



September 5, 2013

*Re: Accrediting Commission Report
August 2013 Meeting
(via email distribution)*

Dear ACCET and Other Colleagues:

As the new Executive Director of ACCET, it is my pleasure to greet all of you as Fall activities commence in many locations. Our Commissioners and those of us in Washington are making every effort to see that this leadership transition is seamless and that ACCET continues to serve its partners during these challenging times. I am honored to serve you and look forward to meeting many of you at our October conference in Orlando.

This letter is presented as an update on the actions undertaken by the ACCET Accrediting Commission at its August 2013 meeting. A summary of all final actions, referenced by institution, a summary of statistics for all actions relative to the various classifications of review, and the policy/documentation revisions, previously posted and referenced herein, will be available to view and download from the ACCET website (www.accet.org). A synopsis of the Commission's actions on ACCET policies undertaken at the August 2013 meetings is included as follows: (1) solicitation of a call for comment (under "News") and (2) finalized document approvals (under "Documents and Forms").

As a reminder, the Commission's Standards and Policy Review Committee (SPRC) reviews specific policies that have been identified for review and revision to address governmental regulatory requirements, issues of concern arising from its reviews, and patterns of good practices, in addition to an ongoing review of policies that have not been subject to review for a period of five years. This report is posted on the website under Commission Reports.

Call for Comment Solicited

1. Document 27 – Policy on Financial Reporting and Financial Stability

Proposed are changes to: (a) clarify that financial statements must include notes prepared by an independent CPA to explain specific items in the financial statement and (b) remind institutions that failure to submit accurate and complete financial statements without all the elements identified herein will require them to resubmit their financials, which may result in additional expenses and late fees.

2. **Document 50 I – On-Site Compliance Checklist Relative to Enrolled Non-Immigrant Students**

Proposed are changes to expand the instructions for on-site teams responsible for completing the Checklist and rename the document “On-Site Compliance Checklist for Non-Immigrant Students”. Changes are also proposed to streamline and focus the on-site review of an institution enrolling students under F/M/J visas, including the review of: (a) the institution’s federal agency approval to enroll F1/M1 students; (b) the requirements and responsibilities of Principal/Designated School Official (P/DSO) and Alternate Responsible Official (A/RO); and (c) the institution’s policies, procedures, and systems for recording and monitoring the up-to-date status of F/M/J students utilizing the SEVIS database. The Commission concurrently approved the document to go out for comment and to be piloted by on-site visit teams in the December 2013 review cycle, with comments to be considered at the December 2013 meeting.

Final Approval

1. **Document 7 - Guidelines for On-Site Evaluation Teams**

For purposes of clarity, the section on “Requirements for the Number and Composition of the Team Members” was expanded to identify when additional team members may be required on an on-site evaluation visit. After the table identifying the minimum team size for different types of accreditation visits, it is noted that additional team members may be required, including extra curriculum content specialists for the review of programs in different fields and/or programs delivered in whole or part by interactive distance learning (IDL).

2. **Document 18.1 IEP - Satisfactory Progress Checklist**

This new document was developed to guide the on-site review of student progress at institutions offering Intensive English Programs, consistent with Document 18.IEP – Satisfactory Progress Policy. This document corresponds with Document 18.1 - Satisfactory Academic Progress Checklist completed by teams as part of the on-site review of student progress at vocational institutions.

3. **Document 33 – Definitions**

Changes were made to expand the definition of “Vocational Institution” to include “Vocational Institution/Program” in order to clarify that some programs may be classified as either vocational or avocational/professional development programs, depending upon whether the purpose of the program is to prepare students for employment or to provide skill enhancement/continuing education to those working in the field or with related prior experience/training. Plebotomy programs are provided as examples of such programs.

4. **Document 35 - Policy on Attendance Requirements**

Changes were made to: (a) streamline wording, (b) specify that institutions offering Intensive English Programs must require students to achieve an 80% attendance rate to complete their term/session, and (c) clarify ACCET’s policy relative to the potential application of federal or state requirements that institutions are required to follow by stating: “The minimum acceptable attendance for students enrolled in vocational programs is an 80% attendance rate for completion/graduation, unless a higher rate is required by an applicable state or federal agency.”

5. **Document 49 - Policy and Procedure for Processing Complaints Initiated Against ACCET Accredited Institutions**

In preparing the ACCET Petition for continued recognition by USDE, issues were identified relative to the processing of complaints filed against ACCET institutions, including: (a) the procedures for the review of complaints by on-site teams and (b) the timeliness of the complaint process. Changes were made to the maximum timeframes for processing complaints to enable complaints to typically be reviewed within 30 days.

A change was also made to identify a process for the on-site review of complaints filed against ACCET institutions, as follows: During an on-site evaluation visit to an institution seeking initial accreditation and reaccreditation, the team will consider complaints filed against the institution and received by ACCET during the application period for initial applicants and during the most recent accreditation period for accredited institutions. Included will be: (1) complaints closed with merit and/or partial merit, (2) open complaints for which the institutions received notice and an opportunity to respond, and (3) any open complaints alleging fraud and/or falsification, if upon initial review the basis of the complaint appears to be well founded. Complaints filed since the last grant of accreditation will also be considered during Quality Assurance Visits (QAVs). The team will receive a summary complaint report identifying, at a minimum, the number of complaints filed against the institution, the names of the complainants, the dates of complaint submissions, the subject/nature of the complaints, the ACCET standards involved, and the complaint resolution (e.g. closed with merit, partial merit, no merit). In evaluating the institution's compliance with ACCET standards, the team will include an assessment as to whether the issues raised in the complaint(s) persist and whether there is any pattern(s) of complaints. If warranted, the team's review of any complaints will be addressed under the relevant ACCET standard(s) in the team report prepared by the team.

Thank you for your continued commitment and responsiveness to our ongoing efforts to refine and strengthen the ACCET standards, policies, and practices, as well as those mandated through regulatory requirements on the agency's continued recognition by the U.S. Department of Education. I am pleased and honored to announce that ACCET's Petition for continued recognition was presented to the National Advisory Committee for Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI) on June 7, 2013 and subsequently considered by the Secretary of Higher Education, with the most favorable result, a five-year grant of recognition (the maximum). Your daily contributions to this Partnership for Quality® in service to your students are the foundation on which our combined accomplishments are measured. Thank you.

Sincerely,



William V Larkin, Ed.D
Executive Director