MEMORANDUM TO THE FIELD
JANUARY 2021

TO: ACICS-Accredited Institutions and Interested Parties
FROM: Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools
DATE: January 11, 2021

This Memorandum to the Field contains final criteria changes and proposed language changes to the Accreditation Criteria from the Council’s December 2020 meeting, along with other information for ACICS-accredited institutions and interested parties.

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Final Criteria Revisions

At its December 2020 Council Meeting, the Council reviewed feedback from the field regarding any proposed language revisions posted in the September 2020 Memo to the Field, as well as necessary changes to Bylaws to provide further clarity. The ACICS Accreditation Criteria has been updated to reflect all final criteria revisions with a publication date of January 11, 2021. To review the revised copy of the Accreditation Criteria please visit the ACICS website at www.acics.org. > Accreditation > Criteria.

The following criteria have been accepted by the Council as final, effective immediately (new language is underlined and deleted language is struck).

Ex Officio Member of the Board

Explanation of Final Changes:

The following revision was made to Article 1 of the Bylaws to reiterate that the President and CEO serves as ex-officio, non-voting member of the board, as already stated in Article II, Section 1 of the Bylaws.

Appendix A – Bylaws, Article I: General Provisions and Definitions

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. The President and CEO serves as an ex officio member of the Council, the Board of Directors, and the Executive Committee and shall have no vote.

Academic, Administrative, and Public

Explanation of Final Changes:

The changes below are to clarify the intent of the language to ensure that persons holding the listed designations of academic, administrative, and public are included on visit teams as well as on the Executive Committee of the Board. This has been a long-standing practice to include representatives of each designation in both of areas, as well as on all decision-making bodies of the Council.
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, and 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.

Appendix A – Bylaws, Article V: Committees

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 shall consist of persons serving as academic, administrative, and public representatives. 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.

Additional Stipulations

Explanation of Proposed Changes

The Council proposed revisions in the June 2020 Memo to codify that the Council has the ability to take additional actions, as necessary, to assist institutions in maintaining compliance and/or to ensure the protection of students, while also maintaining due process for institutions. Feedback from the field relayed concerns regarding the ambiguity of the previous language citing actions to be taken. Therefore, the Council revised the language at its August meeting to include language which qualifies such actions that may be taken. This language was then approved as final at the December 2020 meeting, effective immediately.

2-1-700 − COUNCIL ACTIONS

Action by ACICS Council action 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, student achievement data, any complaints against the institution, 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 and/or otherwise condition the institution’s grant of accreditation. Specific Council actions are discussed in Title II, Chapter 3.

Chapter 3 Council Actions

INTRODUCTION

When the Council has considered all of the information and reports submitted as a part result of the accrediting process, it will make a decision based judgment as to an on the institution’s compliance with the Accreditation Criteria. The Council’s decision is based on the extent of an institution’s compliance. The decision judgment made is referred to as a “Council action.” At its discretion, the Council may limit or otherwise condition an institution’s grant of accreditation in addition to a Council action. The actions that the Council may take are described in this chapter. Procedures available to institutions to challenge those Council 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 (1) granted, (2) deferred, (3) denied, and (4) withdrawn, 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 year, 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.

In addition to the actions stated below, the Council may take an action to require any of the following, at any time, if deemed necessary and appropriate to aid the institution, campus, or program in meeting compliance standards or to ensure the protection of students. Such requirements may include, but are not limited to:

(a) additional reporting requirements;
(b) attendance at a workshop or training relative to areas of concern;
(c) an evaluation visit;
(d) prior approval before the submission of any substantive change applications;
(e) the submission of teach-out plans or agreements for a program and/or campus;
(f) a temporary cessation of new enrollment.

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 review by ACICS. At its discretion, the Council may issue additional requirements while the institution is under 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. Show-cause is a status that the Council may impose on an institution 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, as defined in Section 2-3-500. A suspension order or denial action may be issued by ACICS as the result of
the Council’s review of the institution’s response, and such action is considered a final action that may only be appealed to the Review Board of Appeals as described in 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 as described in 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 on show cause unless approval is received in advance to submit such an application. At its discretion, the Council may issue additional requirements while the institution is under review.

GLOSSARY

Adverse Action, Institutional. An action to deny, withdraw by suspension, or revoke the campus/institution’s accreditation, or an action to withdraw approval of the inclusion of a branch campus within the accredited status of the institution.

Adverse Action, Programmatic. A withdrawal of the program’s approval, except for teach-out purposes for currently enrolled students.

Proposed Criteria Revisions

At its most recent meeting in December 2020, the Council reviewed specific areas of the ACICS Accreditation Criteria outlined in this section, and approved the revisions as proposed for feedback from the field. Proposed changes will be reconsidered for final approval and implementation at the Council’s next meeting and incorporate the perspectives shared by the field. Public comment on these revisions is requested through the ACICS Comment Survey explained at the end of the memorandum. ACICS requests comments and recommendations from a broad cross section of ACICS stakeholders, including students, faculty, school administrators, policy advocates, and other interested parties.

The following criteria have been accepted by the Council as proposed (new language is underlined, deleted language has been stricken).

Visit Reports

Explanation of Proposed Changes

The Council proposes the following revision to further identify the areas captured within the visit report for an evaluation visit. This revision is to further align the language with USDE standards.

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 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 written report includes the assessment of the institution's compliance with the Accreditation Criteria, to include areas needing improvement, and the institution's performance with respect to student achievement. 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.

**Review of Title IV Responsibilities**

**Explanation of Proposed Changes**

The following revisions were another area of clarification to provide clear language on current practices of the Council. The proposed changes qualify the review by ACICS of information, reports, or data provided by the USDE Secretary.

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. **Institutions must notify ACICS of any actions, reviews, or investigations initiated by other oversight agencies or external sources.**

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 cohort 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 the Council 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.

2-1-810. Student Loan Cohort Default Rates Title IV Responsibilities Review. The Council will review and evaluate the most recent student loan default rate data provided by the Secretary, the results of financial or compliance audits, program review, and any other information that the Secretary may provide to the agency and take action as deemed appropriate. 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.

Special and Fact Visits

Explanation of Proposed Changes
The following revision is to clarify that ACICS staff are delegated the authority to schedule a special visit to an institution, on behalf of the Council. These visits may be directed to collect further information to provide to the Council which will then determine if there are concerns or areas of noncompliance.

2-3-800 – SPECIAL AND FACT VISITS
ACICS staff, with delegated authority to do so, 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 ACICS may also direct a Fast Assessment and Compliance Team (FACT) visit to investigate and report on alleged improper practices at ACICS institutions.

The Council ACICS 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.

Change of Ownership or Control Review Procedures

Explanation of Proposed Changes

Further changes to these criteria sections are being proposed by the Council to ensure continuity of accreditation through a change in the ownership or control of an institution. The timeframes surrounding the application submissions have also been revised to allow for varying state requirements surrounding the transactions. The revisions remove language for an automatic discontinuation and reinstatement and replace them with the actions to be taken following each of the two phases in the process.

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

(a) 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 obtain approval of the transfer of accreditation in advance of the change in ownership or control, 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 Part I – Change of Ownership application. 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. Part I of the Change of Ownership application must be submitted a minimum of 45 days prior to the transfer of ownership. The Council, upon review, may take one of the following actions:

a. Approve the transfer of accreditation,
b. Defer the transfer and request additional information,
c. Deny the transfer (appealable), or
d. Take other appropriate action (see Title II, Chapter 3).

Failure to obtain approval prior to the transfer of ownership may result in a suspension of the institution's accreditation (appealable).
The approval of the change of ownership application expires if the transaction does not occur within 90 days from the date provided in Part I Change of Ownership application. If the institution does not receive approval from another regulator agency (e.g., a state or federal agency) after the Council has approved the change, the Council may reconsider the action and rescind the action, or take another action as appropriate.

(ii) Part II – Change of Ownership Application 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 institution, after receiving approval for the proposed transfer of accreditation must submit Part II – Change of Ownership Application within 45 days following the transaction.

(iii) Quality Assurance Monitoring Visit. 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. The Council, following the quality assurance monitoring visit, may take one of the following actions:
   a. Continue the institution’s accreditation under the new ownership,
   b. Defer action and request additional information,
   c. Take other appropriate action (see Title II, Chapter 3).

(iv) 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).

Memorandum of Understanding

Explanation of Proposed Changes
The following revision is in addition to previous changes clarifying language regarding distance education and consortium agreements. The revision limits the amount of instruction provided via a memorandum of understanding (MOU) which may exist within an institution to ensure the campus providing the credential provides a portion of the instruction.

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.

(d) For an institution utilizing a memorandum of understanding among campuses within an institution, at least 25 percent of the program must be delivered by the campus that awards the academic credential.

Glossary

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). An approved arrangement between and among campuses with an institution to provide services, including distance education, from one location to another. At least 25 percent of the program must be delivered by the campus that awards the academic credential. Such arrangements must be approved by ACICS and published in the institution’s catalog.

Expiration of Inactive Mode of Delivery

Explanation of Proposed Changes
The revision below is in addition to recent changes as a part of ACICS’ systematic review of distance education criteria. These revisions coincide with the expiration timeframes for any program and new mode of delivery that has been inactive for two years or has not started within one year following the stated start date.

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 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 Any program/mode of delivery distance education that have not started within one year of the proposed start date and programs or that have been inactive for at least two years must be
surrendered (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.

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2-2-503. Termination of Programs
To Maintain approval, an institution must demonstrate active enrollment in each program of study. If an approved program or mode of delivery is inactive for at least two years, the program or mode of delivery will be considered discontinued and will be removed from the institution’s list of approved programs or mode of delivery. To reinstate the program or mode of delivery, the institution must initiate the new program/distance education application process.

Library and Instructional Resources

Explanation of Proposed Changes
As part of ACICS’s Systematic Review process, all criteria sections relative to library and instructional resources were reviewed for currency and rigor. The standards were reviewed by a third-party content area specialist and then by the Council. As a result of this review, substantive proposed changes include the following: requiring statistics for online database usage in degree programs, to include program directors as stakeholders in acquisition considerations, and to include computer technology in the required holdings. The proposed language also adds library services to the CEP as part of the consideration for overall impact.

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, and library 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.
3-1-800 – 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:

(a) develop an adequate core of library resources to support academic success and to meet instruction and research needs as appropriate;
(b) 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 types of learners at main and nonmain campuses and those online; learners, including those at nonmain campuses and those online;
(f) provide training and encouragement for students and faculty on information literacy and on utilizing 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.

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.

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 and services 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. Records must include usage statistics for online databases.

Physical and/or online library materials and services must be available at times consistent with the typical student’s schedule in day, evening, weekend, 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, program directors, 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.
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 print and/or digital 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. Reference services shall be available to all students.

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. Usage statistics for digital resources must be maintained and evaluated.

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, weekend, 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 and computer technology; 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, program directors, and library staff, with the greater amount of input emanating from the faculty.

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**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 print and/or digital 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. Reference services shall be available to all students.

**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. Usage statistics for digital resources must be maintained and evaluated.

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, weekend, 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 and computer technology; 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, program directors, and library staff, with the greater amount emanating from the faculty.

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 print and/or digital 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, and reference services. 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. Usage statistics for digital resources must be maintained and evaluated.

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, weekend, 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, program directors, and library staff, with the greater amount of input emanating from the faculty.
Semi-Annual CAR
As a reminder, effective with the 2021 CAR, reports will be submitted semi-annually. This reporting timeframe will align with the new two-cycle review year (see item D below) and allow for a better representation of trends in student achievement outcomes. The new reporting schedule will be as follows:

Semi-annual CAR: Opens April 1; due May 1 (July–December)
Annual CAR: Opens October 1; due November 1 (Full report for July - June)

Revised CAR guidelines reflecting the new reporting schedule will be posted to the ACICS website in January 2021, after the 2020 CAR reporting year has closed.

Demonstration of Student Learning Outcomes
Institutions that have a majority of their students waived from placement reporting due to visa restrictions will now be required to submit alternative evidence that graduates are mastering the objectives of the program. Effective with the 2020 CAR submission, any institution that reported over 50% of graduate population in a program as “waived from placement due to visa restrictions” will be notified and required to submit documented evidence of alternative measures for student learning, for each program that meets this criterion. Such evidence would include student learning assessment outcomes identified and analyzed in the institution’s Campus Effectiveness Plan.

PVP Third-Party Verification
ACICS will be discontinuing the acceptance of third-party verifications for up to 10% of any unverified placements at the end of the CAR reporting year. This decision is based on the low number of submissions by institutions coupled with recent privacy regulations that have prevented some institutions from being able to attain these verifications. Third-party verifications will still be accepted for any contested placements as long as they provide the necessary information.

Sustaining Fees and Application Fees
ACICS has made changes to its Sustaining and Application fees following a review of the Consumer Price Index and comparisons of other accrediting agencies. The new fee structure was approved in December 2019 however, due to do the effects of the pandemic, implementation was postponed and will now be effective July 1, 2021. Information regarding these fees can be found here: https://www.acics.org/accreditation-schedule-of-fees.

Systematic Review
As ACICS continually strives to enhance its standards to remain current with best practices in the industry and various fields, the Council continues its solicitation of feedback from all stakeholders. The Council’s 2021–2022 Systematic Review Schedule includes the standards relative to International
Partnership Agreements (Appendix I), and Study Abroad (Appendix J), and Special and FACT Visit policies. The Council requests feedback from all interested parties in these areas, along with any of the proposed revisions above. Stakeholders with expertise in a particular area are especially invited to contact staff for direct involvement in the continued review and revision of these components of the Accreditation Criteria. Requests may be sent to Ms. Karly Zeigler, Director of Accreditation, at kzeigler@acics.org.

ACICS Learn

ACICS Learn is now available on our website to offer training and professional development opportunities! ACICS has partnered with MaxKnowledge to bring our member institutions a robust roster of coursework focusing on career education through the ACICS Online Training Center. This resource provides employee training and certification for career education institutions, offering over 200 online courses, each one providing four hours of continuing education credits. Member institutions can receive a VIP Code for discounted pricing through their institutional email address, or by emailing mbonocore@acics.org. You can find further information by visit the ACICS Learn tab on our website or at https://www.acics.org/about-acics-learn-1.

Workshops

New workshops have been scheduled for 2021, to include the new CEP workshop! Registration information can be found on our website under the ACICS Learn tab or at: https://www.acics.org/workshops.

Call for Evaluators

ACICS evaluators play a critical role in the deliberate, thorough accreditation of institutions, ensuring quality, institutional enhancement, and adherence to ethical business and educational practices. Evaluators are needed in several content areas, from both member and non-member institutions. If you or anyone you know is interested in contributing further to enhancing higher education institutions, please visit our website to register and complete the training: https://www.acics.org/evaluators-becoming. Questions regarding becoming an evaluator can be sent to evaluatormanager@acics.org.

COVID-19 Updates

Continuous updates and guidance on the situation can be found on the website under the “News and Events” tab, or you can click here.

Comment Survey – Proposed Criteria Revisions

The Council encourages students, faculty, administrators, evaluators, employers, and other interested parties to provide feedback regarding proposed revisions to Council policies and procedures. Comments on the proposed Accreditation Criteria revisions are due by Friday, January 22, 2020. ACICS is using an electronic survey to collect all comments from the field on proposed Accreditation Criteria revisions. Please find the survey link below:
https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ACICSCALLFORCOMMENTJAN2021

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In preparation for the scheduled **AWARE** on **Thursday, January 14, 2020** to discuss these proposed changed and informational procedures, please send your questions to kzeigler@acics.org to ensure that we are able to provide as much guidance as possible. To register for the AWARE:

https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/1310355489227417613

For any other questions or to provide policy comments, please contact:

Ms. Karly Zeigler  
Director of Accreditation  
kzeigler@acics.org