

Policy on Commission Actions on Institutions

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Policy

Institutions applying for candidacy or initial accreditation and accredited institutions undergoing periodic evaluation for reaffirmation of accreditation will be reviewed by the Accrediting Commission. The Commission will examine institutional evidence of student learning and achievement, the Self Evaluation Report of Educational Quality and Institutional Effectiveness, the External Evaluation Report of Educational Quality and Institutional Effectiveness, and documents from previous evaluations to determine whether the institution complies with the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies. The Commission will apply, as it deems appropriate, one of the actions listed in this policy.

In the case that a previously accredited institution cannot demonstrate that it meets the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies, the Commission will impose a sanction as defined below. If the institution cannot document that it has come into compliance within a maximum of two years after receiving the initial sanction, the Commission will take adverse action. In keeping with the provisions of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, the Commission defines adverse actions for accredited institutions as termination of accreditation; denial, or termination for institutions seeking candidacy; and denial for institutions seeking initial accreditation.

Policy Elements

I. Actions on Institutions that are Applicants for Candidacy or extension of Candidacy

Grant candidacy. Candidacy is a pre-accreditation status granted to institutions that have successfully undergone eligibility review as well as a comprehensive evaluation process using the Accreditation Standards, including preparation of an Institutional Self Evaluation Report and a review by an evaluation team. Candidacy is granted when the institution demonstrates the ability to meet all the Accreditation Standards and Commission policies, or to fully meet them within the two-year candidate period. Candidacy indicates that an institution has achieved initial association with the Commission and is progressing toward accreditation. During candidacy, the institution undertakes the necessary steps to reach demonstrable and complete compliance with Accreditation Standards. This includes an Institutional Self Evaluation Report in preparation for initial accreditation. Candidate status may be extended for two years, for a total period not to exceed four years.

Defer a decision on candidacy. A Commission decision on candidacy is postponed pending receipt of specified information, as identified by the Commission, from the institution.

Extend candidacy. Candidacy is extended in response to a college request when the Commission determines that a candidate institution has made significant progress toward meeting the Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies, and anticipates that the institution will meet all Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies if granted additional time to do so. Candidacy can be extended once for a two-year period. Four years in candidate status is the maximum allowable.

Deny candidacy. Candidacy is denied when the Commission determines that the institution has demonstrated that it does not meet all of the Eligibility Requirements, and does not meet a significant portion of the Accreditation Standards and Commission policies, and therefore cannot be expected to meet all Accreditation Standards and Commission policies within a two-year period. The institution may reapply for candidacy after two years by submitting an Institutional Self Evaluation Report. Denial of candidacy is subject to a request for review and appeal under the applicable policies and procedures of the Commission.

Termination of candidacy. Candidacy is terminated when the Commission determines that an institution has not maintained its eligibility for candidacy or has failed to explain or correct deficiencies of which it has been given notice. Termination is subject to a request for review and appeal under the applicable policies and procedures of the Commission.

II. Actions on Institutions which are Applicants for Initial Accreditation

Grant initial accreditation. Initial accreditation may be granted after a comprehensive institutional evaluation. The institution meets or exceeds the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies. The institution is required to submit a Midterm Report in the third year of the six-year accreditation cycle. The institution must be fully evaluated again within a maximum of six years from the date of the Commission action granting initial accreditation.

Grant initial accreditation and request a Follow-Up Report. The institution substantially meets or exceeds the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies, but has recommendations on a small number of issues of some urgency which, if not addressed immediately, may threaten the ability of the institution to continue to meet the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies. The Commission will specify the nature, purpose, scope, and due date of the report to be submitted. The institution is also required to submit a Midterm Report in the third year of the six-year accreditation cycle.

Grant initial accreditation and request a Follow-Up Report with a visit. The institution substantially meets or exceeds the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies, but has recommendations on a small number of issues of some urgency which, if not addressed immediately, may threaten the ability of the institution to continue to meet the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies. The Commission will specify the nature, purpose, scope, and due date of the report to be submitted and of the visit to be made. The institution is also required to submit a Midterm Report in the third year of the six-year accreditation cycle.

Defer a decision on Initial Accreditation. A Commission decision on initial accreditation is postponed pending receipt of specified information from the institution, as identified by the Commission.

Extend candidacy. The Commission may extend candidacy in lieu of granting initial accreditation when the institution has not met the conditions for initial accreditation and has had candidacy. Candidacy can only be extended for a maximum of two years.

Deny Initial Accreditation. The Commission denies initial accreditation when an applicant institution no longer meets or fails to meet Accreditation Standards, Commission policies, or Eligibility Requirements within the maximum period allowed for a college to remain in candidacy. A denial is subject to a request for review and appeal under the applicable policies and procedures of the Commission. If initial accreditation is not granted, the institution may not reapply for candidacy for at least two years.

III. Actions on Institutions that are Applicants for Reaffirmation of Accreditation

Actions that Reaffirm Accreditation

Reaffirm accreditation. The institution substantially meets or exceeds the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies. Recommendations are directed toward strengthening the institution, not correcting situations where the institution fails to meet the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies. The institution is required to submit a Midterm Report in the third year of the six-year accreditation cycle.

Reaffirm accreditation, and request a Follow-Up Report. The institution substantially meets or exceeds the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies, but has recommendations on a small number of issues of some urgency which, if not addressed immediately, may threaten the ability of the institution to continue to meet the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies. The institution is required to submit a Follow-Up Report. The Commission will specify the issues to be addressed and the due date of the report. Resolution of the issues is expected within a one- to two-year period. The institution is also required to submit a Midterm Report in the third year of the six-year accreditation cycle.

Reaffirm accreditation, and request a Follow-Up Report with a visit. The institution substantially meets or exceeds the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies, but has recommendations on a small number of issues of some urgency which, if not addressed immediately, may threaten the ability of the institution to continue to meet the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies. The Commission will identify the issues to be addressed in the report, the due date of the report to be submitted, and specifics of the visit to be made. Resolution of the issues is expected within a one- to two-year period. The institution is also required to submit a Midterm Report in the third year of the six-year accreditation cycle.

Defer a decision on reaffirmation of accreditation. A Commission decision on reaffirmation of accreditation is postponed pending receipt of specified additional information from the institution or to permit an institution to correct deficiencies and report to the Commission within six months or less. The response from the institution

may be followed by a visit addressed primarily to the reasons for the decision. The Commission will specify the nature, purpose, and scope of the information to be submitted and of the visit to be made. The accredited status of the institution continues during the period of deferment.

IV. Sanctions

Institutions are advised that the U.S. Department of Education requires recognized accrediting bodies to terminate accreditation when an institution is determined to be out of compliance with Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies and fails to come into compliance within a two-year period. Consequently, the Commission will take action to terminate accreditation if deficiencies are not resolved within this period. Under extraordinary circumstances, the institution may be granted additional time when the Commission determines good cause for extension exists.

- A. **Issue Warning.** When the Commission finds that an institution has pursued a course deviating from the Commission's Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, or Commission policies to an extent that gives concern to the Commission, it may issue a warning to the institution to correct its deficiencies, refrain from certain activities, or initiate certain activities. The Commission will specify the time within which the institution must resolve these deficiencies. During the warning period, the institution will be subject to reports and visits at a frequency to be determined by the Commission. If warning is issued as a result of the institution's educational quality and institutional effectiveness review, reaffirmation is delayed during the period of warning. The accredited status of the institution continues during the warning period.
- B. **Impose Probation.** When an institution deviates significantly from the Commission's Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, or Commission policies, but not to such an extent as to warrant a Show Cause order or the termination of accreditation, or fails to respond to conditions imposed upon it by the Commission, including a warning, the institution may be placed on probation. The Commission will specify the time within which the institution must resolve deficiencies. During the probation period, the institution will be subject to reports and visits at a frequency to be determined by the Commission. If probation is imposed as a result of the institution's educational quality and institutional effectiveness review, reaffirmation is delayed during the period of probation. The accredited status of the institution continues during the probation period.
- C. **Order Show Cause.** When the Commission finds an institution to be in substantial non-compliance with its Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, or Commission policies, or when the institution has not responded to the conditions imposed by the Commission, the Commission will require the institution to Show Cause why its accreditation should not be withdrawn at the end of a stated period by demonstrating that it has corrected the deficiencies noted by the Commission and is in compliance with the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies. In such cases, the burden of proof will rest on the institution to demonstrate why its accreditation should be continued. The Commission will specify the time within which the institution must resolve deficiencies. If the loss of accreditation will likely cause an institution to close, then during the Show Cause

period, the institution must make preparations for closure according to the Commission's "Policy on Closing an Institution." While under a Show Cause order, the institution will be subject to reports and visits at a frequency to be determined by the Commission. If Show Cause is ordered as a result of the institution's educational quality and institutional effectiveness review, reaffirmation is delayed during the Show Cause order. The accredited status of the institution continues during the period of the Show Cause order.

V. Actions that Terminate Accreditation

Terminate Accreditation. If, in the judgment of the Commission, an institution has not satisfactorily explained or corrected matters of which it has been given notice, or has taken an action that has placed it significantly out of compliance with the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies, its accreditation may be terminated. The Commission will give the institution written reasons for its decision. Termination of accreditation is subject to a request for review and appeal under the applicable policies and procedures of the Commission. The accredited status of the institution continues pending completion of any review and appeal process the institution may request. Otherwise, the institution's accreditation ends on the date when the time period permitting such a request expires. In such a case, the institution must complete again the entire accreditation process.