

## Policy on Eligibility to Apply for Accredited Status

*(Adopted June 2015)*

### Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to establish the steps whereby qualified institutions can begin the process of achieving the voluntary status of accreditation with the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACCJC).

Institutions offering the Associate Degree, and located within the geographic region served by the ACCJC, may seek Eligibility to apply for accredited status from the Commission. Institutions may attain Eligibility by demonstrating full compliance with the ACCJC Eligibility Requirements (ERs). Institutional accreditation is public certification that institutions meet defined standards of quality and effectiveness. Institutions preparing for Eligibility are advised to become familiar with the Accreditation Standards and Commission policies, as well as the Eligibility Requirements. Any institution that seeks accreditation from the ACCJC must meet the Commission's Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies (together Commission's Standards).

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACCJC) is one of seven regional accrediting agencies in the United States recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. The ACCJC has the responsibility for accrediting degree granting institutions that offer one or more higher education programs of two academic years in length leading to the Associate's Degree. The Commission accredits public and private institutions in California and Hawai'i, the territories of Guam and American Samoa, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Palau, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

### Steps to Establish Eligibility for Accreditation

1. The interested institution should contact the ACCJC offices. Commission staff will discuss the profile of the institution with the applicant and determine how to proceed. The institution should refer to the Eligibility, Candidacy and Initial Accreditation Manual in preparing the Eligibility Report.
2. The institution will then complete and submit a draft Eligibility Application to the ACCJC. The Eligibility Application must include a narrative description of the manner in which the institution complies with the Eligibility Requirements, addressing each element of an Eligibility Requirement, along with evidence (e.g., supporting documentation) and the Eligibility Fee.
3. Commission staff will review the draft Eligibility Application and provide feedback on the completeness and adequacy of the narrative and evidence prepared by the institution.

4. When the Eligibility Application is in final form, the institution will submit a hard copy and electronic version to the ACCJC.
5. The Commission's Eligibility Committee will review the final Eligibility Application and supporting documentation. During the review process, the Commission staff may arrange a conference call with institutional representatives for additional follow-up, or may arrange to visit the institution. When the Committee has completed its review, it will submit a recommendation for consideration by the Commission at its next regular meeting.
6. The Commission will consider the Eligibility Application and Committee recommendation at its next regular meeting and grant or deny Eligibility.
7. If Eligibility is granted, the Commission will notify the institution in writing. Commission staff will work with the institution to develop a time frame for the Institutional Self Evaluation Report and the comprehensive evaluation team visit in preparation for Candidacy.
8. If Eligibility is denied, the Commission will notify the institution which Eligibility Requirements the institution has failed to meet. The institution may submit another Eligibility Application when it determines it can meet the Eligibility Requirements. Later submitted Eligibility Applications will be handled through the same process as the initial application.
9. The institution is permitted to withdraw an Eligibility Application at any time prior to final action by the Commission. If the institution re-files after withdrawing or being denied Eligibility, the application fee is charged with each new submission.

### **Eligibility Status**

An institution that has achieved eligibility status is an institution that has been reviewed and found to meet the Eligibility Requirements of the Commission. Eligibility status is not a formal affiliation with the Commission, and institutions with this designation are not listed in the ACCJC directory. An eligible institution may proceed to seek Candidacy status and in some instances Initial Accreditation but must not make any representation which claims or implies any relationship with the ACCJC<sup>1</sup>. Eligibility remains current for three years, after which if the institution has not achieve candidacy then the eligibility lapses. If during the period of eligibility the institution changes its state of incorporation, its mission, or ownership or control, then eligibility may be voided, necessitating a new eligibility application.

---

<sup>1</sup> See the Commission's "Policy on Representation of Accredited Status," in the ACCJC Accreditation Reference Handbook.