

Policy on Institutional Integrity and Ethics

(Adopted June 2011; Revised June 2013)

Background

In accordance with the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies, the Commission expects each member institution to exhibit integrity and to subscribe to and advocate high ethical standards. Recognition by the U.S. Department of Education requires the Commission to monitor an accredited institution's compliance with the institution's Title IV program responsibilities and the institution's responsibility to ensure that no false, erroneous, or misleading statements or misrepresentation are made about it. 34 C.F.R. 602.16(a)(1)(x).

Policy

Accredited institutions, or individuals acting on their behalf, must exhibit integrity and subscribe to and advocate high ethical standards in the management of its affairs and all of its activities dealing with students, faculty, staff, its governing board, external agencies and organizations, including the Commission, and the general public.

Policy Elements

1. An accredited institution will uphold and protect the integrity of its practices.
2. An institution applying for eligibility, candidacy or extension of candidacy, accreditation or reaffirmation of accreditation, or responding to Commission requests for information or reporting requirements, such as the annual reports, provides the Commission with information that is readily available, current, complete, and accurate, including reports of other accrediting agencies, licensing and auditing agencies. This includes any information on matters that may affect an institution's integrity.
3. The institution assures the clarity, accuracy and availability of information provided to all persons or organizations and related to its mission statement; its educational programs; its admissions requirements; its student services; its tuition and other fees and costs; its financial aid programs; its policies related to transcripts, transfer of credit and refunds of tuition and fees. The institution reports accurately to the public its accreditation status.
4. The institution has policies to ensure academic honesty, policies to assure integrity in the hiring processes, and policies and procedures to prevent conflict of interest throughout the organization, including governing board decision-making and contracting, and policies that provide due process protections. Such policies are reviewed regularly and are widely available to institutional staff, students, governing board members and the public. The institution is able to provide evidence that it upholds its policies.
5. The institution demonstrates integrity and honesty in interactions with students and prospective students in all academic, student support and administrative functions and services as well as statements and other information provided about its accredited status, its transfer of credit policies, and whether successful completion of its courses

qualify students to receive, to apply, and/or to take licensure examinations or non-governmental certification.

6. The institution establishes and publicizes policies ensuring institutional integrity that contain clear statements of responsibility for assuring integrity and describe how violations of integrity are to be resolved.
7. The institution establishes a governance process and policies to receive and address complaints regarding questionable accounting practices, operational activity which is a violation of applicable law, rules, and regulations, or questionable activities which may indicate potential fraud, waste, and/or abuse. The process shall allow for the confidential and anonymous submission of complaints.
8. The institution, in its relationship with the Commission, cooperates in preparation for site visits, receives evaluation teams or Commission representatives in a spirit of collegiality, and complies with the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies. The institution maintains an openness and commitment to external evaluation and assists peer evaluators in performing their duties.
9. The institution makes complete, accurate and honest disclosure of information required by the Commission, and complies with Commission requests, directives, decisions and policies. The institution acknowledges that if it fails to do so, the Commission may act to impose a sanction, or to deny or revoke candidacy or accreditation.^{1,2}

¹ Eligibility Requirement 21. See also the Policy on Public Disclosure and Confidentiality, § II: "If an institution conducts its affairs so that it becomes a matter of public concern, misrepresents a Commission action, or uses the public forum to take issue with an action of the Commission relating to that institution, the Commission President may announce to the public, including the press, the action taken and the basis for that action, making public any pertinent information available to the Commission."

² Other Commission policies which address integrity and ethics include: Policy on Institutional Advertising, Student Recruitment and Representation of Accredited Status; Policy on Principles of Good Practice in Overseas International Education Programs for Non-U.S. Nationals; Policy on Representation of Accredited Status; Policy on Good Practice in Relations with Member Institutions; and Policy on Institutional Compliance with Title IV.