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## Eligibility Requirements for Accreditation

(Adopted June 2014)

January 2022

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### Introduction

The Commission's Eligibility Requirements represent the minimum qualifications for institutions seeking an accredited status with ACCJC. An institution must first demonstrate that it meets all of the Eligibility Requirements in order to be eligible to apply for Candidacy status (also referenced as "preaccreditation" in federal regulations).<sup>1</sup>

ACCJC only awards Candidacy status (preaccreditation) to those institutions it determines are likely to be successful in obtaining initial accreditation and sustaining compliance with the Commission's Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Policies (hereafter referred to as the Commission's Standards). Therefore, institutions preparing for Eligibility are advised to become familiar with the Accreditation Standards and Commission policies, in addition to the Eligibility Requirements. Application procedures and information about the Commission's eligibility and candidacy review processes can be found in ACCJC's guides and manuals.

Member institutions are expected to maintain compliance with the Eligibility Requirements at all times. Ongoing compliance with Eligibility Requirements will be monitored during an institution's comprehensive review process.

### 1. Authority

The institution is authorized or licensed to operate as a post-secondary educational institution and to award degrees by an appropriate governmental organization or agency as required by each of the jurisdictions or regions in which it operates.

Private institutions, if required by the appropriate statutory regulatory body, must submit evidence of authorization, licensure, or approval by that body. If incorporated, the institution shall submit a copy of its articles of incorporation.

### 2. Operational Status

The institution is operational, with students actively pursuing its degree programs.

### 3. Degrees

A substantial portion of the institution's educational offerings are programs that lead to degrees, and a significant proportion of its students are enrolled in them. At least one degree program must be of two academic years in length.

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<sup>1</sup> Policy on Preaccreditation

#### **4. Chief Executive Officer**

The institution has a chief executive officer appointed by the governing board, whose full-time responsibility is to the institution, and who possesses the requisite authority to administer board policies. Neither the district/system chief executive officer nor the institutional chief executive officer may serve as the chair of the governing board. The institution informs the Commission immediately when there is a change in the institutional chief executive officer.

#### **5. Financial Accountability**

The institution annually undergoes and makes available an external financial audit by a certified public accountant or an audit by an appropriate public agency. Institutions that are already Title IV eligible must demonstrate compliance with federal requirements.

Additional financial accountability for eligibility applicants: The institution shall submit with its eligibility application a copy of the budget and institutional financial audits and management letters prepared by an outside certified public accountant or by an appropriate public agency, who has no other relationship to the institution, for its two most recent fiscal years, including the fiscal year ending immediately prior to the date of the submission of the application. The audits must be certified and any exceptions explained. It is recommended that the auditor employ as a guide Audits of Colleges and Universities, published by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants. An applicant institution must not show an annual or cumulative operating deficit at any time during the eligibility application process.

#### **6. Mission**

The institution's educational mission is clearly defined, adopted, and published by its governing board consistent with its legal authorization, and is appropriate to a degree-granting institution of higher education and the constituency it seeks to serve. The mission statement defines institutional commitment to student learning and achievement. (Standard I.A.1 and I.A.4)

#### **7. Governing Board**

The institution has a functioning governing board responsible for the academic quality, institutional integrity, and financial stability of the institution and for ensuring that the institution's mission is achieved. This board is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the financial resources of the institution are used to provide a sound educational program. Its membership is sufficient in size and composition to fulfill all board responsibilities.

The governing board is an independent policy-making body capable of reflecting constituent and public interest in board activities and decisions. A majority of the board members have no employment, family, ownership, or other personal financial interest in the institution. The board adheres to a conflict of interest policy that assures that those interests are disclosed and that they do not interfere with the impartiality of governing body members or outweigh the greater duty to secure and ensure the academic and fiscal integrity of the institution. (Standard IV.C.1, IV.C.4, and IV.C.11)

**8. Administrative Capacity**

The institution has sufficient staff, with appropriate preparation and experience to provide the administrative services necessary to support its mission and purpose. (Standard III.A.9 and III.A.10)

**9. Educational Programs**

The institution's principal degree programs are congruent with its mission, are based on recognized higher education field(s) of study, are of sufficient content and length, are conducted at levels of quality and rigor appropriate to the degrees offered, and culminate in identified student outcomes. (Standard II.A.1 and II.A.6)

**10. Academic Credit**

The institution awards academic credits based on generally accepted practices for degree-granting institutions of higher education and in accordance with statutory or system regulatory requirements. The institution provides appropriate information about the awarding of academic credit. (Standard II.A.9 and II.A.10)

**11. Student Learning and Student Achievement**

The institution defines standards for student achievement and assesses its performance against those standards. The institution publishes for each program the program's expected student learning and any program-specific achievement outcomes. Through regular and systematic assessment, it demonstrates that students who complete programs, no matter where or how they are offered, achieve the identified outcomes and that the standards for student achievement are met. (Standard I.B.2, 1.B.3, and II.A.1)

**12. General Education**

The institution defines and incorporates into all of its degree programs a substantial component of general education designed to ensure breadth of knowledge and promote intellectual inquiry. The general education component includes an introduction to some of the major areas of knowledge. General education courses are selected to ensure students achieve comprehensive learning outcomes in the degree program. Degree credit for the general education component must be consistent with levels of quality and rigor appropriate to higher education. (Standard II.A.12 and II.A.5)

**13. Academic Freedom**

The institution's faculty and students are free to examine and test all knowledge appropriate to their discipline or area of major study as judged by the academic/educational community in general. Regardless of institutional affiliation or sponsorship, the institution maintains an atmosphere in which intellectual freedom and independence exist. (Standard I.C.7)

**14. Faculty**

The institution has a sufficient number of qualified faculty, which includes full time faculty and may include part time and adjunct faculty, to achieve the institutional mission and purposes. The number is sufficient in size and experience to support all of the institution's educational programs. A clear statement of faculty responsibilities must include development and review of curriculum as well as assessment of learning. (Standard III.A.7 and III.A.2)

**15. Student Support Services**

The institution provides for all of its students appropriate student support services that foster student learning and development within the context of the institutional mission. (Standard II.C.1 and II.C.3)

**16. Admissions**

The institution has adopted and adheres to admission policies consistent with its mission that specify the qualifications of students appropriate for its programs. (Standard II.C.6)

**17. Information and Learning Support Services**

The institution provides, through ownership or contractual agreement, specific long-term access to sufficient information and learning support services adequate for its mission and instructional programs in whatever format whenever and wherever they are offered. (Standard II.B.1 and II.B.4)

**18. Financial Resources**

The institution documents a funding base, financial resources, and plans for financial development adequate to support student learning programs and services, to improve institutional effectiveness, and to assure financial stability. (Standard III.D.1)

**19. Institutional Planning and Evaluation**

The institution systematically evaluates and makes public how well and in what ways it is accomplishing its purposes, including assessment of student learning outcomes. The institution provides evidence of planning for improvement of institutional structures and processes, student achievement of educational goals, and student learning. The institution assesses progress toward achieving its stated goals and makes decisions regarding improvement through an ongoing and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, resource allocation, implementation, and re-evaluation. (Standard I.B.9 and I.C.3)

**20. Integrity in Communication with the Public**

The institution provides a print or electronic catalog for its constituencies with precise, accurate, and current information concerning the following:

**General Information**

- Official Name, Address(es), Telephone Number(s), and Website Address of the Institution
- Educational Mission
- Representation of accredited status with ACCJC and with programmatic accreditors, if any
- Course, Program, and Degree Offerings
- Student Learning Outcomes for Programs and Degrees
- Academic Calendar and Program Length
- Academic Freedom Statement
- Available Student Financial Aid
- Available Learning Resources
- Names and Degrees of Administrators and Faculty
- Names of Governing Board Members

**Requirements**

- Admissions
- Student Fees and Other Financial Obligations
- Degree, Certificates, Graduation and Transfer

**Major Policies Affecting Students**

- Academic Regulations, including Academic Honesty
- Nondiscrimination
- Acceptance and Transfer of Credits
- Transcripts
- Grievance and Complaint Procedures
- Sexual Harassment
- Refund of Fees

**Locations or Publications where Other Policies may be Found**

(Standard I.C.2)

**21. Integrity in Relations with the Accrediting Commission**

The institution provides assurance that it adheres to the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies, describes itself in identical terms to all its accrediting agencies, communicates any changes in its accredited status, and agrees to disclose information required by the Commission to achieve its accrediting responsibilities. The institution will comply with Commission requests, directives, decisions and policies, and will make complete, accurate, and honest disclosure. Failure to do so is sufficient reason, in and of itself, for the Commission to impose a sanction, or to deny or revoke candidacy or accreditation. (Standard I.C.12 and 1.C.13)

*Edited June 2021; Revised January 2022*

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