

Policy on Commission Good Practice in Relations with Member Institutions

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January 2001, January 2006, January 2011; Edited June 2012, August 2012;
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Policy

The Commission makes the commitment to follow good practices in its relations with the institutions it accredits.

Policy Elements

The Commission will fulfill its commitment by adhering to the following practices:

1. Make an initial visit to, or evaluation of, an institution only on the written request of the chief executive officer of the institution.
2. Revisit an institution only on request by the chief executive officer, or if a visit is initiated by the Commission, after due notice to the institution.
3. Permit withdrawal of a request for initial candidacy or initial accreditation at any time (even after evaluation) prior to final action by the Commission.
4. Appraise institutions in the light of their own stated purposes so long as these are within the general frame of reference of higher education and consistent with the standards of the Commission.
5. Use the institution's Self Evaluation Report of Educational Quality and Institutional Effectiveness, the External Evaluation Report of Educational Quality and Institutional Effectiveness, and relevant qualitative and quantitative information in institutional evaluation.
6. Interpret standards for accreditation in ways that are relevant to the character of the particular institution, respecting institutional integrity and diversity.
7. Encourage sound educational innovation and continuous improvement in the educational effectiveness of the institution.
8. Publish at least twice annually in the Commission newsletter the names of institutions scheduled for comprehensive evaluation.
9. Accept relevant third-party comment on the institutions scheduled for evaluation. Such comment must be submitted in writing, signed, accompanied by return address and telephone number, and received no later than five weeks before the scheduled

Commission consideration. The Commission will notify the institution when a third-party report is received by sending a copy of the report to the institution.¹

10. Establish reporting systems for annual, midterm, and self evaluation reports which inform the Commission regarding student loan default rates and the standing of the institution with respect to appropriate state agencies, institutional or specialized accrediting agencies, and the institution's compliance with Title IV.
11. Consider information regarding adverse actions against a member institution by another accrediting agency or state agency and provide an explanation consistent with Accreditation Standards why the action by another authority does not result in an adverse action.
12. Practice monitoring and oversight required by federal statute and regulations in the manner required by that mandate.
13. Include on evaluation teams representation from other institutions of similar purpose and academic program to the extent feasible. Include educators, academics, administrators and members of the public on evaluation teams.
14. Provide institutions an opportunity to object, for cause, to individual members assigned to the team designated to visit the institution, with special concern for possible conflict of interest.
15. Arrange for meetings during the comprehensive evaluation visit with administration, staff, students, and trustees, and include a publicized opportunity for an open meeting during the visit.
16. Address the standards set by the institution and institutional performance with regard to student achievement in reviews of institutional effectiveness.
17. Advise team chairs that the team report should make clear those standards with which the institution does not comply and those areas needing improvement.
18. Provide to the institution a detailed written report on its review assessing the institution's or program's compliance with the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies, noting areas in which the institution must take steps to meet the Standards, and areas for improvement of institutional effectiveness and educational quality, and the institution's performance with respect to student achievement and student learning.
19. Emphasize the value and importance of institutional self evaluation and respect the confidentiality of the institutional Self Evaluation Report and the External Evaluation Report until after the Commission has acted on them. The Commission has the responsibility to require that team members keep confidential all institutional information examined or heard before, during, and after the team visit and after the Commission acts.²

¹ Also refer to the Policy on Rights and Responsibilities of the Commission and Member Institutions.

² Also refer to the Statement on the Process for Preserving Confidentiality of Documents Related to Institutional Evaluations.

20. Encourage discussion and use on campus of major team recommendations.
21. Provide institutions due process³ concerning accrediting decisions made by the Commission: Institutions are provided an opportunity to respond in writing to draft External Evaluation Reports in order to correct errors of fact; to respond in writing (no less than 15 days in advance of the Commission meeting) to final External Evaluation Reports on issues of substance and to any Accreditation Standard deficiencies noted in the report; and to appear before the Commission when reports are considered.
 - a. The Commission will notify the institution in writing, through an action letter, as soon as reasonably possible after Commission decisions are made and will include in its action letter the reasons for actions taken.
 - b. If the Commission's action lists any deficiency, which was not noted in the External Evaluation Report, before making any decision that includes a sanction, denying or terminating accreditation, or candidacy, the Commission, through its President, will afford the institution additional time to respond in writing to the perceived deficiency before finalizing its action at the next Commission meeting. The institution may address any asserted procedural errors as well.
 - c. The institution may request a review by the Commission of adverse actions, as described in the, "Policy on Review of Commission Actions," and may request a further appeal hearing, as described in the "Bylaws of the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges," and Appeal and Hearings Procedures, if the nature of the action warrants an appeal.
22. Provide an opportunity for institutional representatives and the general public to attend those portions of Commission meetings devoted to policy matters and others of a non-confidential nature.
23. Will not condition candidacy or accreditation upon payment of fees which are not approved by the Commission for annual dues, evaluation costs, or other assessments.

³ Complies with 34 C.F.R. § 602.18, § 602.23, § 602.25.