Enrollment, Full-Time Equivalent. The equivalent number of full-time students at an established census date, equivalency being established by dividing the total student credit hours by the assumed normal individual load of credit hours.

Externship. A practical experience, under the supervision of a qualified faculty member, 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. 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.

Face-to-Face or F2F. Refers to the traditional classroom teaching/learning environment. Also known as Instructor-led Training or ILT, on-ground training, or on-site training.

Faculty Contact Hours. The total hours of scheduled instructional activity spent by instructional faculty as of a specific period of time. If a course meets three hours per week for 15 weeks, it yields 45 contact hours.

Faculty Development. The activities by which faculty gain knowledge and skills to enhance expertise in the specific area(s) of instruction or on new curriculum concepts, theories, and techniques of
instruction, and educational media. The institution must demonstrate that the balance between methodology training (in-service) and content knowledge enhancement (professional growth) is appropriate for the individual faculty member. All activities must be documented (see In-Service Training and Professional Growth).

Financial Aid. Student financial assistance funded by state or federal programs and administered by the institution.

Follow-up. The study of any group of students or former students of the institution who have shared a common experience to determine if patterns emerge in their subsequent actions or behavior which prove useful in understanding, counseling, and establishing policies for other students; for example, a study of the number of graduates who have entered graduate schools or a study of the number of graduates who have obtained employment.

Four-Year Institution. (1) Literally, an institution of higher education offering four years of college-level work culminating in a bachelor’s degree. (2) In common usage, distinguished from a two-year institution and characterized by offering four or more years of coursework normally creditable toward a bachelor’s or higher degree or equivalent award. In addition to coursework normally creditable toward a bachelor’s or higher degree, four-year institutions may also offer other types of instruction; e.g., courses in general and continuing education, short courses, occupational curricula leading to an associate’s degree.

Full-Motion Video. Transmission of the complete action taking place at the originating site.

G

General Education. Those areas of learning which are deemed to be the common experience of all “educated” persons and must include subject matter from the humanities, mathematics and the sciences, and the social sciences.

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.

General Education, Mathematics and the Sciences. Courses such as biology, chemistry, physics, geology, astronomy, and mathematics theory and analysis, including algebra, trigonometry, geometry, calculus, and other advanced mathematics courses, but excluding business mathematics and basic computations.

General Education, Social Sciences. Courses such as history, economics, political science, geography, sociology, anthropology, and general psychology, but excluding courses such as practical psychology, selling techniques, and social or business behavior.

Graduate Satisfaction. Graduate satisfaction and the level of satisfaction are defined by the campus based upon information collected on a regular basis from students who have graduated from the programs offered by the campus. Recommended information includes the results of surveys of all graduates who left the institution at least 30 days prior to being contacted. Satisfaction questions should cover different aspects of the program and the campus as well as overall satisfaction of the graduate with the preparation provided by the campus for the position.

H

Home Institution. In a case where an institution collaborates with another entity for the delivery of distance education courses, “home institution” is the campus through which the student enrolls for the course. The Home Institution is responsible for assuring that accrediting standards are met, for
providing on-campus services, and for clearly demonstrating through a formal Consortium Agreement the roles and responsibilities of the Home Institution and the Host Institution, which may deliver the distance education courses and specified online services. The Consortium Agreement must be approved by ACICS and must provide for evaluation visits to the Host Institution as may be required by ACICS.

ACICS expects the Home Institution to offer more than 50 percent of a program if courses are delivered under a distance education Consortium Agreement with an approved accredited institution, and to offer a minimum of 75 percent of a program if courses are delivered under a distance education Consortium Agreement with an approved unaccredited entity.

**Host Institution.** The institution which collaborates with an accredited institution in delivering distance education courses and specific online services as described in a formal Consortium Agreement approved by ACICS. The Consortium Agreement must provide for evaluation visits to the Host Institution as may be required by ACICS. If the Host Institution is an approved unaccredited entity, it is subject to an evaluation visit once every three years as required by ACICS.

**Humanities.** See General Education. Humanities.

**Hybrid Course or Hybrid Program.** A hybrid course is one that mixes face-to-face, traditional classroom instruction with online instruction. A hybrid program is one that offers or requires a percentage of the required courses in a program online. ACICS requires the school to clearly outline the percentage of online activity included in a course or a program. Institutions are required to apply for and secure approval prior to initiating any distance education activity and also when they increase their distance education activity from hybrid to fully online (see Section 2-2-106).

**In-Service Training.** Special planned and systematic experiences sponsored by an institution and related to curriculum and instruction that affect the majority of the faculty in a collective fashion. In-service education has as its major goal the updating of teachers in (1) subject matter, (2) curriculum concepts, (3) new theories and techniques of instruction, and (4) new educational media.

**Independent Study.** Independent study involves a high level of independence and self-direction on the part of the student to read, conduct research, and complete written examinations, reports, research papers, and similar assignments designed to measure the student’s grasp of the subject matter. Under the supervision of a faculty member, a learning contract signed by the student and institution shall be developed which outlines specific learning objectives, texts, supplemental readings, course requirements, evaluative criteria, and examination dates. Because independent study classes are the exception and not the rule, the number of courses that a student will be allowed to take independently should be limited.

**Indirect Assessment.** Tools or instruments which provide for an evaluation of attitudes and/or inferences of whether student learning has occurred. Examples of indirect measures are as follows: 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.

**Information Technology.** Method or modes of delivering training, education, or research information via current or new telecommunications technologies, such as television broadcasts, closed circuit television systems, cable television, satellite transmissions, computers and computer-based access to external learning resources, videotape and interactive video disc, audio by disc, tapes or
broadcasts, and other such information and telecommunications systems that alone or in combination assist in teaching and learning.

**Institution.** A main campus and any branch campuses of that main campus. As an institutional accreditor, ACICS accredits institutions as a whole and does not separately accredit individual campuses or programs (see Title I, Chapter 3, Introduction).

**Institution, Multiple-Campus.** An institution that provides educational programs at one main campus and one or more branch campuses (see Section 1-3-202).

**Institution, Single-Campus.** An institution that provides educational programs at one main, free-standing campus (see Sections 1-3-201 and 2-2-201).

**Integrated Learning System (ILS).** A network system that provides a complete package of curriculum, assessment capabilities, record keeping, and other aids to monitor and manage student learning activity.

**Interaction.** Refers to student engagement with faculty, other students, and other participants in learning content at a level aligned with the courses offered as part of the ongoing learning process.

**Internship.** See Externship.

**Laboratory.** A learning environment where students apply knowledge or instruction to enhance skills and solve problems. Normally, two hours of work in a laboratory environment, under the supervision of an instructor, has the credit equivalency of one hour of classroom lecture.

**Learning Management System (LMS).** A system to manage courses created by a variety of publishers and providers. The LMS also helps the school manage online or distance education activity by providing critical reporting mechanisms.

**Learning Object.** An e-learning content module which is reusable, easily classified, and stored in a data repository.

**Learning Site.** A learning site is a classroom extension of a main campus or branch campus that 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.

**Lecture.** A learning environment where a teacher instructs students in the theory, principles, or history of an academic or vocational subject. To maximally benefit from such instruction, a student is assumed to have done outside preparation. Two hours of preparation for each hour of instruction are generally assumed.

**Loan.** An advance of money, generally evidenced by a promissory note, on the agreement to repay absolutely such advance, with or without interest.

**Lower-Division Course.** Generally, a survey course that includes an introductory overview of a particular area of knowledge. These courses often do not include a prerequisite for enrollment and frequently are offered to freshman- and sophomore-level students. Lower-division courses usually carry course numbers in the 100-299 or 1000-2999 range.
M


Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). An approved arrangement between and among campuses within an institution to provide services, including distance education, from one location to another. Such arrangements must be approved by ACICS and published in the institution’s catalog.

N

Need-based Grant. An institutionally financed award to a student who demonstrates a need for financial assistance in order to participate in the educational program. Need-based grants must be made available to all students on the same terms.

O

Occupational Short-term Programs. Programs that are less than 300 contact hours and lead to an academic credential and/or licensure.

Online Learning. A term used interchangeably with Internet-based Learning, Web-based Learning, and Distance Learning.

Outcomes, Campus. The intended result or end result of an activity or process in the assessment of effectiveness. In determining effectiveness, campuses are required to evaluate the following outcomes: placement rates; retention rates; licensure examination pass rates (where applicable); employer satisfaction; graduate satisfaction; student satisfaction, and other student learning outcomes. Campuses also may use additional outcomes in evaluating effectiveness.

P

Placement. Working in the field of study or acquiring a credential that directly benefits the graduate’s existing employment.

Placement Rate. The Placement Rate is defined by ACICS in terms of the total number of completers and graduates minus those who are not placed (employed), divided by the total number of completers and graduates, and expressed as a percent. The placement rate is calculated at both the program and campus levels, based upon data submitted for the annual Campus Accountability Report (CAR) and according to the detailed formula and terms defined in the Guidelines and Instructions for the Campus Accountability Report, which is available on the ACICS website. The detailed formula includes definitions of placed adjustments, and exclusions for students not available for placement.

Practicum. See Externship.

Professional Growth. The process by which employees gain knowledge and skills which enhance their expertise. Professional growth may be accomplished through a combination of the following activities: membership and participation in educational associations, professional organizations, continuance of education, concurrent related business experience, educational research, and awareness of current practices and standards. Attendance at seminars, conventions, field visits, vendor shows, equipment exhibits, etc., are excellent opportunities for instructors to gain enrichment. Professional writing by an instructor is also an example of professional growth.

Program. A sequential grouping of courses which forms a considerable part, or all, of the requirements for an academic credential or an occupational objective. May refer to the total educational offering of an institution (see Curriculum).
Record, Admissions and Advisement. Official documents of admissions data and academic advising. Such documents include but are not limited to applications for admission or readmission (for matriculants), admissions letters, denial and waitlist notifications, aptitude/assessment test scores, military records, degree audit records, transfer credit evaluations, transcripts reflecting degrees earned from other institutions, and academic advising correspondence.

Record, Financial Aid. Official documents regarding any grant, scholarship, or loan offered to assist the student in meeting college expenses. Documentation may vary depending upon the funding source (e.g. state or federal programs, high schools, foundations, or corporations).

Record, Permanent Academic. Official document of the student’s scholastic progress. Such documents include, but are not limited to, official transcripts; final grade reports detailing each course code, course title, and final grades for a given year and term; and any documented change to final grades.

Record, Student. An electronic or hard-copy record that includes, at a minimum, a student’s admissions and advisement, permanent academic, and financial aid records.

Refund. Return of money, cancellation of obligation, or otherwise resolution of the debt.

Regular Student. A student who is enrolled in a program leading to a certificate, diploma, or degree at an institution and is making satisfactory progress toward program completion in compliance with the Standards of SAP stated in Sections 3-1-420 through 3-1-423. Any other student attending the institution is considered in an extended enrollment status and is not eligible for government student aid.

Retention Rate. The Retention Rate is defined by ACICS in terms of the total student enrollment, minus those students who withdraw, divided by the total student enrollment, and expressed as a percent. The retention rate is calculated at both the program and campus levels, based upon data submitted for the annual CAR and according to the detailed formula and terms defined in the CAR Guidelines and Instructions available on the ACICS website. The detailed formula includes definitions, adjustments, and exclusions for calculating total enrollment and withdrawals.

Scalability. Provisions available for a computer application to handle expansions in size, volume, or number of users without undue disruption.

Scholarship. (1) The quality of a student’s achievement in the student’s studies. (2) A financial award which does not involve repayment. A scholarship may be institutionally financed or funded by a third party. It is awarded by the institution in accordance with published standards which describe student qualifications and the source of funding. Reasons for the award may include one or more qualifications such as the student’s performance (or potential for performance) in the educational program of the institution, financial need, talents sought, and service valued by the institution or the third party.

Service Center, Distance Education. A permanent location used to provide academic support and student services to those enrolled in distance education programs. There is no face-to-face instruction as in a traditional classroom.

Simulations. Computer applications that offer highly interactive options for the learner to practice skills, model, or role play in realistic scenarios.

Social Sciences. See General Education, Social Sciences.
**Specialization.** In a degree program, a collection of courses apart from the Area of Concentration that provides students with in-depth knowledge in a given area of expertise leading to potential career opportunities within that specified field of study.

**Student, Full-Time.** A student enrolled in a minimum of 12 credit hours or the equivalent per term.

**Student Learning Outcomes, Assessment of.** The measurement 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. Student learning outcomes are expressed as measurable knowledge, skills, abilities, or attitudes (see Direct Assessment and Indirect Assessment).

**Student Satisfaction.** Student satisfaction and the level of satisfaction are defined by the campus based upon information collected, typically via a survey, on a regular basis from students who are currently enrolled at the campus. Satisfaction questions should cover different aspects of the current program of study and the services provided by the campus to prepare the student for the workforce.

**Syllabus.** A description of how the course will be taught with a planned arrangement of materials and activities. The minimum requirements for a course syllabus consist of the title and course description, course number, course prerequisites and/or corequisites, instructional contact hours/credits, learning objectives, instructional materials and references, topical outline of the course, instructional methods, out-of-class learning activities and assignments, assessment criteria, method of evaluating students, and the date the syllabus was last reviewed. A course syllabus should be reviewed to ensure that it reflects the most recent trends, developments, and instructional materials for the specific subject areas. A current syllabus prepared and utilized by instructors in guiding and directing the learning experience of the students is necessary to ensure the quality of instruction.

**Synchronous Interactions.** Teaching/learning interactions between instructors and students which take place in real time or simultaneously through the use of various online technologies. These may include virtual classrooms, audio- or videoconferencing, Internet teleconferences, etc.

T

**Teach-out.** A process during which a program, institution, or institutional location that provides 100 percent of at least one program engages in an orderly closure or when, following the closure of an institution or campus, another institution provides an opportunity for the students of the closed institution to complete their program, regardless of their academic progress at the time of closure.

**Teach-out Agreement.** A written agreement between institutions that provides for the equitable treatment of students and a reasonable opportunity for students to complete their program of study if an institution, or an institutional location that provides 100 percent of at least one program offered, ceases to operate or plans to cease operations before all enrolled students have completed their program of study.

**Teach-out Plan.** A written plan developed by an institution that provides for the equitable treatment of students if an institution, or an institutional location that provides 100 percent of at least one program, ceases to operate or plans to cease operations before all enrolled students have completed their program of study.

**Term.** (1) A calendar unit. (2) Division of the school year during which an educational institution is in session; it may designate the summer term or may be used as a synonym for quarter, school term, semester, or trimester. Historically, a term has been any one of the two or three major periods during which classes were in session, specifically referred to as the fall term, spring term, etc.
Terminal Degree. The highest credential generally available in a discipline, which usually is an earned doctorate such as PhD, EdD, JD, or DBA. In some disciplines, however, the master’s degree is considered the terminal degree. Examples include the MFA, MSW, and MLS.

Threaded Discussions. Online classroom activity in which the instructor may post a series of messages on a particular topic and invite the students to participate in the discussion forum.

Transcript. A copy of the permanent academic (educational) record at an institution of higher education. It becomes an official transcript when the seal of the institution is affixed, and the signature of an authorized person is appended.

Two-Year Institution. (1) Literally, an institution of higher education offering the first two years of college-level coursework. (2) In common usage a two-year institution is distinguished from a four-year institution and is characterized by offering at least two, but less than four, years of an organized curriculum. The curriculum may be of the transfer type (with credits normally transferable at full value toward a bachelor’s degree), terminal-occupational, or open-ended. Two-year institutions include junior colleges, technical institutes, and semi-professional schools. In addition to organized curricula, two-year institutions also may offer other types of instruction, e.g., courses in general education and adult education, short courses, and special lectures.

Upper-Division Course. Generally, a course that presents more specialized course content, is more rigorous than a lower-division course, and often includes at least one prerequisite. Upper-division courses usually carry course numbers in the 300-499 or 3000-4999 range.

Validated Test. A nationally recognized, standardized or industry-developed test which consistently measures what it is designed to measure, e.g., ability of non-high school graduates to benefit from postsecondary education.

Videoconferencing. A teaching/learning activity which uses video and audio signals to communicate with student groups at diverse locations.

Webinar. A synchronous online conference in which the teacher or presenter may communicate with students via text, audio, video, electronic whiteboard, and other devices. The event may include listener participation and archived for asynchronous delivery.

Withdrawal. The termination of a student’s attendance in a class or in all classes before the end of the term.
Appendix A – Bylaws

Article I: General Provisions and Definitions

Section 1–Name. The name of the corporation shall be the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools, which corporation also is referred to herein as “ACICS” or “the Corporation.”

Section 2–Board of Directors. The governance and administration of the affairs of the Corporation shall be vested in a Board of Directors (sometimes referred to herein as the “Board”). The Board shall be constituted as provided in Article II.

Section 3–Council. The Council shall consist of elected and appointed commissioners.

Section 4–Recognition. ACICS shall be the body holding recognition from appropriate recognition bodies.

Section 5–Directors. Directors are those persons serving on the Board of Directors.

Section 6–Commissioners. Commissioners are those persons elected by their peers or appointed by the Council to serve designated terms on the Council.

Section 7–Public Representatives. Representatives of the public are persons who are interested in career education; have knowledge or experience useful to the accreditation process; are willing to contribute opinion, advice, and expertise to the endeavors of ACICS and the Council; and are not (1) employed by an institution or program that either is accredited by the agency or has applied for accreditation; or (2) associated as members of the governing board, owners, shareholders, consultants or in some other similar capacity with an institution or program that either is accredited by the agency or has applied for accreditation; or (3) a member of any trade association or membership organization related to, affiliated with, or associated with the agency; or (4) a spouse, parent, child, or sibling of an person identified in paragraph (1), (2), or (3) of this definition.

Section 8–Membership. Membership shall be institutional or organizational in nature and shall consist of accredited colleges, postsecondary schools, branches, and other entities, all as defined in the Accreditation Criteria of ACICS.

Section 9–Offices. The main offices of ACICS shall be in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area. ACICS may have other temporary or permanent offices to facilitate its work. The office of the Corporation’s registered agent shall be an office of ACICS.

Section 10–President. The President of the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools shall be designated by the Board of Directors and shall be ACICS’s CEO.

Article II: Board of Directors

Section 1–Composition. The Board of Directors shall be composed of the commissioners and the President. The President shall serve ex officio as a member of the Board and shall have no vote.

Section 2–Powers and Duties. Except as otherwise provided by law or in these Bylaws, the Board of Directors shall have the right and responsibility to manage and direct the affairs and exercise the powers of the Corporation. Responsibilities of the Board shall be to:

(a) provide for an annual certified audit and management letter regarding all financial affairs of ACICS;
(b) develop and approve an annual budget;
(c) oversee revenues, expenditures, and investments;
(d) monitor and coordinate external affairs, including government and consumer concerns;
(e) ensure canons of ethical business operations and personal conduct;
(f) employ a CEO whose title shall be President;
(g) conduct an annual meeting of the membership of ACICS;
(h) facilitate communication and coordination among the commissioners;
(i) coordinate strategic planning, assess the effectiveness of the strategic plan, and take final action on the strategic plan;
(j) assess the effectiveness of ACICS in fulfilling its mission and meeting its goals and objectives;
(k) take all actions necessary to perform required functions of the Corporation; and
(l) amend the Bylaws as provided for herein.

Section 3—Officers of the Board and Officers of the Council. The officers of the Board of Directors shall be: Chair; Chair Elect; Secretary, and Treasurer. The officers of the Council shall be: Chair and Chair Elect.

(a) Chair. The Chair of the Council shall serve also as the Chair of the Board of Directors. The Chair shall preside over all meetings of the Board and of the Council and is responsible for seeing that policies established and actions taken by those bodies are carried out. The Chair will represent the Board and the Council in their dealings with governmental bodies, the press, and the public, and may sign or approve correspondence and other instruments.

(b) Chair Elect. The Chair Elect of the Council shall serve also as Chair Elect of the Board. The Chair Elect assumes responsibilities as delegated by the Board; in the absence of the Chair, shall serve as Chair of the Board and of the Council; serves as Chair of the Nominating Committee; and shall serve as Chair of the Board and Council in the subsequent year.

(c) Secretary. The President shall serve as the Secretary of the Board. The Secretary is responsible for preparing and maintaining custody of the minutes of all meetings of members, the Board, and the Council for the purpose of authenticating the records of the Corporation for each, for giving all notices required in accordance with these Bylaws, for receiving service in legal matters, and for performing all duties customary to the office of Secretary. The Secretary shall have custody of the corporate seal and authority to affix the seal to any instrument requiring it.

(d) Treasurer. The Treasurer shall be a Director and shall be elected by majority vote of the Directors present and voting at a duly constituted meeting of the Board. The Treasurer shall keep or cause to be kept complete and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements and shall direct the President to ensure deposit of all moneys and other valuable property of the Corporation in such banks or depositories as the Board may designate. The funds, books, and vouchers under supervision of the Treasurer or other delegated persons, with the exception of confidential reports submitted by the members, shall at all times be subject to verification and inspection by the Board. The Treasurer shall serve on the Audit and Investment Committees of the Board of Directors. The Treasurer shall, at the annual meeting of members or by direct mail, report on the financial condition of the Corporation at least once annually.

(e) Additional Officers. The Board may create positions of Assistant Treasurer and Assistant Secretary as necessary for the orderly conduct of business. When so authorized, the President shall appoint persons from the professional staff to fill such offices and may assign appropriate duties to them. The President shall be responsible for filling all vacancies occurring in these positions.

(f) Terms. Except as otherwise provided in these Bylaws, officers of the Board or the Council shall serve in office for one (1) year or until election of a successor or, if ex officio, as long as they hold the position which entitles them to serve as an officer of the Board or Council.
Article III: Council

Section 1–Composition. The Council shall consist of commissioners representing member institutions; commissioners-at-large, and public representatives. It shall comprise no more than 15 commissioners, and it shall include at least 2 academic representatives and at least 2 administrative representatives. Academic representative is defined as someone currently or recently directly engaged in a significant manner in postsecondary teaching and/or research. Administrative representative is defined as someone currently or recently directly engaged in a significant manner in postsecondary institutional or programmatic administration. At least 40 percent of the commissioners shall be public representatives.

Section 2–Powers and Duties. Responsibilities of the Council shall be to:

(a) promulgate standards of accreditation and establish eligibility conditions, policies, and procedures for accreditation;
(b) take final action on initial grants of accreditation;
(c) take final action on denial, suspension, and withdrawal motions;
(d) provide mechanisms for appeals and dispute resolution to ensure due process in resolution of conflicts between members and the Council;
(e) provide to members appropriate accreditation-related services such as consultation, accreditation process workshops, and training opportunities for evaluators;
(f) disseminate information on standards, procedures, and activities;
(g) monitor compliance with the standards;
(h) receive and act on other applications;
(i) issue show-cause directives;
(j) serve as liaison to recognition agencies or bodies;
(k) issue a list of accredited colleges, schools, and organizations;
(l) assess and collect fees from members;
(m) take final action on the strategic plan; and
(n) exercise other powers and duties incidental to the foregoing.

Article IV: Terms, Vacancies, Removal, Resignations, and Compensation

Section 1–Assumption of Office. New commissioners shall assume office on January 1 of the calendar year following election or appointment, unless otherwise provided for by the Council. Incumbent commissioners will remain in office until new commissioners are seated.

Section 2–Terms. The term of service as a commissioner shall be five years. A person appointed to fill a term of less than two and one-half years is entitled to apply for appointment to a full term. Upon completion of a commissioner’s term, the commissioner shall not be eligible to serve another full term until three years have elapsed. However, a commissioner appointment to complete a vacated term, in full or part, is not subject to the three-year waiting period. If nominated, public representatives may serve one additional appointment without the three-year waiting period.

Section 3–Vacancies. Where a vacancy exists, the Nominating Committee shall review and make recommendations to the Council for its consideration.

Section 4–Resignations. Resignation from service as a commissioner and Director may be voluntarily tendered at any time. The resignation becomes effective upon receipt of written notice by the Chair of the Board and Council or the President. Automatic tendering of resignation is required under the following circumstances or conditions:
(a) change of control or ownership at the institution with which affiliated;
(b) change in employment status (other than internal); and
(c) the commissioner is employed by an institution that is deemed to be under sustained and serious scrutiny regarding noncompliance with ACICS standards and requirements; or
(d) adverse information resulting from an investigation of the institution, agency, or company with which affiliated by federal, state, or regulatory agencies.

Not all of the foregoing necessarily will result in acceptance of resignation but must be considered by the Council before service can continue.

Section 5–Removal. A commissioner may also be removed by not less than a two-thirds vote of the Council for breach of any code, canon, or tenet of ethics formally adopted pursuant to these Bylaws. Automatic removal is required under the following circumstances or conditions:

(a) denial, suspension, or involuntary revocation of accreditation at the institution with which affiliated;
(b) cessation or announced cessation of operations at such institution;
(c) filing for reorganization or bankruptcy by such institution or its parent corporation;
(d) debarment by the USDE from employment at any institution participating in federal student funding programs; or
(e) indictment for a criminal offense.

Section 6–Compensation. Commissioners shall serve without compensation. Public representatives shall receive honoraria for service in such amounts as the Board shall fix. Commissioners, as well as members of committees, if so provided in advance, shall be reimbursed for expenses incurred in performance of authorized duties.

Article V: Committees

Section 1–Standing Committees of the Council. There shall be the following standing committees of the Council:

(a) Nominating Committee. The Nominating Committee shall be responsible for the screening of nominees and the selection of candidates for election as commissioners. It also shall identify persons qualified to be appointed as commissioners and recommend them to the Council for appointment. The Nominating Committee shall seek to maintain a Council that is generally representative of the types of member institutions.
(i) Composition. The Nominating Committee shall be appointed by the Chair of the Council and shall consist of five members, at least four of whom are current commissioners. Members representing both nondegree and degree granting institutions are encouraged. There shall be two representatives from the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors and one person from an ACICS-accredited institution who may or may not be a member of the Council. The Chair Elect of the Council and Board automatically serves as the Chair of the Nominating Committee.
(ii) Procedures. The membership of ACICS shall be notified of the composition of the committee and invited to submit to it names of qualified nominees. The committee in its selection of candidates shall be mindful of diversity of programs, size and types of institutions, and geographic representation. It shall develop and publish eligibility criteria, permissible campaign practices by candidates, and any special voting procedures. Interviews of nominees by the committee are permitted.
(b) **Business Practices Committee.** The Business Practices Committee shall consist of commissioners appointed by the Chair of the Council and Board. The mission of the committee is to identify and promote quality business practices of career colleges and schools, to ensure integrity and ethical relations, and to foster cooperation among institutions on behalf of students and others served.

(c) **Education Enhancement and Evaluation Committee.** The Education Enhancement and Evaluation Committee shall consist of commissioners appointed by the Chair of the Council and Board. The mission of the committee is to establish standards for educational quality that assist institutions in mission fulfillment, program planning and development, institutional evaluation activities, and successful educational outcomes.

(d) **Financial Review Committee.** The Financial Review Committee shall consist of commissioners appointed by the Chair of the Council and Board. The mission of the committee is to monitor the financial stability of accredited institutions in order to ensure they maintain sufficient financial resources to deliver a quality education to their students.

(e) **Institutional Effectiveness Committee.** The Institutional Effectiveness Committee shall consist of commissioners appointed by the Chair of the Council and Board. The mission of the committee is to assist institutions in the improvement of their outcomes by establishing and assessing criteria for institutional effectiveness. In order to assist ACICS-accredited institutions to meet established standards, the committee shall review Campus Accountability Reports, Institutional Effectiveness Plans, and institutional outcomes and measurements.

Section 2−Standing Committees of the Board of Directors. There shall be the following standing committees of the Board:

(a) **Executive Committee.** The Executive Committee shall consist of the Chair of the Board of Directors, who shall serve as Chair of the Executive Committee; the Chair Elect of the Board, who shall serve as Chair of the Executive Committee in the absence of the Chair of the Board; the Secretary; the Treasurer; and additional Directors as the Chair deems necessary, which are elected annually by majority vote of the Board. The Executive Committee acts on behalf of the Board and/or Council during the periods between Board and Council meetings. Accurate minutes of each Executive Committee meeting shall be maintained and shall be provided to the Board of Directors and/or Council at the next subsequent meeting of the Board of Directors or the Council. The Executive Committee’s responsibilities shall be: between meetings of the Board and/or Council, act on issues requiring the timely attention of the Board or Council and assume such other duties as the Board of Directors or Council may from time to time delegate to the Executive Committee.

(b) **Audit Committee.** The Audit Committee shall consist of a minimum of three members of the Board, including the Treasurer, as well as such other members as the Chair appoints. The committee shall work with the President to ensure an annual certified audit of the organization’s financial activities is completed, that the findings of the audit are reviewed, and that actions are taken to address recommendations and areas of concern identified as part of the audit process.

(c) **Investment Committee.** The Investment Committee shall consist of the President, a minimum of three other members of the Board, including the Treasurer, and such other members as the Chair appoints. The Investment Committee shall work with the President to provide oversight of ACICS’s investment funds. The Investment Committee shall select investment advisors, develop an investment plan, and review investment reports at least annually.

(d) **Governance Committee.** The Governance Committee shall consist of commissioners appointed by the Chair of the Council and Board. The mission of the committee is to ensure that ACICS
operates within the construct of the Bylaws. The committee will evaluate and make recommendations for modifications to the Bylaws in response to proposed changes in standards or operational policies at ACICS.

(e) Ethics Review Committee. The Ethics Review Committee shall consist of four persons selected by ACICS consisting of two independent, public members, one member affiliated with an ACICS institution, and one current Director. The Committee shall meet at least annually to allow for continuous evaluation of the ethical practices that govern the Council, staff, and its institutions. In addition, the committee shall meet on and as-needed basis to review perceived or actual ethical violations of Directors and provide recommendations for resolution.

Section 3–Other Committees. The Board of Directors may establish and appoint members to other ad hoc committees as deemed necessary.

Article VI: Membership, Fees, and Meetings

Section 1–Gaining Membership. Membership in ACICS is voluntary and can only be obtained through accreditation. Members shall be institutions or organizations which provide education or training as heretofore defined. Each main or branch campus is entitled to all of the rights and privileges and assumes all of the obligations of membership as provided in these Bylaws. The term of membership shall be coexistent with accreditation.

Section 2–Loss of Membership. Any member that ceases to be accredited by ACICS shall automatically, and without the necessity for further action, be deemed to be removed from membership. Members may voluntarily withdraw pursuant to the procedures described in 2-2-700, which results in a revocation of accreditation. All obligations owed to ACICS, including payment of fees, shall be fulfilled prior to resignation. The loss of accreditation shall be retroactive to the date that all outstanding obligations had previously been fulfilled, if applicable.

Section 3–Types of Fees. There shall be three types of fees: (1) annual sustaining fees, (2) user (or service) fees, and (3) late fees. The annual sustaining fee shall be scaled by formula to the annual educational revenue generated by each member. The user fees shall relate to the cost of services requested or the actions initiated by the members or applicants for membership. The late fees shall be established by the Council.

Section 4–Change in Fees. The Council may adjust the fees annually equivalent to the change in the national Consumer Price Index (CPI). Any increase above the CPI percentage shall be presented to the membership for approval.

Section 5–Conditions of Payment. Sustaining fees are due and payable on August 15 and cover the period of July 1–June 30. Nonpayment of annual fees by August 15 subjects a member to late fees and could result in an automatic loss of membership and loss of accreditation without a hearing. Sustaining fees are not subject to proration should an institution voluntarily withdraw or close during the year.

Section 6–Proration of Fees. A member becoming eligible for membership during the first month of the fiscal year shall pay the full amount of the annual sustaining fees as applicable. Members becoming eligible during succeeding months shall pay a proportionate amount of the otherwise applicable fee as determined by the number of months remaining in the fiscal year, including the month in which membership is attained.

Section 7–Other Costs. In addition to fees herein described, costs of visits conducted by the Council will be invoiced to the institution.
Section 8−Assessments. The Council, upon a majority vote, may propose an assessment in addition to the annual sustaining fees provided for in this Article where there has occurred or is impending an emergency which may impair the ability of the Council to achieve its purposes and the amount of annual dues is insufficient to meet the Council’s requirements. The proposed assessment shall be submitted to the members for approval or disapproval on majority vote.

Section 9−Annual Meeting. A meeting of the members shall be held annually at a date and place to be determined by the Board of Directors. The purpose of such meeting shall be the receipt of reports on the budget and finances of ACICS and its activities and affairs, and the transaction of other business as may be specified by the Board in the call for and notice of the meeting. The meeting may combine these business purposes with informational and educational sessions; meetings of the Board, the Council, commissions, or committees; and special events for the members.

Section 10−Special Meetings. Special meetings of the members may be called by the Board of Directors upon request of a majority of the Board or upon petition to the Board by not fewer than the lesser of 50 members or 10 percent of the membership not under common ownership or control.

Section 11−Notice of Meetings. Normally, members shall be notified at least 30 days in advance of the date, location, time, and purpose of all meetings of the members. Waiver of notice may be recorded at any special meeting of the members by majority vote of a quorum present at such meeting.

Section 12−Designated Delegate. Each main campus is entitled to one Designated Delegate who is authorized to vote on behalf of that member institution in all matters requiring a vote of the members. Appointment of the Designated Delegate is made by the CEO of the institution by notice in writing to ACICS. Changes of Designated Delegate shall be made in writing at least 15 days prior to the date of any scheduled vote, which becomes the record date for determining eligibility to vote.

Section 13−Quorum. Twenty percent of the members eligible to vote and represented by Designated Delegates shall constitute a quorum at a meeting of the members for the transaction of business, except that any issue not properly noticed in the call for the meeting and that requires membership-wide participation may not be acted upon under new business. The Board of Directors may adopt such procedures as it deems necessary for the conduct of business. In the absence of an established procedure, Robert’s Rules of Order shall apply.

Section 14−Meetings of the Council. The Council shall convene as often as necessary to review materials attendant to the accrediting process and to take formal action on the accredited status of applicants.

Article VII: Appeals Process

Section 1−Review Board of Appeals. A Review Board of Appeals shall be appointed by the Council. The purpose of the Review Board shall be to review, according to pre-established procedures and guidelines, appeals by members of final adverse actions by the Council and in each case either to affirm the action of the Council, to remand the case to the Council for further review, or to amend or overturn the action. The Review Board shall consist of 15 persons, all of whom have had experience in accreditation. The Review Board shall include at least two academic representatives, two administrative representatives, and three public members, as defined in Article III, Section 1 herein. Review Board panels will consist of a minimum of three members and be comprised of at least one public, one academic, and one administrative representative. Members of the Review Board shall be appointed to terms of three years, with terms of initial appointees staggered so that one-third of the terms expire each year. A person appointed to the Review Board shall not have been a commissioner within one year prior to appointment. The President shall convene timely a panel of the Review Board when necessary.
Section 2–Due Process. Criteria promulgated by the Council shall ensure that institutions are provided a fair and reasonable opportunity to present reasons why denial, suspension, withdrawal, or other final actions taken by the Council are inappropriate and should be remanded for further consideration. The due process provided is an appeal to the Review Board, pursuant to the procedures described in Section 2-3-604. All appeals to the Review Board of Appeals shall be on the record and shall provide for the submission of briefs and oral testimony by institutional representatives.

Article VIII: Miscellaneous

Section 1–Liability. No applicant, member, or former member shall be liable for the debts of ACICS in any amount except to the extent of the fees required of each member pursuant to Article VI, Sections 3 and 8, hereof.

Section 2–Corporate Seal. The corporate seal shall be in such form as may be approved by the Board of Directors.

Section 3–Checks, Notes, Contracts. The Board of Directors shall determine the persons who will 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; to enter into contracts; or to execute and deliver other documents and instruments. These persons (positions) will be designated in the Board approved Governance Policy Document. The Board of Directors shall, at its discretion, 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–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 5–Confidentiality. The Council shall maintain the confidentiality of the accrediting process with members insofar as permitted by accrediting criteria, law, and regulation. The Council shall have written policies on disclosure of information to third parties.

Section 6–Indemnification and Insurance. The Corporation shall indemnify and hold harmless each director, officer, commissioner, member of an appeals board, member of a visiting team, agent, employee, or other person acting on behalf of the Corporation or the Council 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 they acted as part of or on behalf of ACICS, the Council, or the Review Board, as a director, officer, commissioner, member of an appeals board, member of a visiting team, agent, or employee. The rights specified in this Section shall apply whether or not persons continue to act in such 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 to be liable for willful misconduct. The Board of Directors also may authorize the purchase and maintenance of insurance on behalf of such persons and the Corporation against any liability that arises from their actions in such capacities.

Section 7–Amendments. The Bylaws of the Corporation may be amended by the Board of Directors by majority vote of all the directors.

Section 8–Dissolution. ACICS shall use its funds only to accomplish the objectives and purposes set forth in these Bylaws, and no part of said funds shall inure or be distributed to the members of ACICS. On dissolution of ACICS, any funds remaining shall be distributed to one or more regularly organized and
qualified charitable, educational, scientific, or philanthropic organizations to be selected by the Board of Directors.

Section 9–Fiscal Year. The fiscal year of ACICS shall be July 1 through June 30.

Section 10–Limitation of Liability. In any claim, cause, or action of any kind against ACICS by any applicant for membership, member, or former member, ACICS’ liability is limited solely to reimbursement of any application or membership fees paid by said applicant for membership, member, or former member during the calendar year in which any such claim, cause, or action is initiated. ACICS shall not be liable to any applicant for membership, member, or former member for any direct, indirect, incidental, special, consequential, or any other type of damages, including but not limited to lost profits, nor shall ACICS be liable for any other person’s or party’s attorneys’ fees or costs associated with any claim, cause, or action against ACICS. This limitation of liability applies to any and all liability or causes of action however alleged or arising to the fullest extent permissible by law.

Article IX: Litigation, Jurisdiction and Venue, and Expenses

Section 1–Suits against ACICS, Jurisdiction, and Exhaustion of Administrative Remedies. Jurisdiction and venue of any suit, claim, or proceeding relating to membership, accreditation, or accredited status, whether a claim for damages or injunctive or declaratory relief, brought by an accredited member, former member, or applicant for membership and accredited status against ACICS, the Council, the Review Board, or a commissioner, officer, committee member, Review Board member, or staff member acting in his or her official capacity shall only be in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division, or the Circuit Court for the City of Alexandria, Virginia. Accredited members, former members, and applicants must exhaust all administrative remedies provided for in the ACICS Criteria and Bylaws before initiating any suit, claim, or proceeding in Court.

Section 2–Reimbursement of ACICS’s Litigation Expenses. An applicant for membership, member, or former member of ACICS shall reimburse ACICS for all costs and expenses (including attorney’s fees) actually and reasonably incurred by ACICS in defending any suit, claim, or proceeding, whether for damages or for injunctive or declaratory relief, brought by an applicant, member, former member, or one or more present or former students of any of the foregoing against ACICS, the Council, the Review Board, any commissioners of the Council, or members of the Review Board, or officers, employees, or agents of ACICS, the Council, acting in their official capacity, where ACICS, the Council, the Review Board, the commissioner, officer, employee, or agent shall have been adjudged to be the prevailing party in the suit, claim, or proceeding.

Section 3–Other Expenses. Each member shall reimburse ACICS for all costs and expenses (including attorney’s fees) incurred by it in the production of any of the Corporation’s, or the Council’s, records relating to such member in response to lawful requests from parties in litigation or from state or federal agencies.

Section 4–Binding Effect.

(a) Each existing member and new member of ACICS shall be provided with a copy of these Bylaws. Acceptance or continuation of membership in ACICS shall constitute each member’s agreement to be bound by the provisions of these Bylaws, as they may be amended from time to time, while a member of and subsequent to the termination of membership in ACICS.

(b) Each applicant for membership in ACICS shall be provided with a copy of these Bylaws. Application for membership in ACICS shall constitute such applicant’s agreement to be bound by
the provisions of these Bylaws, as they may be amended from time to time, regardless of whether such applicant becomes a member of ACICS.

Appendix B – Unannounced Visits

UNANNOUNCED VISIT FACT SHEET
The Council, at its discretion, may direct an unannounced visit to an institution about which it has received adverse information or when general operations of the institution may be called into question. This Fact Sheet is designed to assist the institution and the visiting team in conducting this visit as smoothly and efficiently as possible.

VISIT PROCEDURES
The purpose of this visit is to review records, interview students and staff, and, if applicable, review previously cited problem areas and verify responses to previous requests for information, such as complaints. The team may consist of a staff member, an experienced evaluator, or both. Expect the team to spend the full day at your institution.

Upon arrival, the team will ask to speak with the chief on‐site administrator. Following a brief interview, the team is to be given a short tour of the facility, including records storage areas, and then shown to a work room. This room could be an empty classroom or office, and it should be available exclusively for the team for the entire visit.

The institution must make the following information available to the visiting team:
1. the most recent CAR;
2. the current catalog and addenda (if applicable);
3. the current class schedule, including names of instructors and room numbers;
4. the most recent ACICS accreditation visit team report and institutional response;
5. a copy of each government program review and compliance audit conducted within the prior two years and any institutional responses;
6. faculty/personnel records;
7. all student records, including admissions, academic, and financial; and
8. copies of institutional advertising.

Additional records may be requested by the team. Staff, faculty, and students will be interviewed. Institutions are encouraged to have these records in a central location where more than one person can access them, should the chief on‐site administrator not be present.

REPORT AND SUBSEQUENT ACTIONS
A report will be prepared and sent to the institution for response. If the institution is found to be operating in accordance with the Accreditation Criteria, no further action will be taken.

If the institution is found to be violating provisions of the Accreditation Criteria, the Council may direct the institution to show cause why its accreditation should not be withdrawn, or it may direct that a full team visit the institution to evaluate its correction of these violations.

EXIT CONFERENCE
At the conclusion of the visit, the team will meet with the chief administrator to discuss the visit and to answer any questions regarding the Council policies, procedures, and standards.

FEES
A fee will be assessed for this visit. Failure to remit payment for this fee may result in an adverse action.

INSTITUTIONAL PARTICIPATION

Any institution that refuses to undergo an on-site unannounced visit evaluation will be directed to show cause why its accreditation should not be withdrawn by suspension.

Appendix C – Institutional Publications

This Appendix includes the Council’s criteria for institutional publications, including catalogs, advertising literature, and other published documents describing the institution.

CATALOG

The Council requires all accredited institutions and all applicant institutions to publish an acceptable catalog. An accredited institution with branch campuses may publish a common catalog, but it should be specific as to the faculty, programs, and student services available at each location (see Multiple-Campus Catalogs in this Appendix). All enrolled students must have access to the current catalog.

A catalog is written for many purposes and is directed toward a varied audience. The catalog becomes an announcement and a record and should be dignified in appearance. It must not be primarily a promotional publication, nor should it be directed toward a single segment of its varied audience. The catalog has been determined by the courts to be a legal document of the institution concerned.

The catalog should explain the offerings and services of an institution, but it should not glorify or extol. It should reflect the dignity and integrity of the institution it describes. The catalog must be available in hard copy and may also be available in a read-only electronic format. The hard copy catalog must be appropriately printed and bound. The catalog may include illustrations and photographs that are pertinent to the institution.

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

1. A table of contents and/or an index.
2. An indication, on the front cover or the title page, of the year(s) for which the catalog is effective.
3. The names and titles of the administrators of the institution.
4. A statement of legal control that includes the names of trustees, directors, and officers of the corporation.
5. If the institution is now accredited, a statement denoting this fact (see Statement of Accreditation below).
6. A statement of the mission of the institution.
7. A list of the full-time faculty members that shows the following:
   (a) academic credentials held;
   (b) institutions awarding the credentials; and
   (c) the area of teaching specialization.
8. An academic calendar (calendar of events) showing beginning and ending dates of terms, quarters, or semesters; holidays; registration dates, etc.
9. The full disclosure of the institution’s admission requirements, policies, and procedures, including the basis for admissions, test requirements, advanced standing requirements, and experiential learning assessment requirements.
10. A statement of the criteria established by the institution by which a determination is made with regard to accepting credits from another institution and, if applicable, a list of institutions with which the institution has established articulation agreements (see Section 3-1-413).
11. A statement on the transferability of the credits in the programs that are offered (see Section 3-1-413).

12. A description of the contracts or agreements and the services to be provided if the institution has entered into an agreement with an accredited institution, an agreement with an unaccredited institution, or an international partnership agreement (see Sections 2-2-504 – 2-2-507).

13. A statement of the curricula (programs) offered, including for each:
   (a) a statement of the objective or purpose of the curriculum;
   (b) an accurate and complete listing of the courses included in each curriculum, each with a unique identifying number and title;
   (c) the credit or clock hours awarded for each subject;
   (d) the total credits or clock hours required for satisfactory completion of the curriculum;
   (e) specialization options with a listing of all courses which make up that specialization;
   (f) requirements for certification, licensing, or registration in the program career field, as appropriate; and
   (g) any additional or special requirements for completion (such as practica or externships).

14. A description of each course (subject) offered including:
   (a) identifying number;
   (b) title;
   (c) credit or clock hours awarded;
   (d) a complete but concise description of the contents of the course; and
   (e) prerequisites, if any.

15. An explanation of the grading or marking system (consistent with that appearing on the student transcript).

16. A definition of the unit of credit. If credit hour, identify whether quarter or semester (see Section 3-1-516).

17. An explanation of standards of satisfactory academic progress (see Section 3-1-420).

18. A description of the certificates, diplomas, and/or degrees awarded, together with a statement of the requirements to be met in each instance.

19. A statement of the tuition, fees, and all other regular and special charges.

20. A complete and accurate listing of all scholarships offered (see Section 3-1-431).

21. A statement of the institution’s refund policy and formula relative to the method of financial obligation. This policy must be clearly outlined and must comply with Sections 3-1-433 and 3-1-434.

22. A statement pertaining to the nature and extent of student services offered (e.g., counseling and placement).

23. A grievance procedure that includes the name and address of ACICS, unless the grievance procedure is published in a student handbook.

24. If the institution offers degrees, the catalog must include the following information:
   (a) for occupational associate’s degree programs, identification of courses that satisfy the general education requirement and an explanation of the course numbering system;
   (b) for academic associate’s degree programs, identification of courses that satisfy the general education and concentration requirements and an explanation of the course numbering system;
   (c) for bachelor’s degree programs, identification of upper-division courses and courses that satisfy the general education and concentration requirements and an explanation of the course numbering system; and
   (d) for post-baccalaureate or graduate degree programs (master’s degree programs), a separate section in the catalog describing the program requirements, admissions procedures, transfer policies, graduation requirements, regulations, and course descriptions (see Section 3-6-800).
25. If the institution offers courses via distance education, the catalog must include the following information:
   (a) a description of each mode of distance education delivery method used;
   (b) the admission requirements for the courses or program(s) of study offered through distance education required only if different from the admission requirements for the residential programs;
   (c) a description of tests used in determining access to distance education courses and programs, if applicable;
   (d) a description of the resources and equipment the students must have to avail themselves of the instruction (including computer requirements, such as hardware and software, internet access, access to library/college for monitoring of examinations); and
   (e) the special costs and fees associated specifically with distance education (e.g., platform access fees, online library access fees, purchase of books online).

ADDENDA/SUPPLEMENT TO THE CATALOG

Listing of administrative staff and faculty, tuition and fees, and academic calendar may be included in a catalog addendum/supplement as standing items. In addition, the addendum/supplement may include other reasonable changes that occur after a catalog has been printed until the next printing. An institution is expected to update its catalog at an appropriate interval and the addendum/supplement should not be used as a substitute for meeting this expectation.

The addendum/supplement must clearly state that it is part of the catalog and must include the school name, location, and effective date for the entire document (or for individual sections if effective dates vary). The addendum must be included with each copy of the catalog.

MULTIPLE-CAMPUS CATALOGS

1. Pictures of the physical facilities of any of the institutions must be captioned to identify the particular campus depicted.
2. Faculty and administrative staff must be listed in the catalog and be clearly identified for each campus. The administrative staff of the institution also must be listed.
3. Any information contained in the catalog that is not common to all campuses in the group shall be presented in such a manner that no confusion, misunderstanding, or misrepresentation is possible.
4. The catalog must comply with the existing standards in all respects as outlined in this Appendix.

ADVERTISING

Any advertisement or promotional literature written or provided by an institution through any type of media shall be completely truthful and dignified. The material shall be presented in a manner which avoids leaving any false, misleading, or exaggerated impressions with respect to the institution, its personnel, its courses and services, or the occupational opportunities for its graduates. An English translation for advertising that is in a language other than English must also be available.

1. All advertising and promotional literature provided by an institution must clearly indicate that training or education, and not employment, is being offered.
2. All advertising and promotional literature must include the correct name of the institution. So-called “blind” advertisements are not permitted.
3. Institutions advertising to attract students in classified columns of newspapers or the equivalent on websites and other electronic publications must use only classifications such as “Education,” “Schools,” and “Instruction.” Headings such as “Help Wanted,” “Employment,” and “Business Opportunities” may be used only to procure employees for the institution.
4. Testimonials used in advertising must reflect the opinions or experience of a current or prospective student or graduate of the institution. Testimonial messages must be factual and portray current conditions. They cannot contain any representations that would be deceptive or could not be substantiated by the institution. The institution must maintain a written release from the person providing the testimonial on file.

5. An institution shall not use the words “free” and “guarantee” for advertising or marketing purposes in a manner that is misleading to prospective or current students.

6. An institution shall not offer monetary incentives to the general public to visit, enroll in, attend, or complete a program. The institution cannot make guarantee or similar claims regarding job placement or salary for graduates.

7. References to financial aid availability must use the phrase “for those who qualify.” Financial aid cannot be the sole source of an advertisement.

PERFORMANCE INFORMATION DISCLOSURE

In its disclosure of student achievement data (see Section 3-1-704), the following disclosure statement must be included:

“These are the data reported to ACICS by the institution in its most recent Campus Accountability Report.”

STATEMENT OF ACCREDITATION

When making public disclosure of accredited status in its catalog, the institution must include the name, address, and telephone number of ACICS.

For institutional catalogs, the fact of accreditation shall be stated only as follows:

“Accredited by the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools to award (name all applicable specific credential levels from among certificates, diplomas, associate’s degrees, bachelor’s degrees, and master’s degrees).”

For publications and advertising other than catalogs, institutions that wish to state the fact of accreditation shall use either the catalog language noted above or one of the following disclosure statements:

“Accredited by the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools” or “Accredited Member, ACICS”

An institution is not permitted to use such statements as “fully accredited” or “accredited” without including the name of ACICS. An institution will not use or publicize the term “accredited” unless it is in fact accredited by ACICS or another recognized agency, or it has affirmative authority under state law. Any reference to stated authority for status as “registered,” “approved,” or “accredited” must include the name of the state extending the approval and must accurately identify the state agency. An applicant for ACICS accreditation may not disclose this fact in any manner.

For electronic media and websites, the institution may provide a link to the ACICS website when making public disclosure of its accredited status (see Appendix C).

Appendix D – Standards of Satisfactory Academic Progress

An essential element in providing appropriate instruction and support services to students is monitoring their Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP). The Council requires all institutions to develop a policy that measures whether students are maintaining SAP in their educational program.
SAP Policy for International Institutions

Institutions located outside the United States that serve students not participating in Title IV financial assistance programs are required to publish a SAP policy in the catalog and systematically monitor their students’ academic progress. At a minimum, the SAP policy must address the following: (a) minimum qualitative standards, such as GPA, which must be achieved by the end of each academic year or at 50 percent of the normal program length if the program is less than one academic year; (b) maximum time frame in which the educational objectives must be successfully completed; (c) a rationale if the maximum time frame for program completion exceeds 150 percent of the normal program length; (d) institutional procedures for systematically monitoring each student’s progress in making SAP; (e) a description of actions that must be taken by the institution if the student fails to make SAP; and (f) a minimum CGPA of 2.0 or the equivalent that must be achieved by each student upon graduation.

The Council has determined that the institutional policy must include the following requirements, which are consistent with the regulations specified by the USDE for student eligibility for receiving Federal Title IV financial assistance.

1. The institution has written standards and a schedule of satisfactory academic progress for all students, which are published in the catalog and appropriate institutional literature and are consistently applied to all students.

2. The institution strictly adheres to its published standards of satisfactory academic progress, monitors whether a student meets the minimum qualitative and quantitative components of the standards, and notifies students when satisfactory academic progress is not being made.

3. The standards of SAP provide for minimum qualitative standards, such as a grade point average or completion of work projects, which can be measured against a norm.

4. The policy defines a maximum time frame, not to exceed 150 percent of the normal program length, as defined by the institution, for all programs, in which the educational objective must be successfully completed (e.g., number of academic years, credit hours attempted, clock hours completed, months/weeks, terms or modules, as appropriate), as opposed to simply setting a time limit on eligibility for Title IV financial aid.

5. The institution has provisions for an evaluation point at least by the end of each academic year (or at 50 percent of the normal program length if the program is one academic year or less) that determine whether the student has met the qualitative and quantitative components of the standards.

6. The institution has provisions for utilizing and publishing a schedule designating the minimum percentage or amount of work that a student must successfully complete at the end of each increment to complete the educational program within the maximum time frame.

7. The institution has provisions for determining at the end of each increment whether the student has met the qualitative and quantitative components of the standards. The qualitative and quantitative standards must be cumulative and must include all periods of the student’s enrollment regardless of whether or not the student receives federal financial aid.

8. The institution’s policies define the effect on satisfactory academic progress of course withdrawals, incomplete grades, repeated courses, and non-punitive grades. The institution’s policies define the effect of non-credit or remedial courses on satisfactory academic progress.

9. The institution has provisions for an evaluation at the end of the second academic year and at the end of each subsequent academic year, at which point the student must have a minimum CGPA of 2.0 on a scale of 4.0, C, or their equivalent, or has academic standing consistent with the institution’s requirements for graduation. A student receiving federal financial aid who does not
meet the CGPA standards at the end of the second year will no longer be eligible for financial aid, may not be placed on probation, and must be dismissed, unless the student wishes to continue without being eligible for federal financial aid. However, a student not meeting the CGPA standards at the end of the second year may remain as an enrolled student who is eligible for federal financial aid if there are documented mitigating circumstances (i.e., death in the family, sickness of the student).

10. If the institution places students on warning or probation, as defined in sections 11 and 12 below, the institution’s policy must describe these statuses.

11. An institution that evaluates academic progress at the end of each payment period may assign warning status to a student who fails to make satisfactory academic progress. A student may be assigned to warning status without an appeal or other action by the student. For institutions awarding USDE financial aid, a student on warning may continue to receive assistance under federal financial aid programs for one payment period despite a determination that the student is not making satisfactory academic progress.

12. The institution must have an appeal process for students who do not meet the requirements of the institution’s satisfactory academic progress policy. When an institution grants a student’s appeal for mitigating circumstances, the student will be placed on probation for a specified period of time and considered to be making regular satisfactory progress. While a student is on probation, the institution may require the student to fulfill specific terms and conditions such as taking a reduced course load or enrolling in specific courses.

If a student is not making satisfactory academic progress, the institution may place the student in an extended enrollment status. However, all credits attempted count toward the 150 percent of the normal program length even if the student is on extended enrollment. Grades may be replaced if that is the institution’s written policy. At the discretion of the institution, a student with an approved appeal who exceeds one and one-half times the standard time frame as defined by the institution either as a regular student or in an extended enrollment status may receive the original academic credential for which he or she enrolled, provided that there are no additional financial obligations to the student.

For institutions awarding USDE financial aid only: A student on probation will have their eligibility for financial aid reinstated. A student on probation may receive federal financial aid funds for one payment period. At the end of one payment period on probation, the student must meet the institution’s satisfactory academic progress standards or meet the requirements of the academic plan developed by the institution and the student to qualify for further federal financial aid funds. A student placed in an extended enrollment status is not eligible for financial aid.

13. The institution must have clearly defined procedures for re-establishing satisfactory academic progress.

14. The institution has rules for students who change programs, as well as for students who seek to earn additional credentials. For instance, an institution may have a policy that for a student who changes programs it will include in the determination of a student’s satisfactory academic progress standing the credits attempted and grades earned that count toward the student’s new program of study. Such a policy must be part of the institution’s written policy.

15. The institution must have a policy that addresses the implications of transfer of credit on satisfactory academic progress.

16. The institution has provisions that the student must have a minimum CGPA of 2.0, C, or their equivalent for undergraduate programs and 3.0, B, or their equivalent for graduate programs upon graduation. For approved professional graduate programs, which require attainment of specified
competencies and a licensure or certification, the institution has published and consistently follows an appropriate SAP policy.

Appendix E – Institutionally Funded Student Aid

In evaluating institutionally funded student aid, ACICS will consider the characteristics listed below. These characteristics are not listed in any priority order. Any institution whose aid program is not in accordance with any or all of these characteristics may be subject to a compliance warning. The greater the number of these characteristics evident in an institution’s grant program, the greater the presumption of acceptability. ACICS will, however, review each institutional grant program in its entirety.

1. Grants are made from segregated funds or from identifiable funds which have been provided for in the institution’s operating budget.
2. The percentage of students receiving institutionally funded grants, as compared to the overall student population of the institution, is not inordinately high.
3. The total amount for institutionally funded grants is publicly and clearly identified prior to the beginning of the academic year or term.
4. Institutionally funded grants may be awarded on the basis of student need or standards describing similarly circumstanced students.
5. The amount of institutionally funded grants is not based solely on the difference between the tuition charged and the amount of federal or state financial aid received.
6. The tuition charged reasonably and closely represents the cost to the institution of the instruction provided and does not significantly vary in amount from similar or same instruction in another certificate or degree program.
7. The amount of tuition retained as nonrefundable by the institution from those students who drop out prior to the end of the academic term or period is proportionally allocated between the institutionally funded grants and the federal and state financial aid received by the student.
8. The type and amount of institutionally funded needs-based grants is determined by an independent selection or review panel.

Appendix F – English as a Second Language Programs

In addition to the general standards for all institutions in Title III, Chapter 1, the following areas apply specifically to institutions offering English as a Second Language (ESL) programs. Further, as detailed in Title II, Chapter 2, all requirements apply related to the addition of a new program and changes to an existing program. This appendix outlines the Council’s requirements for institutions offering stand-alone ESL programs and/or ESL coursework as part of a Title IV-eligible program. In both cases, the institution is required to comply with federal requirements for awarding financial aid.

ESL coursework required by a student when accepted into an existing, Title IV-eligible program must be considered remedial in nature for the purpose of calculating student financial aid. This coursework does not require ACICS approval as it does not constitute an academic program.

The objective of a stand-alone ESL program is to enhance English-language proficiency, including for those who have pre-existing vocational knowledge, training, or skills they cannot use because of their limited English-speaking proficiency. No vocational training is provided in a stand-alone ESL program. However, the ESL program must articulate proficiency outcomes for successful completion of the
program to meet English Language Proficiency Admission requirements for vocational or academic programs, if applicable. Further, vocational training programs must have established English proficiency benchmarks for admission purposes.

**Curriculum and Program Development**

1. The program’s objectives must be clearly defined and aligned with the institution’s mission.
2. The curriculum must have goals and objectives that demonstrate clear progression to meet the program’s stated outcomes.
3. The curriculum must have clearly defined learning outcomes, with demonstrated consistency and progression towards the program’s objectives.
4. The length of the program must be consistent with similar ESL offerings in the field, and the curriculum must have clearly delineated proficiency levels and the progressions through those levels.

**Recruitment and Admissions Requirements**

1. The institution must demonstrate compliance with all Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Department of State (DOS) requirements, if applicable, as they relate to the monitoring and use of international recruiting agents.
2. The institution must administer a reliable and valid evaluation instrument for admission and placement in proficiency levels that is benchmarked to a recognized proficiency framework, such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, the Canadian Framework of Reference for Languages, the Global Scale of English, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, the Association of Language Testers in Europe, or the Defense Language Institute. The assessment instrument must be aligned to the program’s proficiency bands and curriculum goals, objectives, and learning outcomes.
3. Admissions criteria must be aligned with the program’s objectives and documentation must be maintained to demonstrate consistency among different types of students.
4. In addition to the requirements of Section 3-1-414, enrollment agreements must include notice to students that the ESL program does not lead to licensure or placement for employment purposes.

**Faculty Qualifications and Development**

1. All faculty members must hold the following minimum qualifications:
   (a) A bachelor’s degree with at least 18 semester credit hours or its equivalent in TEFL; or
   (b) A bachelor’s degree with either a certification or at least six months of documented experience teaching ESL or EFL.
2. Faculty must hold membership and participate in professional organizations such as the national or regional TESOL International Association.
3. Faculty development plans must include annual participation in professional development activities that strengthen the knowledge and expertise of the faculty members, specifically in ESL.

**Instructional Support and Resources**

1. The program must have sufficient and appropriate instructional resources that support student engagement and learning.
2. External resources, including community engagement, that enhance the student experience while supporting the program objectives must be incorporated in the program.
3. Instructional materials and methodologies should be clearly aligned and consistent with the curriculum and support learning outcomes.

**Student Services and Academic Progress**

1. The institution must provide appropriate immigration counseling and/or referrals, as required by the federal agencies.

2. Cultural adjustment support and counseling must be provided to meet the needs to ESL students who are not domestic. These services must be appropriate in scope and offering to the program size and objective.

3. The SAP policy must be specific to the program as part of Section 3-1-421 and include the following:
   (a) monitoring schedule of student progress within a level and between levels,
   (b) the number of levels that can be repeated,
   (c) procedures when a student repeats a level or levels, and
   (d) process for those students who are not making SAP.

**Program Assessment**

1. The program must include a final exit exam using the same entrance instrument.

2. The institution must provide an ongoing analysis of the exams used in the program to demonstrate how they are updated and used to enhance the overall quality of the program.

3. An evaluation of the program, as it affects institutional effectiveness, must be included in the CEP.

**Appendix G – Disclosure and Notification**

The policies presented below are not intended to be exhaustive, and the Council exercises considerable discretion in balancing the need for confidentiality in the accreditation process with the need to disclose information to the public, including current and prospective students, and to other interested third parties, including government agencies. The Council will provide information as requested by the USDE that may bear on an institution’s compliance with federal student financial aid requirements, including the eligibility of the institution to participate in Title IV programs (see Title II, Chapter 3).

1. The Council maintains the following information on its website to be available to member institutions, appropriate governmental agencies, and the public regarding the following:
   (a) accreditation policies, procedures, and standards;
   (b) currently accredited institutions, including the accreditation status, grant length terms, and approved programs;
   (c) the names, educational backgrounds, and professional qualifications of its commissioners and senior administrative staff.

   The directory of accredited institutions, summaries of Council actions, and annual reports are all available on the ACICS website.

2. The Council will notify the USDE, state regulatory agencies, other accrediting agencies, other interested third parties, and the public within 30 days of all Council actions that affect an institution’s grant of accreditation, including initial grants of accreditation. Notification of institutional closings and voluntary withdrawal or expiration of accreditation will occur within 10 days.
(a) At the same time the Council notifies the institution, it will notify the USDE, state regulatory agencies, and other accrediting agencies of the following actions: (a) a final decision to place an institution on show-cause or equivalent status;
(b) the initiation of an adverse action; or
(c) a final decision to deny, withdraw, revoke, or terminate the accreditation of an institution.

In such instances, public notification will be provided within one business day. The institution will be required to notify all current and prospective students within seven business days.

Deferral actions will include an explanation that the institution’s application is pending, and that additional information has been requested. Adverse actions subject to appeal will be denoted with a statement that the action is subject to appeal and is not final unless the institution does not exercise its appeal rights or until the institution’s appeal rights have been exhausted. The disclosure of Review Board decisions will be in accordance with the procedures described in Section 2-3-607. The Council retains the discretion and the responsibility to communicate other relevant accreditation information with appropriate agencies and regulatory bodies.

3. Within 60 days of a final adverse action, the Council will also make available to the agencies above and the public a brief statement summarizing the reasons for the adverse action determination and the official comments that the institution may wish to make with regard to the Council’s decision, or evidence that the affected institution has been offered the opportunity to provide official comment.

4. Through written, established protocols, the Council will directly, and in a timely manner, inform the USDE of any institution which the Council has reason to believe is failing to meet its Title IV program responsibilities or is engaged in fraud and abuse, along with the Council’s reasons for concern about the institution.

Further, the Council will make such notification if it believes the institution demonstrates systemic noncompliance with respect to use of the USDE definition of credit hour or significant noncompliance regarding conformity with commonly accepted practice in the assignment of credit hours to one or more programs at the institution. The institution will be given an opportunity to provide evidence demonstrating it is in compliance with Title IV requirements regarding credit hour assignments.

5. The Council will notify the public through its website and other means, as appropriate, of the following:
   (a) at least one year in advance of grant expirations, a list of all institutions with current grants of accreditation due to expire; and
   (b) as soon as practical, a list of all institutions which have applied for initial grants of accreditation.

This notification will include guidance on how third parties may comment on these institutions’ qualifications for accreditation.

6. The Secretary of Education’s grant of recognition constitutes a “grant of authority” to the Secretary to (1) observe site visits to one or more of the institutions accredited by the Council, on an announced or unannounced basis; (2) visit locations where agency activities such as training, review and evaluation panel meetings, and decision meetings take place, on an announced or unannounced basis; (3) obtain copies of all documents the staff deems necessary to complete its review of the agency; and (4) gain access to agency records, personnel, and facilities. The Council automatically will submit an annual report to the Secretary of Education, as requested.

7. The Council will provide information regarding debarment actions on the website.
Appendix H – Distance Education

DISTANCE EDUCATION

In addition to the general standards in Title III, Chapter 1, which apply to all institutions, and applicable standards in Chapters 2–6, the following standards apply specifically to distance education delivery methods. These requirements are designed to inform institutions of the policies of the Council and to guide institutional representatives when designing, implementing, and evaluating distance education forms of educational delivery.

INSTITUTIONAL READINESS

1. Institutions must notify ACICS and receive Council approval prior to using distance education as a mode of delivery (see Section 2-2-106).
2. The objectives which support the institution’s mission must identify the role of distance education learning within its scope and purpose (see Section 3-1-100).
3. Institutions must have a plan to implement and maintain effective distance education instruction which is integrated into the CEP (see Section 3-1-111 and Appendix K). At a minimum, the plan should include the following:
   (a) rationale and continued value (effectiveness) of distance education to the institution’s mission;
   (b) instructional, human, and technological resources designed to sustain distance education operations;
   (c) course and program objectives and how they align with the institution’s mission;
   (d) content and the distance education infrastructure, including the LMS;
   (e) processes in place that ensure student privacy and that the student who registers is the same student who academically engages in the course.
4. The instructional delivery method must be appropriate for students and the curriculum.
5. Institutional policies and procedures should be applied consistently using procedures that are appropriate to the mode of delivery.
6. Institutions must designate a qualified person to oversee the distance education activities and to monitor student learning outcomes and the effectiveness of the mode of delivery.

ADMISSIONS REQUIREMENTS AND ENROLLMENT

1. Institutions must identify the admission requirements of distance education courses/programs and, if applicable, how they differ from the on-ground admission requirements.
2. If an online admissions test is required, it must be administered in a manner which verifies the student’s identity. Institutions must make it clear in writing at the time of enrollment how the student’s identity will be verified throughout the course and program, how the student’s privacy will be protected, and if the student will be assessed any additional charges associated with the verification of student identity.
3. Institutions must clearly and appropriately state any hardware or software the students must have or have access to, or other requirements to access this mode of delivery.
4. Institutions must provide an online orientation to familiarize the student with the distance education learning process and the equipment and resources that will be used.

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY
1. Regardless of the instructional delivery method, the syllabi must identify the course learning objectives. Each course learning objective must support one or more program learning outcomes (see Glossary: Syllabus).

2. The course must provide sufficient and appropriate opportunities for substantive interaction between faculty and students and among students (see Glossary: Interaction).

3. 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 formulas for credit calculations (see Section 3-1-516).

4. Curriculum must be administered in a way that maintains security and stability of access.

5. Institutions must demonstrate that the student who registers for a distance education course or program is the same one who participates in and completes the course or program and receives the academic credit. The verification method, at the option of the institution, may include a secure login and pass code, proctored examinations, and other appropriate student authentication or verification technology. A policy specific to academic integrity expectations and oversight in the distance learning environment must be developed and implemented.

FACULTY AND INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT
1. The institution must employ academically and/or experientially credentialed faculty to teach online courses appropriate to the subject matter.

2. Faculty hired to facilitate online instruction must be properly trained to use the institution’s LMS for purposes of instruction, communication, and assessment.

3. All staff assigned to or involved in the administration and support of the distance education activities must be clearly identified and possess the skills and experience necessary to provide the support for course development and delivery.

4. The instruction must provide an accessible and reliable LMS and technical support to effectively facilitate online instruction and learning and to ensure faculty and student success.

5. The institution must demonstrate that the student-teacher ratio appropriately supports faculty-student interaction, facilitation of interaction among students, and interaction with curriculum content.

6. The institution must have a faculty development plan on file that is appropriate for each faculty member to include professional development and/or in-service activities relevant to the online delivery method (see Section 3-1-543).

7. Faculty observations and evaluations must be conducted at least annually to assess effectiveness in the distance education environment.

RESOURCES AND EQUIPMENT
1. The institution must demonstrate that it has adequate financial resources to support the form of delivery.

2. The institution must demonstrate that students taking online courses have access to the same or equivalent library resources and support as students taking courses in a physical classroom. If 50 percent or more of the student’s program is approved for online delivery, these resources must include, at a minimum, access to a virtual library collection of program-related books, journals, and periodicals, and access to virtual library and information technology services. These resources are
expected to be appropriate for the students’ needs and must be incorporated into the instructional
design of the courses offered, as appropriate.

STUDENTS AND STUDENT SERVICES
1. The institution must orient online students to online education, its LMS, resources, and support
   services, including expanded technical support expectations.
2. Student support services available to students enrolled in online programs must be the same or
equivalent to those provided to students enrolled in on-ground programs, including, but not limited
to, academic advising, financial aid, and employment assistance.

STUDENT EVALUATION AND PROGRAM ASSESSMENT
1. The learning objectives for a course delivered online must be the same as the learning objectives for
   the same course delivered on ground.
2. Regardless of instructional delivery method, assessments and assignments should demonstrate
   student achievement of course learning objectives.
3. The institution must document that it conducts course/program evaluations, including assessment
   of student learning outcomes; student retention and placement; and student, graduate, faculty, and
   employer satisfaction. The institution must also evaluate the effectiveness of its distance learning
   activities, including the extent to which online learning goals are achieved, and use the results to
   enhance the attainment of established program and/or institutional goals (see Section 3-1-111 and
   Appendix K).

PUBLICATIONS
1. The institution must fully disclose what form(s) of instruction it uses in its catalog and on its website,
   and, when appropriate, in its advertising and promotional material.
2. The catalog disclosure must follow the requirements as described and outlined in Section 3-1-701
   and Appendix C.
3. The institution must meet all disclosures required by state, federal, or other oversight bodies
   concerning the recruitment and admission of, and services to, students.

Appendix I – International Partnership Agreements
In addition to the general standards in Section 2-2-507; Title III, Chapter 1, which apply to all institutions,
and applicable standards in Title III, Chapters 2 through 6, the following standards apply specifically to
institutions proposing to initiate an International Partnership Agreement (IPA) with an entity outside the
United States or its territories.

The programs and/or courses offered abroad must be consistent with the institution’s educational
mission and goals and must meet the same academic standards, educational effectiveness and student
achievement.

These principles and guidelines are designed to inform institutions of the policies of the Council and to
guide institutional representatives when designing, implementing, and evaluating an IPA.

The partnership agreement should include the following items and detail each entity’s responsibility in
the following areas:

ELEMENTS IN AN IPA
1. Duration and Jurisdiction
   (a) Institutions must identify the start and end date of the agreement.
(b) The agreement must list the signatories/partners involved in the IPA.
(c) The agreement must describe under which jurisdiction(s) it will legally be bound, i.e., legal jurisdiction of the ACICS institution.

2. Administration of the IPA
   (a) Institutions must identify the person with the overall responsibility for the activity.
   (b) Institutions must identify the on-site administrator for the activity.

CURRICULUM CONTENT, INSTRUCTION, AND DELIVERY
Institutions shall ensure the quality and rigor of the courses/programs offered through the IPA.

3. Faculty and Instructional Support
   (a) Institutions must employ academically and experientially credentialed faculty to oversee the instruction, evaluation, and grading requirements of the courses/programs.
   (b) Institutions must have faculty credentials evaluated by a recognized service for evaluation of foreign credentials.
   (c) The faculty must be supported with the appropriate education resources and technology.

4. Admissions Procedures and Requirements. The institution must identify the admission requirements for enrolling in courses/programs abroad.

5. Students and Student Services
   (a) **Advising**
      (i) Institutions must provide academic advising services to students.
      (ii) Institutions must have procedures for adding and dropping courses.
   (b) **Financial Aid.** If applicable, institutions shall detail their procedure for awarding, disbursing, and counseling students on financial aid funds that will be used for overseas study.
   (c) **Transfer of Credit.** Institutions must be in compliance with Section 3-1-413 as it relates to transfer of credit.
   (d) **Student Orientation.** The institution must provide pre-departure orientation and on-site orientation programs for students, if applicable.
   (e) **Grievance Procedure.** A grievance policy and procedure must be included in the catalog and list the name and address of ACICS, unless it is published in a student handbook.
   (f) **Student Records.** The institution must provide a plan for storing student records and providing access to the on-site administrator at the international location.
   (g) **Student Accommodations.** Institutions should detail the plan for arranging student accommodations during the study abroad period, if applicable.

6. Security
   (a) Institutions must describe student, staff and faculty safety at the international education facility will be ensured.
   (b) Institutions must describe the plan to ensure the security of students, staff, and faculty in case of civil unrest or natural disaster in the host country.

7. Financial Requirements. Institutions must be in compliance with Section 3-1-430 as it relates to financial aid, tuition, and charges.

8. Resources and Equipment. Instructional resources and equipment must be readily available, accessible, and reliable.

9. **Student Evaluation and Program Assessment.** The institution must implement an assessment plan that measures attainment of core competencies for courses and/or programs and measurable objectives for each course.
10. **Publications.** The institution must fully disclose what form(s) of instruction it uses in its catalog, on its website, and when appropriate, in its advertising and promotional material. This disclosure must follow the requirements outlined in Section 3-1-701 and Appendix C, Number 22.

11. **Termination of Agreement and Teach-out Plan.** Institutions must detail the plan for completion of programs or courses should an international partner fail to provide services.

12. **International Site Facilities.** Institutions must include a description of facilities at the international site and provide evidence that the facilities are in compliance with host country building code regulations.

Summary

ACICS members planning to enter into an international partnership agreement must be aware of and in compliance with all Council requirements and Department of Education regulations.

**Appendix J – Program Enhancement Education and Study Abroad**

International demands for postsecondary education provide opportunities for member institutions to expand the geographic footprint of their education delivery infrastructure, through online, on-ground, 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 or study abroad 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 or study aboard activity, or the modality with which the education is delivered. Council acknowledges education or study 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 or study 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 or study abroad under the parameters prescribed in this section in recognition that structured education or study abroad may enhance the graduate’s ability to compete for job placement with international employers.

A key principle of ACICS standards regarding education or 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 or study abroad.

1. **Education or Study Abroad Activities:** For all education or study abroad activities, other than those performed through a formal partnership agreement with an international institution, a U.S.-based institution is required to host a comprehensive Forum review and provide the final determination letter demonstrating substantial conformity with the Forum’s standards, contained in the document, “Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad (SGPEA)”, published by The Forum on Education Abroad (https://forumea.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Standards-2015.pdf); 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 or study abroad activities performed through a formal partnership agreement, the IPA requirements apply (see section 2-2-510 and Appendix I). International institutions accredited by ACICS located outside the U.S. that are planning to initiate education or study abroad activities must disclose the nature and scope of such activities in writing to ACICS and seek prior approval.

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

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

**Appendix K – The Campus Effectiveness Plan**

This Appendix identifies the Council’s requirements for the content of a written Campus Effectiveness Plan (CEP) document. The CEP should provide information about the campus and how it measures and evaluates key elements of its operations in order to continuously improve its overall educational operations and meets its mission and objectives. The Council requires each campus to have a current CEP available that meets the requirements identified in this Appendix.

A main and branch campus may use similar language, format, and general content in CEPs, where appropriate. However, the CEP for each main and branch campus must also include information and data specific to its own campus including the characteristics and demographics of the current student population; the number of students enrolled in each program; campus and program retention, placement, graduation rates; results of surveys to determine current student, graduate, and employer satisfaction; and student learning outcomes.

Follow-up studies on students or former students, as an extension of or in addition to the analysis of satisfaction surveys, must be conducted by the institution and summarized within the CEP. The studies should provide further data or feedback regarding the programs and institution, relative to its performance as an educational institution or program, or regarding the effectiveness of its training in the workplace. Such studies must be conducted at least annually (see Glossary: Follow-up).

For those campuses offering programs in non-traditional modes of delivery, the distance education plan must be integrated into the CEP and the elements evaluated to include the effect of the modality on overall outcomes. Further, the campus must also incorporate its assessment of faculty satisfaction into its plan.

**EVALUATION OF ELEMENTS IN THE CAMPUS EFFECTIVENESS PLAN (CEP)**

The CEP shall, at minimum and at both the campus and program levels, report outcomes for each of the elements listed below. For each element, at the campus and program levels, as appropriate, baseline rates and levels for comparison and goals for the current evaluation period must be identified. A summary and analysis of previous performance, a rationale for the baseline rates and levels, goals, and a listing of activities that will be undertaken to achieve the goals must also be included. In accordance with Section 2-1-809, a specific plan to improve the retention, placement, and/or licensure pass rate(s)
for each program not meeting current Council standards for retention and/or placement must be included within the CEP.

1. Retention rates
2. Placement rates

   Student retention and graduate placement rates reported on the Campus Accountability Report (CAR) shall be included in the CEP for the most recent three years, or, if less than three years' worth of CAR data is available, data for at least one reporting period. The data and information reported for retention and placement rates must demonstrate that the campus is maintaining or improving performance each year or, if that is not the case, then the campus must provide an explanation of mitigating circumstances affecting improved outcomes.

3. Graduation Rates

   Graduation rates are based on scheduled to graduate cohort for each program offered at a campus. The graduation rates reported on the Campus Accountability Report (CAR) shall be included in the CEP for the most recent three years, or, if less than three years' worth of CAR data is available, data for at least one reporting period.

4. Current student satisfaction
5. Graduate satisfaction
6. Employer satisfaction

   The level of satisfaction for each of the three elements identified above shall be determined and reported at least twice a year. For each of these three elements, the CEP must identify and describe what types of data were used to determine the level of satisfaction, how they were collected, and the target group's response rate. Graduate satisfaction should be evaluated no sooner than 30 days following and within 6 months after graduation and include both placed and non-placed graduates.

7. Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

   Measuring and evaluating achievement of the SLOs are among the most important activities available to validate and confirm overall program and campus effectiveness. The assessments used to measure SLOs should be appropriately selected, with a rationale, to reflect the nature of the academic programs offered and must include direct assessments but may also include indirect measurements (see Glossary definitions of Direct Assessment and Indirect Assessment). For campuses that offer programs for which licensure or certification is required to practice in the specific career field, pass rates shall be evaluated as a required SLO.

**IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING OF THE CAMPUS EFFECTIVENESS PLAN (CEP)**

Each campus shall systematically maintain progress reports on a periodic basis as defined by the campus but no less than two times during the CEP year that document completion of activities and changes in data and information for each of the CEP elements. Activities, as described in the reports, are to be specific and measurable.

In addition to the periodic progress reports, each campus is required to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of its plan at the end of the CEP year and to incorporate the results of that evaluation into the next year’s CEP, as appropriate. The next year’s CEP should contain a narrative section describing or explaining the consideration and, if applicable, the incorporation of the previous year’s outcomes in the formulation of the new document.
Appendix L – Student Achievement and Campus Accountability Reports

INTRODUCTION

ACICS defines academic quality in terms of the extent to which an accredited institution achieves its intended student learning and student success outcomes. Student learning outcomes involve assessment of skill and competency attainment, including licensure or certification examination pass rates, where applicable. Student success outcomes include student retention or persistence and employment or placement.

Section 2-1-809 of the Accreditation Criteria requires periodic Council review of student achievement data, verified both by the institution as well as by the Council, submitted by the campus in the annual Campus Accountability Report (CAR) as required under Section 2-1-801. Appendix L provides an overview of the Council’s student achievement standards and Council actions that will be taken if the student achievement data show that a campus or program is out of compliance with these standards.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT STANDARDS

Student achievement standards outlined below apply to retention and placement rates at the campus and program levels, and licensure or certification examination pass rates, where applicable, at the program level. Minimum standards are intended to ensure that a substantial majority of students at ACICS-accredited campuses are retained, pass licensure or certification examinations where applicable, and find appropriate employment.

Consideration will be given to extenuating circumstances in relation to local, state, or national requirements or trends; student population; program length; graduates pending the completion of licensure or certification exams; economic or cultural factors; or any other reasonable circumstances impeding an institution’s ability to meet or exceed the established compliance standard. However, the institution must also submit documented evidence of student learning through other appropriate indicators.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campus-Level Student Achievement Elements (Effective 2013 Reporting Year)</th>
<th>Compliance Standard (percent)</th>
<th>Benchmark* (percent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retention Rate</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement Rate</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program-Level Student Achievement Elements (Effective 2013 Reporting Year)</th>
<th>Compliance Standard (percent)</th>
<th>Benchmark* (percent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retention Rate</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement Rate</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensure Examination Pass Rates, where applicable**</td>
<td>60^</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*A campus and/or program whose rates fall below the Benchmark must develop and implement an Improvement Plan.

**Standards apply to programs for which licensure or certification is required to practice in the specific career field. The program is required to meet any higher licensure or certification agency standards.

^ The Council also will consider any conditions or adverse actions from other oversight agencies, as well as additional student achievement indicators when taking an action.
DATA COLLECTION AND VERIFICATION OF DATA INTEGRITY

As required under Standard 2-1-801, each main campus and each branch campus must submit an annual Campus Accountability Report (CAR). These reports are due on or before November 1 annually. The CAR reporting year is July 1 to June 30. Placement is accepted through November 1 of the CAR reporting year. Based on the student-by-student data submitted by the campus, the Council calculates the various student achievement rates. All data reported to ACICS for any purpose is expected to reflect an accurate and verifiable portrayal of institutional performance and is subject to review for integrity, accuracy, and completeness (see Standard 3-1-203). In addition to the Council review of data on an annual basis, placement information is reviewed via monthly submissions, and all CAR data is subject to review and verification at any time, including during an on-site evaluation visit.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT REVIEW AND COUNCIL ACTIONS

The Council reviews student achievement data for each campus on an annual basis and takes appropriate action. The Council reserves the right to take prompt adverse action once a campus and/or program is found out of compliance and will exercise its judgment in applying the guidelines outlined below:

YEAR REPORTING: Current Submission**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rates (percent)</th>
<th>Campus and/or Program Status*</th>
<th>Council Directed Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60-69.9</td>
<td>Reporting</td>
<td>• Development and implementation of an Improvement Plan (IP) and inclusion in the CEP (campus and/or program level)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Attendance at ACICS’s Retention and Placement Workshop (campus level)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59.9</td>
<td>Compliance Warning</td>
<td>• Institutional review before the Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Development and implementation of an IP and inclusion in the CEP (campus and/or program level)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Submission of a partial CAR which includes back-up documentation to support the rate(s) reported for the specified period (campus and/or program level)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Submission of all communication and reporting with the oversight agency on licensure or certification performance (program-level licensure/certification)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Submission of updated licensure/certification information as provided by the oversight agency or a reliable third party, or as collected and compiled by the campus with supporting back-up documentation (program-level licensure/certification)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 49.9</td>
<td>Show-Cause</td>
<td>• Institutional Review before the Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Submission to the Council of a corrective action plan along with documentation of implementation and effectiveness (campus and/or program level)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Accreditation Criteria

#### Rates (percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rates (percent)</th>
<th>Campus and/or Program Status*</th>
<th>Council Directed Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 50-59.9         | Show-Cause                   | • Submission of a partial CAR which includes back-up documentation to support the rate(s) reported for the specified period (campus and/or program level)  
• Institutional review before the Council (campus and/or program level)  
• Submission of a corrective action plan to the Council along with documentation of implementation and effectiveness (campus and/or program level)  
• Submission of a partial CAR which includes backup documentation to support the rate(s) reported for the specified period (campus and/or program level)  
• Notification of its status to its current and prospective students on its website, internal student communication |

#### Year Reporting: Following Year 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rates (percent)</th>
<th>Campus and/or Program Status*</th>
<th>Council Directed Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| *               | Adverse Action               | • Submission of a Campus Closure Application with a teach-out plan and agreements (campus level)  
• Institutional review before the Council (campus and/or program level)  
• Submission of a Program Termination Application with teach-out or transfer-out agreements (program level)  
• Immediate cessation of new enrollment (program level) |

### Rates (percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rates (percent)</th>
<th>Campus and/or Program Status*</th>
<th>Council Directed Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|                |                              | • Submission of a partial CAR which includes back-up documentation to support the rate(s) reported for the specified period (campus and/or program level)  
• Notification of status to current and prospective students on its web site, internal student communication system, and appropriate admissions forms and reference materials (campus and/or program level)  
• Submission of a prepared campus closure plan and/or program termination plan that includes an audit of students currently enrolled along with a plan for teach out (campus and/or program level)  
• Submission of all communication and reporting with the oversight agency on licensure/certification performance (program-level licensure/certification)  
• Submission of updated licensure/certification information as provided by oversight agency or reliable third party, or as collected and compiled by the campus with supporting back-up documentation (program-level licensure/certification) |

### Year Reporting: Following Year 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rates (percent)</th>
<th>Campus and/or Program Status*</th>
<th>Council Directed Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|                |                              | • Submission of a partial CAR which includes back-up documentation to support the rate(s) reported for the specified period (campus and/or program level)  
• Notification of status to current and prospective students on its web site, internal student communication |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Below 49.9</th>
<th>Adverse Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Submission of a prepared campus closure plan and/or program termination plan that includes an audit of students currently enrolled along with a plan for teach out (campus and/or program level)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Submission of all communication and reporting with the oversight agency on licensure or certification performance (program-level licensure/certification)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Submission of updated licensure/certification information as provided by oversight agency or reliable third party, or as collected and compiled by the campus with supporting back-up documentation (program-level licensure/certification)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**YEAR REPORTING: Following Year 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rates (percent)</th>
<th>Campus and/or Program Status*</th>
<th>Council Directed Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below 59.9</td>
<td>Adverse Action</td>
<td>• Submission of a Campus Closure Application with a teach-out plan and agreements (campus-level)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Institutional review before the Council (campus and/or program level)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Submission of a Program Termination Application with teach-out or transfer-out agreements (program level)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Immediate cessation of new enrollment (program level)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* If the Council deems an institution or program significantly out of compliance relative to student achievement outcomes with little or no chance of coming into compliance within the maximum time frame, it will take an adverse action. If Council judges that the institution or program can come into compliance within the maximum time frames specified in Title II, Chapter 3, Introduction, it will take action appropriate to the circumstances such as compliance warning or show-cause directive.

**For any institution or program that receives a compliance warning or show-cause directive, the institution must come into compliance within the time frames specified in Title II, Chapter 3, Introduction (i.e. an institution whose longest program is less than one year in length has a time frame of twelve months to come into compliance).
A program show-cause directive or compliance warning is not an adverse or conditioning action and is therefore not appealable. It is issued as an official notification to an institution that a program provided by the institution is out of compliance with agency standards.

**DESCRIPTION OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT REVIEW ACTIONS**

**Immediate Adverse Action:** The Council reserves the right to take immediate adverse action if the institution or one of its campuses is significantly out of compliance with the Council standards with little or no chance of coming into compliance within the maximum time frame. An adverse action for an institution is a withdrawal by suspension of the institution’s accreditation, or withdrawal of inclusion of the branch campus’s approval within the accredited status of the institution. An adverse action for a program is the withdrawal of the program’s approval, except for teach-out purposes for the currently enrolled students. An institution, in accordance with Section 2-3-403(a), will be allowed the opportunity for a review before the Council prior to the execution of an adverse action.

**Withdrawal by Suspension or Withdrawal of Program Approval:** If an institution or one of its campuses does not come into compliance within the time frames specified by a compliance warning or show-cause directive, then the Council will issue a withdrawal by suspension of the institution’s accreditation, or withdrawal of inclusion of the branch campus’s approval within the accredited status of the institution. If a program does not come into compliance within the time frames specified by a compliance warning or show-cause directive, then the Council will issue a withdrawal of program approval and the institution will be required to immediately cease new enrollments and terminate the program.

**Show-Cause:** The show-cause directive is an action by which the Council determines that the campus and/or program is materially out of compliance and provides the institution an opportunity for a review before the Council concerning the deficiencies identified. The campus must submit evidence to the Council of the corrective actions planned and implemented to improve performance and come into compliance within one year. Further, the campus must prepare a campus closure and/or program termination plan. In addition, the campus and/or program must provide notification of its status to all current and prospective students. If the show-cause directive is as a result of licensure or certification examination pass rate performance, the campus must also provide updated pass rate information and all communication from the oversight agency concerning the monitoring of its performance.

**Compliance Warning:** A campus and/or program on compliance warning is required to evaluate, analyze, and if necessary, revise the Improvement Plan implemented while on student achievement reporting. The Council reserves the right to request the submission of the evaluation and analysis of the Improvement Plan for review. The campus will be given the opportunity for a review before the Council to provide evidence of improvement at the campus and/or program levels. As a result of being found out of compliance, the campus and/or program must come into compliance within the time frame specified in Title II, Chapter 3, Introduction.

**Reporting:** If a campus and/or program reports student achievement retention or placement rates or program-level licensure or certification examination pass rates between 60-70 percent, it is considered on student achievement reporting. The campus and/or program is required to show improvement and must develop and implement an Improvement Plan that is fully incorporated into the Campus Effectiveness Plan (CEP). The Improvement Plan must identify the factors negatively impacting the student achievement outcome, the specific activities to be implemented or being implemented to address the deficiency, and an analysis of any changes realized since its implementation. This plan will be reviewed during any on-site evaluation visit.
Data Collection and Verification: ACICS standards are applied by the Council to data collected from each main and branch campus through the annual Campus Accountability Report (CAR). The Council reviews campus- and program-level retention and placement rates and program-level licensure or certification examination pass rates where licensure or certification is required for employment in the state the campus is located. The CAR reporting year is July 1 to June 30, and placement is accepted through November 1 of the CAR reporting year.

Please refer to CAR Guidelines and Instructions for details regarding online submission of the annual report, instructions, types of information collected, and calculation formulas.

Appendix M – Occupational and Avocational Programs and Courses

OCCUPATIONAL PROGRAMS
The offering of programs with occupational objectives requires the review and approval of ACICS consistent with Sections 2-2-105 and 2-2-120. As defined, these programs would be included within the scope of the campus’s approval or institution’s accreditation, and therefore subject to the following expectations of review to ensure academic quality.

EVALUATION OF OCCUPATIONAL PROGRAMS

Admissions and Tuition: An admissions policy, appropriate to the scope and outcomes for the program, must be established and published, with consistent application to similar students.

Tuition and any applicable fees must be reasonable for the program with notice to students of any changes as well as any balances due at the time of completion.

Program Oversight and Instruction: Evidence must be maintained to demonstrate that the program has qualified oversight and instructors in the area of study to ensure adequate preparation of the students. The program must meet all state or licensing requirements for instruction, licensure preparation, and outcomes.

Student Achievement Outcomes: Retention, placement, and licensure pass rates, if applicable, will be evaluated consistent with Appendix L. The program must also be included in the campus’s effectiveness plan for evaluation of each required element.

AVOCATIONAL COURSES/PROGRAMS
These programs and/or courses do not require ACICS approval except if required by the state or other licensing/oversight body. Further, these programs and/or courses may only be disclosed in the catalog and other publication/media with clear notice to students and other interested parties that they are not approved by ACICS as part of the institution’s accreditation and are offered for the sole purpose of continuing education, professional development, or preparation.
INDEX

A

Ability to Benefit
  definition of, Glossary
  enrollment of students under, 3-1-411(a)
  recordkeeping, 3-1-303(b)(c)

Academic Associate’s Degree
  educational activities, 3-4-200 to 3-4-204
  faculty, 3-4-300 to 3-4-304
  library, 3-4-400 to 3-4-406
  state authority, 3-4-100

Academic Credentials
  academic associate’s, Title III, Chapter 4
  bachelor’s, Title III, Chapter 5
  conferring of, 3-1-521
  definition of, Glossary
  master’s, Title III, Chapter 6
  nondegree, Title III, Chapter 2
  occupational associate’s, Title III, Chapter 3

Academic Freedom
  3-1-202(c); 3-1-531(b); 3-1-541

Accreditation
  automatic discontinuation of, 2-2-403(a)
  compliance warning, 2-3-220
  criteria maintenance, 3-1-301
  deferral of, 2-3-210
  deferred or conditioned, 2-3-200
  definition of, Glossary
  denial of, 2-3-300
  denoting, 2-1-806; Appendix C
  granting of, 2-3-100
  maintenance of, 2-1-800 to 2-1-810
  reinstatement of, 2-2-403(b) (ownership)
  revocation of, 2-3-401
  show-cause, 2-3-230
  suspension of, 2-3-402

  withdrawal of, 2-3-400
  withholding of, 2-1-302
  workshop requirements, 2-1-100

Accrediting Council, The
  authority of, Appendix A
  autonomy of, Appendix A
  composition of, Appendix A
  meetings of, Appendix A
  official activity of, Appendix A
  organization of, Appendix A
  purpose and authority of, Appendix A
  scope of, Appendix A

Accrediting Process
  Appendix A
  disclosure and confidentiality, Appendix G
  ethical standards, Appendix A
  privacy of, Appendix A

Actions
  accreditation deferred or conditioned, 2-3-200
  accreditation deferred, 2-3-210
  accreditation denied, 2-3-300
  accreditation granted, 2-3-100
  accreditation withdrawn, 2-3-400
  accreditation withheld, 2-1-302
  compliance warning, 2-3-220
  general Council, 2-1-700; Title II, Chapter 3
  revocation, 2-3-401
  show cause, 2-3-230
  suspension, 2-3-402

Administration
  evidence of degrees, 3-1-302
  in general, 3-1-300
  management, 3-1-301
  master’s degree, 3-6-300 to 3-6-302
of student financial aid, 3-1-434
program, 3-1-511
records, 3-1-303
Administrative Staff
counseling and guidance, 3-1-441
duties of, 3-1-202(b)
library, 3-1-800(d); 3-3-401; 3-4-401; 3-5-401; 3-6-701
management, 3-1-202; 3-1-301
student financial aid, 3-1-434
student recruitment, 3-1-412
Admissions Policies
general standards, 3-1-410 to 3-1-414
master’s degrees, 3-6-600 to 3-6-604
Admissions and Recruitment
3-1-410
representatives, 3-1-412(d)
Advertising
3-1-703; Appendix C
Annual Accountability Report
2-1-801
Annual Financial Report
2-1-802
Appeals
expenses of, 2-3-608
hearing of, 2-3-500; 2-3-606
process, 2-3-500; 2-3-600
review board, 2-3-600 to 2-3-608
Application
for initial grant of accreditation, 2-1-200
for renewal of accreditation, 2-1-300
Applied General Education
definition of, Glossary
occupational associate degrees, 3-3-202
Area of Concentration
definition of, Glossary
Articulation Agreements
2-2-507
Associate’s Degree
academic, Title III, Chapter 4
occupational, Title III, Chapter 3
Attendance
satisfactory progress, 3-1-420
Audioconferencing
definition of, Glossary
Avocational short-term programs/courses
definition of, Glossary
guidelines, Appendix M
B
Bachelor’s Degree
educational activities, 3-5-200 to 3-5-204
faculty, 3-5-300 to 3-5-304
library, 3-5-400 to 3-5-406
state authority, 3-5-100
Blended Course or Blended Learning
definition of, Glossary
Board of Directors
Appendix A
Branch Campus
definition of, 1-3-102; Glossary
evaluation of, 2-2-102(a)
notification of, 2-2-101(a)
Budget
general (institutional), 3-1-204
library, 3-1-800
library, academic associate’s, 3-4-402
library, bachelor’s, 3-5-402
library, master’s, 3-6-702
library, nondegree, 3-2-204
library, occupational associate’s, 3-3-402
Bulletin Board System (BBS)
definition of, Glossary
Accreditation Criteria  
Page 117 of 126

Bylaws of ACICS  
1-1-100; Appendix A

C  
Campus Effectiveness Plan (CEP)  
3-1-110; Appendix K  
evaluation of, 3-1-112; Appendix K  
implementation of, 3-1-111; Appendix K  
monitoring of, 3-1-111; Appendix K

Campus Accountability Report (CAR)  
Appendix L

Cash Discounts  
3-1-435

Catalog  
Appendix C  
3-1-700 to 3-1-702; 3-6-800

Category Grant  
definition of, Glossary

Certification  
requirements, 3-1-500

Change of Ownership or Control  
general, 2-2-400 to 2-2-403

Changes  
administration, 3-1-301; Title II, Chapter 2  
facilities, 2-2-100  
location, 2-2-602  
name, 2-2-601  
ownership or control, 2-2-400 to 2-2-403  
programs, 2-2-503

Chat Room  
definition of, Glossary

Classification of Campuses  
branch campus, 1-3-102  
general, 1-3-100  
main, 1-3-101

Closing of (Campus) Institution  
2-2-300

Committees  
Appendix A

Community Resources  
3-1-512(c)

Community Surveys  
3-1-514

Complaints and Adverse Information  
general, 2-3-700  
grievance policy, 3-1-202(d)

Compliance Warning  
2-3-220

Computer-Assisted Instruction (CAI)  
definition of, Glossary

Confidentiality  
Appendix A; Appendix G

Connect Time  
definition of, Glossary

Consortium Agreements  
2-2-504

Contracts with Accredited Institutions or Entities  
2-2-504

Contracts with Unaccredited Institutions or Entities  
2-2-506

Copyright Laws  
3-1-531(d)

Council Actions  
accreditation deferred, 2-3-210  
accreditation deferred or conditioned, 2-3-200  
accreditation denied, 2-3-300  
accreditation granted, 2-3-100  
accreditation withdrawn, 2-3-400  
compliance warning, 2-3-220  
denial of branch campus, 2-3-302  
denial of change of control, 2-3-302
denial of change of ownership, 2-3-302
denial of initial grant, 2-3-301
denial of renewal of accreditation 2-3-302
general, 2-1-700
other denial actions, 2-3-303
procedural guarantees, 2-3-403
revocation, 2-3-401
show-cause directive, 2-3-230
suspension, 2-3-402
Council Evaluation 2-1-603
Counseling and Guidance 3-1-441
Course
definition of, Glossary
scheduling, 3-1-516
Credentials Conferred
certificates, diplomas, degrees, 3-1-521
Credit
allocation, 3-1-515
clock hour conversion, 3-1-515
hours, definitions of, Glossary; 3-1-515
transfer of, 3-1-413
Curriculum
academic associate’s degree, 3-4-203
bachelor’s degree, 3-5-203
evaluation and revision, 3-1-514
general, 3-1-512
master’s degree, 3-6-404
occupational associate’s degree, 3-3-203
D
Debarment 2-3-900
Default Rate 2-1-810
Deferral of Accreditation
plant and equipment, 3-1-601

Electronic Learning or E-learning
   definition of, Glossary

Eligibility Criteria
   agreements, 3-1-432(c)
   credit requirements, academic associate’s, 3-4-202
   credit requirements, bachelor’s, 3-5-202
   credit requirements, master’s, 3-6-403
   credit requirements, occupational associate’s, 3-3-202
   minimum requirements, 1-2-100(a)–(i)
   state authority, 3-3-100; 3-4-100; 3-5-100; 3-6-200

Employment Assistance
   3-1-441(c)

English as a Second Language
   guidelines, Appendix F

Enrollment
   academic associate’s, 3-4-204
   agreements, 3-1-432(c)
   bachelor’s, 3-5-204
   master’s, 3-6-405
   occupational associate’s, 3-3-204

Equipment, Educational
   3-1-531; 3-1-601

Evaluation
   authorization of, 1-2-100(h) by team, 2-1-500
   graduate applicants, 3-6-602
   nonmain campus, 2-2-102
   self (self-study), 2-1-204
   visiting team, 2-1-400 to 2-1-402

Evaluation Standards
   3-1-100 to 3-6-800

Evaluation Team
   composition of, 2-1-402

evaluation of separately accredited programs, 2-1-403
expenses of, 2-1-405
functions of, 2-1-502
general, 2-1-400
procedures, 2-1-503
selection of team members, 2-1-401
staff member on, 2-1-404

Evaluation Visit
   post visit, 2-1-600
   scheduling of, 2-1-205
   scope of, 2-1-501

Evaluator Selection
   2-1-400

Extended Enrollment
   for satisfactory academic progress,
   Appendix D (see Glossary: Regular Student)

Extracurricular Activities
   3-1-442

F
Face-to-Face or F2F
   definition of, Glossary

Faculty
   academic associate’s, 3-4-300
   administrative participation by, 3-1-301
   assignments, 3-2-104; 3-3-302; 3-4-302;
   bachelor’s degree granting, 3-5-300
   curricula revision by, 3-1-514
   development, 3-1-543; Glossary
   field preparation, 3-2-102
   general, 3-1-540; 3-2-100; 3-3-300; 3-4-300; 3-5-300; 3-6-500; 3-5-302; 3-6-502
   in-service training, Glossary
   master’s, 3-6-500
   meetings, 3-1-544
   nondegree, 3-2-100
   occupational associate’s, 3-3-300
preparation, 3-1-541; 3-3-301; 3-4-301; 3-5-301; 3-6-501
professional growth, Glossary
stability, 3-2-105; 3-3-304; 3-4-304; 3-5-304; 3-6-504
student-teacher ratio, 3-2-105; 3-3-305, Appendix H
subject preparation, 3-2-103
teaching load, 3-2-101; 3-3-303; 3-4-303; 3-5-503; 3-6-503
verification of credentials, 3-1-542
working conditions, 3-1-531
Federal Regulations
knowledge of and adherence to, 3-1-434; Appendix E
Financial Report
annual, 2-1-802
certified audit, 2-1-803
Financial Stability
3-1-204
Full-Motion Video
definition of, Glossary
G
General Education
definition of, Glossary
General Education. Humanities
definition of, Glossary
General Education. Mathematics and the Sciences
definition of, Glossary
General Education. Social Sciences
definition of, Glossary
General Education Requirements
academic associate’s, 3-4-202; Glossary
bachelor’s, 3-5-202; Glossary
master’s, 3-6-403; Glossary
occupational associate’s, 3-3-202; Glossary
Grading System
3-1-303(e)
Graduation Requirements
Appendix C; 3-1-420
certification, 3-1-500
Grants in Aid
3-1-431; Appendix E
Guidance Services
3-1-441
H
Hearings
financial, 2-3-502
format, 2-3-501
general, 2-3-500
procedures, 2-3-500(a) to 2-3-500(c); 2-3-606
review board, 2-3-600 to 2-3-608
Home Institution
definition of, Glossary
Host Institution
definition of, Glossary
Hybrid Course or Hybrid Program
definition of, Glossary
I
Independent Study
definition of, Glossary
Indirect Assessment
definition of, Glossary
Individual Differences of Students
3-1-512(b)
Information Technology
definition of, Glossary; 3-2-200; 3-3-400; 3-4-400; 3-5-400; 3-6-700
Initial Application
application of, 2-1-202
genral, 2-1-200
preliminary review of, 2-1-201
resource visit of, 2-1-203
scheduling the visit of, 2-1-205
self-evaluation of, 2-1-204

In-Service Training
definition of, Glossary
faculty development, 3-1-543
institutional changes (see Procedures)

Institutional Effectiveness
3-1-110 to 3-1-113

Institutions
classification/types of, 1-3-100 to 1-3-103
integrity of, 3-1-202

Instruction
general standards, 3-1-530 to 3-1-532

Instructional Resources and Materials
academic associate’s, 3-4-400 to 3-4-406
bachelor’s, 3-5-400 to 3-5-406
budget, 3-2-204, 3-3-402, 3-4-402, 3-5-402
master’s, 3-6-700 to 3-6-706
nondegree, 3-2-300 to 3-2-204
occupational associate’s, 3-3-400 to 3-3-406

Integrated Learning System or ILS
definition of, Glossary

Intermediate Review Committee
2-1-602

International Partnership Agreements
2-2-508, Appendix I

Legal Control and Organization
1-2-100(b)(g); 3-1-201

Library, Instructional Resources, and Technology
academic associate’s, 3-4-400 to 3-4-406
acquisitions, 3-3-406; 3-4-406; 3-5-406; 3-6-706
bachelor’s, 3-5-400 to 3-5-406
budget, 3-2-204; 3-3-402; 3-4-402; 3-5-402; 3-6-702
distribution of, 3-2-202
function, 3-3-403; 3-4-403; 3-5-403; 3-6-703
general, 3-1-800
holdings, 3-3-405; 3-4-405; 3-5-405; 3-6-705
inventory, 3-2-203
master’s, 3-6-700 to 3-6-706
nondegree, 3-2-200
occupational associate’s, 3-3-400 to 3-3-406
references, 3-2-201
staff, 3-3-401; 3-4-401; 3-5-401; 3-6-701
use and accessibility, 3-3-404; 3-4-404; 3-5-404; 3-6-704

Loan
definition of, Glossary; 3-1-431; Appendix E

Lower-Division Course
definition of, Glossary

M
Maintaining Accreditation
annual financial report, 2-1-802
annual institutional report, 2-1-801
audited financial statements, 2-1-803
general, 2-1-800
payment of fees, 2-1-804; Appendix A

Master’s Education
admissions, 3-6-600 to 3-6-604
educational activities, 3-6-400 to 3-6-405
faculty, 3-6-500 to 3-6-504
library, 3-6-700 to 3-6-706
nature of, 3-6-100
organization and administration, 3-6-300 to 3-6-302
publications, 3-6-800
state authority, 3-6-200
Meetings
  Council, Appendix A
  faculty, 3-1-544
  review board of appeals, 2-3-600 to 2-3-608
Membership of Faculty
  in professional associations, 3-1-543
Methods of Instruction
  3-1-530
Minimum Eligibility Requirements
  1-2-100 (a)–(i)
Mission
  bachelor’s education, 3-5-201
disclosure, 3-1-101
general, 3-1-100
implementation, 3-1-102
master’s education, 3-6-401
N
Need-based Grant
  definition of, Glossary
Nondegree Programs
  faculty, 3-2-100 to 3-2-105
  instructional resources, 3-2-200 to 3-2-204
Nonmain Campus
  evaluation of, 2-2-102
general, 2-2-100
notification of, 2-2-101
termination or substantial change of, 2-2-103
Nontraditional Education
  course measurement, 3-1-515
  Guidelines, Appendix H
O
Objectives
  academic associate’s degrees, 3-4-201
  bachelor’s degrees, 3-5-201
general, 3-1-100
master’s degrees, 3-6-401
  occupational associate’s degrees, 3-3-201
Occupational Associate’s Degrees
  educational activities, 3-3-201 to 3-3-204
  faculty, 3-3-300 to 3-3-305
  library, 3-3-400 to 3-3-406
  state authority, 3-3-100
Occupational short-term programs
  definition of, Glossary
guidelines, Appendix M
Online Learning
  definition of, Glossary
Organization
  Council, Appendix A
disclosure, 3-1-201
  financial stability, 3-1-204
  in general, 3-1-200
  integrity, 3-1-202
  master’s degree, 3-6-300 to 3-6-302
Orientation
  3-1-441
Ownership (or Control)
  change of, 2-2-401
corporate structure, 1-2-100(g)
P
Physical Plant
  3-1-601
Placement
  of students, 3-1-441(c)
  rate, 2-1-809; 3-1-111
Post-Visit Procedures
commission and council review, 2-1-603
  general, 2-1-600
  intermediate review, 2-1-602
  opportunity to respond, 2-1-601

Preliminary Review
  initial applicants for accreditation, 2-1-201

Prerequisites
  3-1-513(b); 3-3-204; 3-4-204

President of Council
  Appendix A

Procedural Guarantees
  accreditation withdrawn, 2-3-400 to 2-3-403
  in general, 2-3-403

Procedures
  accreditation (initial), 2-1-100 to 2-1-205
  accreditation (renewal), 2-1-300 to 2-1-302
  appeals, 2-3-500; 2-3-600
  approval of scholarships, grants, and loans, 3-1-431(b)(c); Appendix E
  branch location to main campus
  reclassification, 2-2-201
  change of name or location, 2-2-601; 2-2-602
  change of ownership or control, 2-2-400 to 2-2-403
  closing an institution, 2-2-300
  degree granting status, 1-3-100 to 1-3-103; 3-1-521
  evaluation teams, 2-1-400
  handling complaints, 2-3-700
  hearings, 2-3-500(a) to 2-3-500(c); 2-3-606
  new programs, evaluation of, 2-2-501
  nonmain campus, evaluation of, 2-2-102
  initiation of, 2-2-101;
  termination of, 2-2-103
  renewal of accreditation, 2-3-1002-3-100
  review board of appeals, 2-3-600

Professional Growth
  definition of, Glossary

Program Administration
  3-1-511

Programs
  administration of, 3-1-511
  changes to, 2-2-503
  course and program measurement, 3-1-515
  definition of, Glossary
  development of, 3-1-513
  evaluation of, 3-1-514
  higher credential, 2-2-502
  length and tuition and fees, 2-1-807
  new 2-2-501
  planning of, 3-1-512
  termination of, 2-2-504

Progress
  of student, 3-1-303(e); 3-1-420 to 3-1-423

Public Participation
  1-1-300

Publication
  of grant of accreditation, 2-1-806
  of review board decisions, 2-3-600 to 2-3-608
  of withdrawal action pending appeal, 2-3-604

Publications
  advertising, 3-1-703; Appendix C
  catalog, 3-1-701; Appendix C
  general, 3-1-700; 3-6-800; Appendix C
  master’s programs, 3-6-800; Appendix C
  multiple school catalog, 3-1-702; Appendix C

R

Recognition
  1-1-200

Record, Transcript of Hearing
2-3-500(c); 2-3-605

Records
- administrative operations, 3-1-303(a)
- faculty, 3-1-542
- in general, 3-1-303
- safety of, 3-1-303(f)
- student, 3-1-303(b)–(g)

Recruitment
- of students, 3-1-412

Redesignation of Campuses
- branch location to main campus, 2-2-201
- reassignment of campuses, 2-2-202

Refunds
- policy, 3-1-433

Regular Student
- 3-1-420 to 3-1-423
- definition of, Glossary

Renewal of Accreditation
- 2-3-100
- application, 2-1-301
- general, 2-1-300
- withholding of, 2-1-302

Reports
- annual and interim, 2-1-801 to 2-1-808
- by visiting team, 2-1-502
- financial, 3-1-204

Resource Visit
- 2-1-203

Resources (of Community)
- 3-1-512(c)

Response to Team Report
- 2-1-601

Retention
- emphasis on, 3-1-441(b)
- rates, 2-1-809; 3-1-111

Review Board of Appeals
- accreditation withdrawn, 2-3-400
- appeal, 2-3-600
- appointment of members, 2-3-602
- Council receipt of decisions, 2-3-607
- decisions of, 2-3-606
- expenses of hearing, 2-3-608
- hearing of appeal, 2-3-605
- jurisdiction and authority, 2-3-603
- request for appeal, 2-3-604

Reviews
- intermediate (post visit), 2-1-602
- preliminary, 2-1-201

Revocation (of Accreditation)
- 2-3-401

S

Safety
- of facilities, 3-1-601
- of records, 3-1-303(f)

Satisfactory Academic Progress Standards
- 3-1-420 to 3-1-423; Appendix D

Scalability
- definition of, Glossary

Scheduling (course)
- 3-1-516

Scholarships
- Appendix E
- definition of, Glossary; 3-1-431

School Plant
- general, 3-1-600
- physical requirements, 3-1-601

Self-Evaluation (Self-Study)
- 2-1-204

Simulations
- definition of, Glossary

Special (and FACT) Visits
- 2-3-900
Specialization
- academic associate’s degrees, 3-4-202
- bachelor’s degrees, 3-5-202
- definition, Glossary
- master’s degrees, 3-6-403
- occupational associate’s degrees, 3-3-202

Stability, Financial
3-1-204

Staff
- general administrative, 3-1-202(b); 3-1-300 to 3-1-302
- general recruiting, 3-1-412(a)(d)
- general counseling, 3-1-441
- library, 3-3-401; 3-4-401; 3-5-401; 3-6-701

Standing Committees, Council
Appendix A

State Authority (for granting credentials)
- academic associate’s degrees, 3-4-100
- bachelor’s degrees, 3-5-100
- master’s degrees, 3-6-200
- occupational associate’s degrees, 3-3-100

State Laws
- knowledge of and adherence to, 3-1-412(c); 3-1-431; 3-1-434; 3-1-500; 3-1-602

Student Financial Aid
3-1-430; 3-1-435

Student Loan Repayment
3-1-431(c)

Student Relations
- administration of financial aid, 3-1-434
- admissions, 3-1-411
- cash discounts, 3-1-435
- counseling and guidance, 3-1-441
- extracurricular activities, 3-1-442
- financial relations, 3-1-430
- general, 3-1-400
- institutional grants, 3-1-431; Appendix E

institutional loans, 3-1-431; Appendix E
recruitment, 3-1-412
refund policy, 3-1-433
satisfactory academic progress, disclosure, 3-1-422
satisfactory academic progress, elements, 3-1-423
satisfactory academic progress standards, 3-1-420 to 3-1-423, Appendix D
scholarships, 3-1-431; Appendix E
student services, 3-1-440
tuition and charges, 3-1-432

Student Services
- advising, 3-1-303(b); 3-1-441
- employment assistance, 3-1-441(c)
- extracurricular activities, 3-1-442
- guidance, 3-1-303(b); 3-1-441
- in general, 3-1-400
- orientation, 3-1-441

Student-Teacher Ratios
- nondegree granting, 3-2-105
- occupational degree, 3-3-305

Study Abroad
3-1-504; Appendix J
- international partnership agreements, Appendix I (see Education or Study Abroad)

Suspension
- of accreditation, 2-3-402

Syllabus
3-1-513(a)
- definition of, Glossary

Synchronous Interactions
- definition of, Glossary

T

Teaching Load
academic associate’s degree granting, 3-4-303
bachelor’s degree granting, 3-5-303
master’s degree granting, 3-6-503
nondegree granting, 3-2-101
occupational associate’s degree granting, 3-3-303
Teach-out
2-2-303
Team Functions and Procedures
compositions of teams, 2-1-402
expenses, 2-1-405
functions, 2-1-501
general, 2-1-500
procedures, 2-1-502
scope of visit, 2-1-404
selection of team members, 2-1-401
staff member on visit, 2-1-403
Terminal Degree
definition of, Glossary
Threaded Discussions
definition of, Glossary
Transcripts
of staff, 3-1-302
of students, 3-1-303
of faculty, 3-1-542
Transfer of Credits
evaluation of, 3-1-413
in general, 3-1-512(b)
master’s programs, 3-6-603
Tuition and Fees
3-1-430 to 3-1-435
U
Unannounced Visit
2-1-805; Appendix B
Upper-Division Course
definition of, Glossary
V
Validated Test
definition of, Glossary
scores for, 3-1-303(b)
Videoconferencing
definition of, Glossary
Visiting Team
2-1-400 to 2-1-405 (see Evaluation Team)
W
Webinar
definition of, Glossary
Withdrawal
definition of, Glossary
of accreditation, 2-3-400 to 2-3-404
voluntary, 2-2-700, Appendix G
Withholding
definition of, Glossary
of accreditation, 2-3-300
Working Conditions
of faculty, 3-1-531