



February 4, 2014

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

Dear ACCET Members and Other Colleagues:

This letter is presented as an update on the actions undertaken by the ACCET Accrediting Commission at its December 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, are 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 December 2013 meetings is included as follows: (1) finalized document approvals (available on the website under "Documents and Forms") and (2) additional items considered by the Commission. 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 policies for review and revision to address governmental regulatory requirements, arising issues of concern, and the need for additional policy guidance. This report is posted on the website under Commission Reports.

Final Approval

1. Document 10 – 2014 Fee Schedule

Once again, the Executive Committee recommended and the Commission approved no increases to annual sustaining fees and only modest increases to visit fees and appeals to reflect increases in the cost of living.

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

Changes were made 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.

3. Document 11 – Policies and Practices of the Accrediting Commission

Changes were made to: (a) clarify the language relative to the status of an institution while it is appealing an adverse action (denial or withdrawal of accreditation) by the Commission, and (b) specify that an electronic copy of the appeals brief and exhibits must be submitted to ACCET by the institution.

4. Document 18.IEP – Satisfactory Progress Policy

A change was made to specify that documented learning plans are only required to be prepared by an institution for learners repeating a level more than once.

5. Document 18.1 IEP – Satisfactory Progress Policy Checklist

For purposes of clarity, a change was made to list two additional elements identified in the Document 18.IEP – Satisfactory Progress Policy for verification by the on-site team, including: (a) a documented learning plan required for students repeating a level more than once and (b) a maximum limit of 36 months (cumulative) of language training at the institution. An additional change was to clarify that the on-site review of 10 active student files is not to be limited to students' current academic status, but is to encompass the students' entire academic history. To this end, the specific change was to modify two column headings on the table to be completed by the on-site team to include the word "consistently", as follows: (a) consistently meets minimum attendance requirements and (b) consistently meets the minimum academic requirements.

6. Document 50 I – On-Site Immigration Compliance Checklist/Guidelines

Changes were made to expand the instructions for the teams responsible for completing the Checklist and rename the document "On-Site Compliance Checklist for Enrolled Non-Immigrant Students". Additionally, changes were made to streamline and focus the on-site review of institutions enrolling students under F/M/J visas.

Additional Items Considered by the Commission:

- 1. Strategic Priorities:** The Commission endorsed the following ACCET Strategic Priorities established after a review of thoughtful comments from ACCET institutions and Commissioners regarding the future direction of ACCET. Additional information regarding these priorities will be posted to the ACCET website and distributed to membership in the near future, including the strategies, resources, and time frames required to achieve these priorities.

- i. *Review and revise, as necessary, ACCET’s scope, roles, and mission to clarify its future as an accrediting agency.*
 - ii. *Re-align ACCET training and professional development initiatives and approaches to meet current and anticipated needs and priorities.*
 - iii. *Develop and implement a comprehensive communications strategy that enhances ongoing communications to members by utilizing current advances in technology, when appropriate, to promote transparency, better engage ACCET members in the operation of the agency, and re-establish a sense of “connected culture.”*
 - iv. *Review and re-align the staffing pattern, salary ranges, organizational structure and deployment of ACCET professional staff to ensure that they serve ACCET’s diverse constituencies.*
 - v. *Enhance, expand, and (re)establish ACCET’s external outreach in the higher education community and beyond so that membership priorities are better realized.*
 - vi. *Review ACCET’s definitions, policies, standards and practices in the upcoming cycle being mindful of relevance, appropriateness and effectiveness. Furthermore, be cognizant of changes in the sector, necessary timeframes for implementation, as well as current and future environmental and organizational challenges.*
2. **Quality Assurance Visits:** The Commission approved the following changes relative to Quality Assurance Visits: (a) During the April 2014 review cycle, the Commission will pilot the scheduling of announced QAV visits, with institutions given 24-hours of advanced notice of the upcoming QAV visits. This 24-hour advanced notice will provide an opportunity for institutional staff to be present for the visit and for requested documentation to be readily accessible for the visit. (b) Effective December 2013, the Commission will routinely require QAV visits to newly accredited institutions offering Intensive English Programs (IEP), with the QAV scheduled at the mid—point of the initial grant of accreditation. The QAV will provide an opportunity for a preliminary on-site review of these new IEP members in advance of their full-team reaccreditation visits.
 3. **Conflict of Interest Relative to IEP Institutional Commissioners:** The Commission will narrow the definition of conflict of interest relative to IEP Institutional Commissioners. Beginning in 2014, IEP Commissioners will be permitted to review and vote on IEP institutions, except when there is an identified conflict of interest or an appearance of such a conflict.
 4. **Definition of Institutional Show Cause:** The Commission authorizes and encourages ACCET to work with other accrediting agencies towards the goal of establishing a common definition of institutional show cause.

Thank you for your continued commitment and responsiveness to our ongoing efforts to refine and strengthen the ACCET standards, policies, and practices. Your daily contributions to this Partnership for Quality® are the foundation on which our combined accomplishments are measured. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "William V. Larkin".

William V Larkin, Ed.D
Executive Director