



September 2, 2016

*Re: Accrediting Commission Report
August 2016 Meeting
(via email distribution)*

Dear ACCET Members and Other Colleagues:

This letter provides information regarding actions undertaken by the ACCET Accrediting Commission at its August 2016 meeting. Specific reports relative to the August 2016 Commission meeting are available on the ACCET website under the “Commission” tab, including: (1) Final Actions Taken by the Commission (referenced by institution), (2) Summary Statistics of Actions Taken by the Commission, and (3) a copy of this Accrediting Commission Report, which describes new and/or revised ACCET policy documents considered by the Commission for final approval or sent out for comment. Also available on the website is a request for written comments relative to institutions scheduled for consideration of accreditation at the Commission’s December 2016 and April 2017 meetings.

A synopsis of the Commission’s actions on ACCET policies undertaken at the April 2016 meeting is included as follows: (1) final documents approved by the Commission (available on the ACCET website under “Documents and Forms”) and (2) call for comment on proposed revisions to policy documents. At the August 2016 meeting, the Commission made significant changes to Document 31 ESOL – Cancellation and Refund Policy for purposes of clarity and to ensure fair and equitable policies for students enrolled in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs. Further, the Commission considered several documents that were scheduled for the five-year review, including documents pertaining to: (1) the satisfactory progress policy and checklist, (2) the enrollment agreement checklist and (2) the processing of complaints filed against ACCET.

As a reminder, the Commission’s Standards and Policy Review Committee (SPRC) conducts an ongoing review of each ACCET policy document at least every five years. Additionally, SPRC considers specific policy documents for review and revision to address governmental regulatory requirements, arising issues of concern, and/or the need for additional policy guidance. Member institutions and other interested parties are invited and encouraged to submit their written comments to proposed changes to ACCET policies and standards (available on the ACCET website under “News”).

FINAL APPROVAL

1. Inquiry Questionnaire & Supplementary Questions for Institutions Participating in Title IV Federal Financial Aid.

Changes were made to add “distance learning (interactive distance learning or e-learning)” as a type of training to be offered. A set of supplementary questions to be addressed by initial applicants that participate in Title IV federal financial aid was also added, including questions pertaining to: (a)

federal financial aid status, (b) accreditation status, (c) lawsuits and regulatory disputes, (d) insurance and payments, (e) financials, and (f) completion and placement rates.

2. Document 1 – The Accreditation Process

Changes were made to add the following provision: For multi-site vocational institutions operating in the United States, on-site visits will be conducted to the main campus and to all branches. For other multi-site institutions, including vocational institutions operating outside of the United States and all avocational institutions, on-site visits will be conducted to the main campus and up to 15 branches as part of the accreditation review process, with additional locations scheduled for on-site visits, as deemed necessary by the Accrediting Commission.

3. Document 1.1 – Initial Accreditation Process

Changes were made to the following provisions: (a) An Inquiry Questionnaire expires if: (i) the Inquiry Questionnaire is not officially accepted by ACCET within 60 days of receipt of the questionnaire and/or (ii) a completed Application for Accreditation is not submitted to ACCET within six (6) months of the acceptance date of the Inquiry Questionnaire; and (b) For multi-site vocational institutions operating in the United States, on-site visits will be conducted to the main campus and to all branches. For other multi-site institutions, including vocational institutions operating outside of the United States and all avocational institutions, on-site visits will be conducted to the main campus and up to 15 branches as part of the accreditation review process, with additional locations scheduled for on-site visits, as deemed necessary by the Accrediting Commission.

4. Document 1.2 – Reaccreditation Process

Changes were made to the following provisions: (a) Attendance at the two-day workshop is required for (i) vocational institutions and (ii) avocational institutions that offer English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Other avocational institutions will attend the one-day workshop; and (b) For multi-site vocational institutions operating in the United States, on-site visits will be conducted to the main campus and to all branches. For other multi-site institutions, including vocational institutions operating outside of the United States and all avocational institutions, on-site visits will be conducted to the main campus and up to 15 branches as part of the reaccreditation review process, with additional locations scheduled for on-site visits, as deemed necessary by the Accrediting Commission.

5. Document 10 – 2016 Fee Schedule

Changes were made to the following provisions: (a) Attendance at the two-day workshop is required for (i) vocational institutions and (ii) avocational institutions that offer English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Other avocational institutions will attend the one-day workshop; and (b) For multi-site vocational institutions operating in the United States, on-site visits will be conducted to the main campus and to all branches. For other multi-site institutions, including vocational institutions operating outside of the United States and all avocational institutions, on-site visits will be conducted to the main campus and up to 15 branches as part of the initial and reaccreditation review process, with additional locations scheduled for on-site visits, as deemed necessary by the Accrediting Commission.

6. Document 29.1 – Enrollment Agreement Checklist

Revisions were made to request, “All costs for each applicable program of study itemized, with any non-refundable items clearly identified.”

7. **Document 49.2 – Policy and Procedure for Processing Complaints Initiated Against ACCET**

No substantive changes were made during the five-year review of this document. Changes were made to: (a) eliminate the purpose statement and (b) modify the language, but not the substance of the policy.

8. **Document 31.ESOL – Cancellation and Refund Policy**

Changes were made, including: (a) eliminating the headings “Standards VII-B Cancellation and Refunds” and “Rationale”; (b) moving to the “General Requirements” section, the following: (i) the requirement that refunds be based on last date of attendance (LDA), (ii) the statement that ACCET’s cancellation and refund policy are minimum standards, and institutions may incorporate policies that are more generous to students, (iii) the statement regarding consistent treatment of students relative to charges and refunds, (iv) the requirements regarding refund calculation documentation; (c) clarifying the section pertaining to the use of State and ACCET cancellation and refund policies; (d) clarifying what may be done if the institution is unable to translate the enrollment agreement and refund policy into a student’s native language; (e) the calculation of the 45-day deadline for advanced notices of withdrawal; (f) changing “program” to “an enrollment”; (g) moving the items under “Changes Other than Tuition” to other sections; and (h) providing definitions for terms used in the policy document.

Additionally, changes were made to:

- a) Require refund eligibility for students who are terminated due to violations of the institution’s written disciplinary or attendance policies.
- b) Permit institutions to request, but not require, a student to submit a written notification of withdrawal for administrative purposes, unless written notice is mandated by federal or state law. (It is noted that the Student Exchange Visitor’s Program (SEVP) does not explicitly require written notification of cancellation or withdrawal.)
- c) Require that, in the event that no notice of withdrawal (written or verbal) is provided, an institution must automatically administratively withdraw a student after s/he has been absent for a maximum of 30 consecutive calendar days (excluding any scheduled breaks of the institution) and complete a refund calculation, processing any refunds to or on behalf of the student.
- d) Prohibit barriers to cancellations, withdrawals, or refunds due to or on behalf of students, including requirements for: (a) advance notification of cancellation or withdrawal; (b) written notice of cancellation or withdrawal, unless required by federal or state law; (c) a written request for a refund; and/or (d) a cancellation or withdrawal fee.
- e) Update the period being pro-rated for withdrawals from the current language of “term/session”, which has been interpreted in multiple different, equally valid ways, to “period of financial obligation. Period of Financial Obligation is defined as follows: “The training period for which a student is legally obligated to pay (e.g. month, term, or session), which may be less than the total period of enrollment, if tuition is charged in smaller increments, such as by the month, term, and/or session. Under no circumstance may a period of financial obligation exceed a 12-month period.”
- f) Require an institution to complete and document refund calculations for each student who cancels, withdraws, or is terminated from training. This documentation must be sufficient to demonstrate that refunds are timely and accurate.

CALL FOR COMMENT

1. Document 3.ESOL – English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)Template

Proposed is a change to the specific field criteria under Standard IV-A Educational Goals and Objectives to indicate that: “The content and length of ESOL programs are consistent with the objectives of the programs and sound educational practice.”

2. Document 7 – Guidelines for On-Site Evaluation Teams

Proposed is an expanded section pertaining to the orientation and training of team evaluators, including a provision that states: “Prior to participating on an on-site visit, new team evaluators must have: (1) attended a Team Evaluator Workshop and/or (2) completed ACCET’s online evaluator training.” Further, it is the responsibilities of team members “to demonstrate appropriate preparation to serve as an on-site evaluators in the accreditation peer review process by: (1) attending the ACCET Team Evaluator Workshop, (2) completing ACCET’s online evaluator training, or (3) previously serving as an on-site evaluator on at least two ACCET accreditation visits”.

3. Document 18 - Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy

Proposed is a change to eliminate the sections entitled “Standards” and “Rationale” to be consistent with other ACCET policy documents. Changes are also proposed to add the following provisions to reflect revisions to Standard VIII-A Student Progress, including: (a) The institution clearly and effectively communicates the assessment system to students at orientation and/or the beginning of each course; (b) Students are informed of their progress on a regular and timely basis, including after each evaluation period or increment; (c) Satisfactory academic progress policies clearly identify the consequences of failing to meet minimum standards. Students must demonstrate that they meet the SAP standards established by the institution or be dismissed from training in accordance with the institution’s policy, including when it is no longer feasible for students to meet the requirements to successfully complete their programs.

An additional change is to specify that: “For financial aid purposes, an increment (evaluation period) may not be longer than one half the program or one half an academic year, whichever is less; however, for academic purposes, evaluation periods must occur earlier and more frequently, along with a system of early warnings to increase the opportunity for students to successfully complete their programs”. Other proposed changes are to provide, for purposes of clarity, an example of “incremental qualitative measures.”

4. Document 18.1 - Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy Checklist

Proposed are changes to reflect proposed changes to Document 18.