



**ACCREDITING
COMMISSION
for COMMUNITY and
JUNIOR COLLEGES**

*Western Association
of Schools and Colleges*

10 COMMERCIAL BOULEVARD
SUITE 204
NOVATO, CA 94949
TELEPHONE: (415) 506-0234
FAX: (415) 506-0238
E-MAIL: accjc@accjc.org
www.accjc.org

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Date: January 21, 2015

**Memo to: Chief Executive Officers
Accreditation Liaison Officers**

From: Dr. Krista Johns, Vice President, Policy and Research

Subject: January 2015 Commission Actions on Policy

We request that you publicize the information in this memo at your institution. Please note that comment is invited from the field on the first reading policies listed below in section 1. A two-week period of time has been established for comment, and information about how to submit comment is included below.

The Policy Committee is a standing committee of the Commission. Through Commission processes, the Policy Committee oversees the ongoing review and updating of Commission policy. Commission procedures require that proposed institutional policy changes and/or new policies be considered by the Commission in a two-meeting process. At the first meeting, new policies/policy changes are discussed and modifications are made as appropriate. Policies approved by the Commission for first reading are then circulated to ACCJC accredited institutions via email, and to other interested parties via online posting, for review and comment before presentation at the next Commission meeting for second reading and adoption. If it is necessary, after the comment period, the Commission may meet and conduct an electronic vote on second reading policies.

When changes are needed in order to align with federal regulations or guidelines, these changes must be made expeditiously; they may be made by the Commission without the normal first reading/second reading process. If such changes are made by Commission action between regular meetings, then the changes are reported to the field at the next Commission meeting. No actions of this nature were reported at the January 2015 Commission meeting.

Changes to existing policies are noted in *italic* and ~~strikethrough~~. New policies are all ***bold italic***. As a part of the ongoing policy review process, terminology has been changed in all reviewed policies as necessary to align with current usage of terms in the *Manual for Institutional Self Evaluation*.

The institutional policies and operational policies of the Commission are published annually in the *Accreditation Reference Handbook (ARH)* along with Eligibility Requirements and Accreditation Standards. The publication is completed after the June Commission meeting each year. The ARH is available online at www.accjc.org.

1. **A. The following revised institutional policies were approved by the Commission for first reading.** The first reading revisions are circulated to member institutions for review and comment.

- **Policy on Substantive Change**

The primary substantive revision clarifies that when voluntary or involuntary withdrawal of accreditation occurs at an institution, or is anticipated to occur, the need for a closure report and substantive change review may be triggered. Other routine clarifications and edits were made to the policy language as well.

- **Policy on Closing an Institution**

As with the Policy on Substantive Change, the primary substantive revision here is to clarify that when voluntary or involuntary withdrawal of accreditation occurs at an institution, or is anticipated to occur, the need for a closure report and substantive change review may be triggered. Other routine clarifications and edits were made as well.

- **Policy and Procedures for Evaluation of Institutions in Multi-College/Multi-Unit Districts or Systems**

The policy has been revised to eliminate procedural material and to simplify the policy statement concerning multi-college district or system reviews. As detailed in item 3 below, the Policy Committee will identify procedural guidance for inclusion in a chapter or brief manual for team chairs.

- **Policy on Commission Good Practice in Relations with Member Institutions**

This policy underwent a full review to update references to current accreditation practice and to eliminate sections that were better covered in other policies. Remaining language was edited and reorganized to facilitate readability and clarity.

- **Policy on Commission Actions on Institutions**

In accordance with direction from the Commission in June 2014, the Policy Committee undertook revisions to this policy so that it would reflect changes in accreditation practice arising from the Review of Accreditation Standards and Practices, and so that definitions related to sanction would align with those of other regional accreditors. New sections include a definitions section and a section on other commission actions.

- B. The following new institutional policy was approved by the Commission for first reading** The first reading new policy is circulated to member institutions for review and comment.

C. Policy on Eligibility to Apply for Accredited Status

This policy provides information that has been contained in the Eligibility, Candidacy, and Initial Accreditation Manual, for reference by institutions seeking to begin the process for gaining accredited status.

The policies considered for first reading as well as the adopted policies and organizational documents were attached to an electronic version of this correspondence emailed to Chief

Executive Officers and Accreditation Liaison Officers. The policies can also be found online at www.accjc.org under ‘Recent Commission Actions,’ ‘Actions on Policy.’

Please note: The Commission invites comment on these first reading policy matters through April 20, 2015, 5:00 p.m. Pacific Time.

Comments may be made in written, FAX, or email format and sent to one of the following addresses:

- Email: [kjohms@accjc.org](mailto:kjohns@accjc.org)
- FAX: 415-506-0238
- Mail: ACCJC, 10 Commercial Boulevard, Suite 204, Novato, CA 94949

2. **Two operational documents were presented; the revisions to the operational policy were adopted, and the recent amendments to the ACCJC Bylaws are presented for information to the public.** Bylaws and operational policies do not require first reading with a comment period prior to adoption. However, member institutions are provided with notification of changes to Bylaws and operational policies, and these documents are included in the Accreditation Reference Handbook which is updated annually.

- **Policy on Access to Commission Meetings**

The policy was revised to better explain that observer statements are generally limited to 5 minutes or less, but may be extended at the discretion of the Chair or by vote of the Commission. Other revisions were made for clarification and readability.

- **ACCJC Bylaws—Report on Action Taken**

The ACCJC Bylaws were amended in January 2015. A section that was previously part of the former WASC Bylaws and Procedures documents was added to address the situation when a member institution is involved in a criminal or civil inquiry, or legal proceeding, which results in requested testimony or production of documents by the accrediting agency. In those cases, the institution will need to cover the ACCJC costs. Other edits were made to update language or clarify meaning.

3. **The Policy Committee obtained Commission endorsement of its plan to proceed with seeking input concerning guidance for accreditation reviews in multi-college districts or systems.**

As part of its substantive review of the Policy on Evaluation of Institutions in Multi-College/Multi-Unit Districts or Systems, the Policy Committee considered ways in which the policy and other Commission guidance could better inform accreditation reviews in multi-college districts or systems. The committee considered input from the field and from Commission experience concerning the unique qualities of these reviews, and the need to consider further guidance for multi-college reviews within districts or systems. The Commission endorsed the Policy Committee plan to identify further procedural guidance for such reviews.

The Commission welcomes your thoughts on ACCJC policy matters.