

Policy on Commission Good Practice in Relations with Member Institutions

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Policy

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

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

1. Visit an institution on the initiative of the Commission only after notice, appropriate to the situation, is provided to the institution.
2. Evaluate institutions in the context of their mission, respecting institutional integrity and diversity, so long as the mission is within the general frame of reference of higher education and consistent with the standards of the Commission.
3. Use the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies (together Commission's Standards), along with relevant authentic, factual qualitative and quantitative information in institutional evaluations, including information in the Institutional Self Evaluation Report and any Special Reports, in the evaluation team report, Annual Reports, External Audits, and other information including written supplemental information provided by the institution in response to the final team report, and oral testimony before the Commission. Encourage educational innovation and continuous improvement in the educational effectiveness of the institution.
4. Publish the names of institutions scheduled for comprehensive evaluation.
5. Accept relevant third-party comment on member institutions as delineated in the Policy on Rights and Responsibilities of the Commission and Member Institutions.
6. Consider information regarding adverse actions against a member institution by another accrediting agency or state agency and provide an explanation consistent with the Commission's Standards as to why the action by another authority does not result in an adverse action by the Commission.
7. Provide institutions an opportunity to object, for cause, to individual members assigned to the team designated to visit the institution, with special concern for conflict of interest or demonstrated bias.
8. Require that the comprehensive evaluation include a publicized opportunity for an open meeting with students and interested others during the visit.

9. Examine the institution set standards for student achievement, and institutional performance against those standards, in reviews of institutional effectiveness.
10. Expect that the evaluation team in its report make clear the areas of deficiency and those Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies (together Commission's Standards) with which the institution does not comply and also those areas of institutional practice needing improvement.
11. Provide to the institution written notice of the Commission action and a detailed written evaluation report assessing the institution's compliance with the Commission's Standards and its reported performance with respect to student achievement and student learning. The evaluation team report will note findings, conclusions and recommendations in areas for which the institution has deficiencies and must take steps to meet the Commission's Standards. The team report also includes, when appropriate, recommendations for improvement of institutional effectiveness and educational quality. The Commission action letter will specify the period, not to exceed two years, within which the institution must resolve deficiencies in meeting standards.

Commission practices also affirm the following:

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.¹

The Commission provides institutions due process² concerning accrediting decisions made by the Commission.

- A. Evaluation team reports are held as confidential until the Commission has conducted its review and acted on the accredited status of the institution.
- B. An institution, through its CEO, is provided with the draft evaluation team report before it becomes final. The institution through its CEO is provided an opportunity to respond to the evaluation team chair concerning the draft team report, in order to correct errors of fact.
- C. An institution, through its CEO, is provided with the evaluation team's final evaluation team report in advance of the Commission meeting. The institution is provided an opportunity to submit a written response (no less than 15 days in advance of the Commission meeting) to the final team report on issues of substance concerning any perceived remaining errors of fact in the team report, and to any deficiencies noted in the report which could result in a finding of noncompliance with an Eligibility Requirement, Accreditation Standard, or Commission policy. The written supplemental information may also pertain to the evaluation process, conditions at the institution at the time of the visit, verification of final policy adoption or similar actions noted in the team report as pending or imminent, or to the institution's ability to achieve and maintain compliance with standards.

¹ Also refer to the Statement on the Process for Preserving Confidentiality of Documents Related to Institutional Evaluations.

² Complies with 34 C.F.R. § 602.18, § 602.23, § 602.25.

- D. An institution, through its CEO, is provided with the opportunity to appear before the Commission to present oral comments in closed session before the Commission acts on the accredited status of the institution. The oral comments must pertain to the matters identified in section C., above, for inclusion in supplemental written responses by the college.

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, or will refer the institution to the evaluation team report for detailed reasons.

If the Commission's action on an institution will be based upon any deficiency which has not been noted as part of an accreditation review in the evaluation team report, Self Evaluation Report or other institutional report, or in the submitted annual reports and audit reports, then before making any decision on the institution's compliance with the pertinent Accreditation Standard that will become part of the basis for sanction or denial or withdrawal of accreditation or candidacy, the Commission, through its President, will afford the institution additional time to respond in writing to the perceived deficiency before including the related finding of noncompliance in a sanction or accreditation denial or withdrawal action. In its response, the institution also may address any asserted procedural errors as well.

An institution subject to an adverse decision, may request a review by the Commission of its adverse actions, as described in the Policy on Review of Commission Actions, and thereafter an appeal as described in the Bylaws of the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACCJC), and Appeals Procedure Manual, if the nature of the action warrants an appeal.

The Commission will provide an opportunity for institutional representatives and the general public to attend those portions of Commission meetings devoted to policy matters and others items of a non-confidential nature.