

ELIGIBILITY, CANDIDACY, AND INITIAL ACCREDITATION MANUAL

*A Publication of the Accrediting Commission
for Community and Junior Colleges,
Western Association of Schools and Colleges*

AUGUST 2015
Edition

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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
1 STEPS TO ESTABLISH ELIGIBILITY FOR ACCREDITATION	2
2 REQUIREMENTS FOR ESTABLISHING ELIGIBILITY FOR ACCREDITATION	3
2.1 The Eligibility Application	3
2.2 Eligibility Requirements and Suggestions for Documentation	3
3 STEPS TO ESTABLISH CANDIDACY STATUS	11
4 STEPS TO ACHIEVE INITIAL ACCREDITATION STATUS AFTER CANDIDACY STATUS IS GRANTED	13
5 AFTER INITIAL ACCREDITATION IS GRANTED	14
APPENDICES	15
Appendix A: Eligibility Requirements for Accreditation	16
Appendix B: Accreditation Standards.....	21
Appendix C: Policy on Eligibility to Apply for Accredited Status.....	39

Introduction

The purpose of the *Eligibility, Candidacy, and Initial Accreditation Manual* is to provide institutions with the steps to achieve the voluntary status of accreditation with the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACCJC). Accreditation serves the public interest by certifying that the institution meets or exceeds specific quality standards. The peer-based nature of accreditation helps maintain the values of higher education and is a positive force in sustaining educational quality and improving the effectiveness of accredited institutions.

Institutions offering the Associate's Degree, and located within the geographic region served by the ACCJC may seek Eligibility, Candidacy, and Initial Accreditation from the Commission. The process for each is described in the following pages. All institutions that seek accreditation from the ACCJC must meet the Commission's Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies (together Commission's Standards). Institutions are therefore referred to the ACCJC's website at: www.accjc.org, and are advised to become familiar with the Commission and to review the Commission's Standards.

Institutional accreditation is public certification that institutions meet defined standards of quality and effectiveness. It is granted by accrediting associations, which are independent, non-profit, non-governmental organizations formed by educational institutions to provide standards for excellence, a process of quality review and certification and impetus for institutional and educational improvement. There are three kinds of accrediting associations recognized by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE): regional accrediting agencies, national accrediting agencies, and professional and specialized programmatic accrediting agencies. The Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) is one of six regional accrediting associations in the United States. It consists of the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities, (ACSCU); the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, (ACCJC), and the Accrediting Commission for Schools (ACS).

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (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 does not accredit programs or districts/systems. 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.

1 Steps to Establish Eligibility for Accreditation

1. The institution makes an inquiry about accreditation to the Commission office. Commission staff will discuss the profile of the institution with the applicant and determine how to proceed.
2. The institution submits one hard copy and one electronic copy of the Eligibility Application and supporting documentation to the ACCJC. Staff will inform the institution of the application fee in accordance with the ACCJC Fee Schedule. The cover page should be titled “Eligibility Application” and include the institution’s name, address, name of preparer, and submission date. The application must address each Eligibility Requirement including evidence.
3. Commission staff will review the Eligibility Application and may arrange a conference call with institutional representatives or visit the institution.
4. The Commission’s Eligibility, Candidacy, and Initial Accreditation Committee will review the final Eligibility Application and supporting documentation.
5. The Commission will consider the Eligibility Application and Committee recommendation at its next regular meeting and grant or deny Eligibility.
6. If Eligibility is granted the Commission notifies the institution in writing and develops a time frame for the institution’s self evaluation for Candidacy.
7. If Eligibility is denied the Commission will state which Eligibility Requirements (ERs) the institution has failed to meet. The institution may submit another Eligibility Application when it determines it can meet the ERs. This latter Eligibility Application will be handled through the same process as the initial application.
8. 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.

In summary, the definition of an institution that has achieved eligibility status is an institution that has been reviewed and found to meet the ERs of the Commission. Eligibility status is not a formal affiliation with the Commission, and institutions with this designation are not listed in the ACCJC, WASC directories. 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. Please refer to the Commission’s “Policy on Representation of Accredited Status,” in the *ACCJC Accreditation Reference Handbook*, and *Appendix C “Policy on Eligibility to Apply for Accredited Status”*, page 39 in this manual.

2 Requirements for Establishing Eligibility for Accreditation

2.1 The Eligibility Application

The eligibility process is designed to screen institutions prior to a period of formal and extensive institutional self evaluation so that only institutions which meet the Eligibility Requirements (ERs) may proceed. The ERs are listed below along with a description of the documentation the institution must provide the Commission.

The institution must also review the Accreditation Standards and Commission policies as these provide a clear statement of ultimate Commission expectations of quality institutional performance and give further definition to the ERs.

If an institution believes it meets the following ERs and subsequently the Accreditation Standards and Commission policies, it must submit an Eligibility Application as the first step toward Candidacy and Initial Accreditation. The Eligibility Application must explain in detail how the institution meets each of the ERs and provide evidence to support the assertions made in the application.

2.2 Eligibility Requirements and Suggestions for Documentation

1. Authority

The institution is authorized or licensed to operate as an 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.

Documentation

- Degree-granting approval statement, authorization to operate, or certificates from appropriate bodies
- Articles of incorporation (private institutions)

2. 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 achieving student learning.

Documentation

- Copy of the mission statement as it appears in a published catalog or other public document
- Minutes of governing board meeting where the mission statement was adopted
- Any recent revisions to the mission statement

3. Governing Board

The institution has a functioning governing board responsible for the quality, integrity, and financial stability of the institution and for ensuring that the institution's mission is being carried out. 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.

Documentation

- Biographical information about governing board members
- Copy of governing board bylaws
- Copy of conflict of interest policy
- Certification that there is no board majority of persons with employment, family, ownership, or personal interest in the institution; this must be signed by the chief executive officer and governing board chair

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.

Documentation

- Name, address, and biographical information about the Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
- Certification of CEO's full-time responsibility to the institution signed by the CEO and governing board chair

5. Administrative Capacity

The institution has sufficient staff, with appropriate preparation and experience to provide the administrative services necessary to support its mission and purpose.

Documentation

- Organizational chart, including names of those in the identified positions
- Names and biographical information about administrative staff

6. Operational Status

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

Documentation

- Enrollment history of institution (most recent three years suggested)
- Enrollments in institutional degree programs by year or cohort, including degrees awarded
- Current schedule of classes

7. 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.

Documentation

- List of degrees, course credit requirements, and length of study for each degree program
- General education courses and requirements for each degree offered
- Catalog designation of college level courses for which degree credit is granted
- Data describing student enrollment in each degree program and student enrollment in the institution's non-degree programs

8. 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. At least one degree program must be of two academic years in length.

Documentation

- Names of programs which reflect the mission of the institution, including documentation of at least one degree program of two academic years in length
- Documentation from catalog or other public document which describes courses and curricular sequence of educational programs
- Documentation of location(s) of educational programs, including a list of those offered electronically
- Student learning outcomes for degree programs

9. Academic Credit

The institution awards academic credits based on generally accepted practices in degree-granting institutions of higher education. Public institutions governed by

statutory or system regulatory requirements provide appropriate information about the awarding of academic credit.

Documentation

- Institutional policies on transfer and award of credit (See Commission’s “Policy on Award of Credit” and “Policy on Transfer of Credit”)
- Catalog documentation of credits awarded
- Formula used by the institution to calculate values of units of academic credit, especially for laboratory, clinical, or other learning configurations

10. Student Learning and Achievement

The institution defines and publishes for each program the program’s expected student learning and achievement outcomes. Through regular and systematic assessment, it demonstrates that students who complete programs, no matter where or how they are offered, achieve these outcomes.

Documentation

- Catalog statements which establish student learning outcomes for courses, programs and degrees
- Student learning outcome data from educational program reviews
- Graduation, transfer, job placement, licensure examination pass rate history, course completion, retention term to term, progression to the next course/level, program completion, as appropriate to the institutional mission

11. 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 demonstrated competence in writing and computational skills and an introduction to some of the major areas of knowledge. General education has comprehensive learning outcomes for the students who complete it. Degree credit for general education programs must be consistent with levels of quality and rigor appropriate to higher education. See the Accreditation Standards, Standard II.A.3, (Appendix B) for areas of study for general education.

Documentation

- List of general education courses currently offered, including catalog descriptions and evidence of student learning outcomes, wherever they exist, i.e., course outlines, syllabi, etc.
- Course outlines for language and quantitative reasoning courses
- Evidence that general education courses are of higher education rigor and quality

12. 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.

Documentation

- Board approved policy on academic freedom

13. Faculty

The institution has a substantial core of qualified faculty with full-time responsibility to the institution. The core 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.

Documentation

- Full-time and part-time faculty roster, including degrees and experience (note that faculty degrees must be from U.S. accredited institutions or the equivalent)
- Faculty responsibilities statement or contract outlining faculty responsibilities
- Current schedule of classes identifying faculty responsible for each class

14. Student Services

The institution provides for all of its students appropriate student services that support student learning and development within the context of the institutional mission.

Documentation

- Demographic characteristics of students
- Evidence the institution assesses student needs for services and provides for them
- List of student support services provided which reflect the mission of the institution
- Description of programs for special student populations

15. Admissions

The institution has adopted and adheres to admission policies consistent with its mission that specify the qualifications of students appropriate for its programs.

Documentation

- Copy of admissions policy from the college catalog or other published document

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- Copy of enrollment application
 - Statement of student qualifications for admission
 - Statement of roles and expectations of admissions personnel

16. Information and Learning Resources

The institution provides, through ownership or contractual agreement, specific long-term access to sufficient information and learning resources and services to support its mission and instructional programs in whatever format and wherever they are offered.

Documentation

- Profile of holdings and resources, including electronic resources
- Copies of agreements for access to external resources

17. 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.

Documentation

- Past, current, and proposed budgets and financial statements
- Documentation of any external foundation or other funding support
- Documentation of funding base

18. 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. 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. Institutions that are already Title IV eligible must demonstrate compliance with federal requirements.

Documentation

- Past, current, and proposed budgets
- Certified independent audits, including management letters (most recent three years suggested)

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- Financial aid program review/audits, if the institution is a participant
 - Student loan default rates and relevant USDE reports, if the institution is a participant

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.

Documentation

- Current written institutional plans that describe ways in which the institution will achieve its educational goals
- Evidence of how results of institutional plans are used to guide resource planning and allocation, facilities plans, and other significant institutional planning efforts and decision making processes
- Evidence the institution engages in regular self-reflective evaluation of its operations and of student learning outcomes, and uses the results to identify strengths and areas in need of improvement for purposes of developing institutional plans and maintaining educational quality
- Evidence that well-defined decision-making processes and authority serve to facilitate planning and institutional effectiveness

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 (34 C.F.R. § 668.41-43; § 668.71-75.):

General Information

- Official Name, Address(es), Telephone Number(s), and Website Address of the Institution
- Educational Mission
- Course, Program, and Degree Offerings
- 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 of Transfer Credits
- Grievance and Complaint Procedures
- Sexual Harassment
- Refund of Fees

Locations or Publications Where Other Policies May be Found

Documentation

- Catalog or other public document which serves that purpose
- Recent print or other media advertisements
- Policies regarding public disclosure

21. Integrity in Relations with the Accrediting Commission*

The institution provides assurance that it adheres to the Eligibility Requirements and Accreditation Standards and policies of the Commission, 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 carry out 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. (34 C.F.R. § 668 - misrepresentation.)

*This Eligibility Requirement will not be realized until Candidacy or Initial Accreditation has been achieved.

Documentation

- Copy of the policy adopted and published by governing board assuring compliance with this criterion
- List of other accreditations held by institution and information regarding status with those organizations
- Copy of directory pages or website which describe the institution's representation by those accrediting bodies

3 Steps to Establish Candidacy Status

1. Once Eligibility is granted, ACCJC staff develops a time frame for the institution's self evaluation in preparation for the Candidacy review. The institution's president and the ACCJC agree on a visit date. The Commission also invites college staff to attend training for institutions undertaking the self evaluation.
2. In preparation for Candidacy, the institution completes and submits an Institutional Self Evaluation Report using the Accreditation Standards, the *Manual for Institutional Self Evaluation*, the *Guide to Evaluating and Improving Institutions*, the *Accreditation Reference Handbook*, and other Commission policies and resources as appropriate. This Institutional Self Evaluation Report is supported by evidence for review by the Candidacy evaluation team. The Report is submitted to the Commission and the evaluation team members.
3. The Commission sends an evaluation team to visit the college to review the institution's readiness for Candidacy status and reviews the evidence submitted to verify how well the institution meets or exceeds the ERs, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies. The evaluation team provides recommendations to the institution on what to improve to meet the ERs, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies in a team report, and makes a confidential recommendation to the Commission on Candidacy status. The steps for Candidacy remain separate and distinct from the steps to achieve Initial Accreditation. In rare instances, the Commission may grant Initial Accreditation at the same time Candidacy is approved.

Candidacy status: The team report will identify any perceived deficiencies in meeting ERs, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies. The institution will be provided a copy of the draft team report and asked to correct errors of fact. The institution will also be afforded the opportunity to comment in writing to the Commission on any perceived deficiencies noted in the final team report prior to the Commission's action on the institution.

4. An institution must participate in and complete the Candidacy phase of accreditation to receive Title IV federal financial aid.
5. At its next regular meeting the Commission reviews the institution's Self Evaluation Report, the evaluation team report and the confidential team recommendation. The Commission makes the final determination whether to grant, deny, or defer Candidacy.
6. If Candidacy is granted, the institution is notified by the Commission and a timeframe for Initial Accreditation is arranged. If Candidacy is denied, the institution may reapply by submitting another Institutional Self Evaluation Report after two years. If the decision is to defer, the institution is notified regarding the specific items to address.
7. The institution is permitted to withdraw an application for Candidacy at any time prior to the final action by the Commission.

In summary, the definition of an institution which has achieved Candidacy status is an institution that has demonstrated that it meets the ERs, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies. Candidacy status is a formal status of affiliation with the

Commission; Candidate institutions are listed in the ACCJC/WASC directories and are expected to remain in compliance with the ERs, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies throughout the Candidacy period. Institutions which have achieved Candidacy status may make public representations about their relationship with the Commission. Please refer to Commission’s “Policy on Representation of Accredited Status,” in the *Accreditation Reference Handbook*.

4 Steps to Achieve Initial Accreditation Status after Candidacy Status is Granted

If the Commission grants Candidacy it is awarded for two years. Within this period an institution must either apply for Initial Accreditation or seek an extension of Candidacy status beyond the initial two-year period. Under no circumstance may Candidacy status exceed a total of four years.

1. When the Candidate institution wishes to apply for Initial Accreditation it must submit another Institutional Self Evaluation Report using the ERs, Accreditation Standards, *Manual for Institutional Self Evaluation*, *Guide to Evaluating and Improving Institutions*, *Accreditation Reference Handbook*, and other Commission policies and resources. The Report is submitted to the Commission and to the evaluation team members. This Institutional Self Evaluation Report is supported by evidence for review by the Initial Accreditation evaluation team.
2. The Commission sends an evaluation team to the college. The purposes of the visit are to review existing evidence and determine how well the institution meets the ERs, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies, provide recommendations to the institution on how to improve in a team report, and make a confidential recommendation to the Commission on whether to grant Initial Accreditation with or without terms (such as a Follow-up Report and visit), extend Candidacy, defer, or deny Initial Accreditation. The evaluation team report will identify any perceived deficiencies meeting Accreditation Standards. The institution will be provided a copy of the draft team report to correct errors of fact. The institution will also be afforded the opportunity to comment in writing to the Commission on any perceived inaccuracies noted in the final team report prior to the Commission's action on the institution.
3. At its next regular meeting, the Commission reviews the institution's Self Evaluation Report, the evaluation team report, and the confidential team recommendation. The Commission makes the final determination whether to grant Initial Accreditation, defer action, deny Initial Accreditation or extend Candidacy. The Commission will not extend Candidacy status for an institution that has been in Candidacy status for four years.
4. If an institution fails to achieve Initial Accreditation after four years in Candidacy status, it must wait two years before submitting a new Eligibility Application to the Commission and begin the process anew. The new application should address all concerns expressed in the team report(s) that were prepared when the institution initially sought Accreditation.

5 After Initial Accreditation Is Granted

If Initial Accreditation is granted, the institution conducts a self evaluation and applies for reaffirmation every seven years thereafter. If the institution is part of a multi-college district, the reaffirmation cycle will be aligned with other colleges in that district. Institutional self evaluation reports must demonstrate that the institution meets Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies (together Commission's Standards).

The periodic comprehensive review by an evaluation team is a peer review of ongoing institutional good practice. An accredited institution is expected to meet ERs, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies at all times. Institutional leadership is therefore urged to carefully review the *Accreditation Reference Handbook* and other Commission publications and to stay apprised of quality assurance and quality improvement practices in higher education. The ACCJC website provides current information as well as references to other quality of higher education resources.

Appendices

Appendix A: Eligibility Requirements for Accreditation

ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR COMMUNITY AND JUNIOR COLLEGES
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

Eligibility Requirements for Accreditation

(Adopted June 2014)

Introduction

Eligible institutions offering one or more programs leading to the Associate Degree, located in the states of Hawai'i and California, the territories of Guam and American Samoa, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Republic of Palau, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands may apply to the Commission for candidacy. Eligible institutions may offer, in addition to the Associate Degree, other credentials including certificates and the baccalaureate degree.

Prior to making a formal application, an institution wishing to become a Candidate for Accreditation must begin by assessing itself in relation to the basic criteria for institutional eligibility, stated below. The institution should also review the Accreditation Standards and Commission policies, as they will provide a clear statement of ultimate Commission expectations of institutional performance and quality and give further definition to the eligibility criteria. The eligibility process is designed to screen institutions prior to a period of formal and extensive institutional self evaluation so that only institutions which meet the basic criteria for eligibility may proceed.

The Commission uses the same institutional self evaluation and site visit process for both candidacy and accreditation applications. The history of an applicant institution will also bear on the Commission's decision. The outcome of a candidacy (pre-accreditation) or an initial accreditation review is candidacy, accreditation, or denial. When appropriate, the Commission may defer its decision on candidacy or initial accreditation pending receipt of specified information.

Eligibility Requirements

In order to achieve eligibility, the institution must completely meet all Eligibility Requirements. Compliance with the Eligibility Requirements is expected to be continuous and will be validated periodically, normally as part of every Institutional Self Evaluation process and external Educational Quality and Institutional Effectiveness Review.

Institutions that have achieved accreditation are expected to include in their Institutional Self Evaluation Report information demonstrating that they continue to meet the eligibility requirements. Accredited institutions must separately address Eligibility Requirements 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 in the Institutional Self Evaluation Report. The remaining Eligibility Requirements will be addressed in the institution's response to the relevant sections of the Accreditation Standards.

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.

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)

Appendix B: Accreditation Standards

ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR COMMUNITY AND JUNIOR COLLEGES
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

Accreditation Standards

(Adopted June 2014)

Introduction¹

The primary purpose of an ACCJC-accredited institution is to foster student learning and student achievement. An effective institution ensures that its resources, programs, and services, whenever, wherever, and however delivered, support student learning and achievement. The effective institution ensures academic quality and continuous improvement through ongoing assessment of learning and achievement and pursues institutional excellence and improvement through ongoing, integrated planning and evaluation.

There are four Standards that work together to define and promote student success, academic quality, institutional integrity, and excellence. The mission provides a framework for all institutional goals and activities. The institution provides the means for students to learn and achieve their goals, assesses how well learning is occurring, and strives to improve learning and achievement through ongoing, systematic, and integrated evaluation and planning (Standard I). Student learning programs and support services make possible the academic quality that supports student success (Standard II). Human, physical, technology, and financial resources enable these programs and services to function and improve (Standard III). Ethical and effective leadership throughout the organization guides the accomplishment of the mission and supports institutional effectiveness and improvement (Standard IV). Integrating the elements of the Standards gives institutions the means to develop a comprehensive assessment of academic quality, institutional integrity and effectiveness, and a path to continuous improvement.

¹ The Introduction section and opening paragraphs of each Standard are not intended for citation as standards. They are introductory in nature only.

Standard I: Mission, Academic Quality and Institutional Effectiveness, and Integrity

The institution demonstrates strong commitment to a mission that emphasizes student learning and student achievement. Using analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, the institution continuously and systematically evaluates, plans, implements, and improves the quality of its educational programs and services. The institution demonstrates integrity in all policies, actions, and communication. The administration, faculty, staff, and governing board members act honestly, ethically, and fairly in the performance of their duties.

A. Mission

1. The mission describes the institution's broad educational purposes, its intended student population, the types of degrees and other credentials it offers, and its commitment to student learning and student achievement. (ER 6)
2. The institution uses data to determine how effectively it is accomplishing its mission, and whether the mission directs institutional priorities in meeting the educational needs of students.
3. The institution's programs and services are aligned with its mission. The mission guides institutional decision-making, planning, and resource allocation and informs institutional goals for student learning and achievement.
4. The institution articulates its mission in a widely published statement approved by the governing board. The mission statement is periodically reviewed and updated as necessary. (ER 6)

B. Assuring Academic Quality and Institutional Effectiveness

Academic Quality

1. The institution demonstrates a sustained, substantive and collegial dialog about student outcomes, student equity, academic quality, institutional effectiveness, and continuous improvement of student learning and achievement.
2. The institution defines and assesses student learning outcomes for all instructional programs and student and learning support services. (ER 11)
3. The institution establishes institution-set standards for student achievement, appropriate to its mission, assesses how well it is achieving them in pursuit of continuous improvement, and publishes this information. (ER 11)
4. The institution uses assessment data and organizes its institutional processes to support student learning and student achievement.

Institutional Effectiveness

5. The institution assesses accomplishment of its mission through program review and evaluation of goals and objectives, student learning outcomes, and student achievement. Quantitative and qualitative data are disaggregated for analysis by program type and mode of delivery.

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6. The institution disaggregates and analyzes learning outcomes and achievement for subpopulations of students. When the institution identifies performance gaps, it implements strategies, which may include allocation or reallocation of human, fiscal and other resources, to mitigate those gaps and evaluates the efficacy of those strategies.
 7. The institution regularly evaluates its policies and practices across all areas of the institution, including instructional programs, student and learning support services, resource management, and governance processes to assure their effectiveness in supporting academic quality and accomplishment of mission.
 8. The institution broadly communicates the results of all of its assessment and evaluation activities so that the institution has a shared understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and sets appropriate priorities.
 9. The institution engages in continuous, broad based, systematic evaluation and planning. The institution integrates program review, planning, and resource allocation into a comprehensive process that leads to accomplishment of its mission and improvement of institutional effectiveness and academic quality. Institutional planning addresses short- and long-range needs for educational programs and services and for human, physical, technology, and financial resources. (ER 19)

C. Institutional Integrity

1. The institution assures the clarity, accuracy, and integrity of information provided to students and prospective students, personnel, and all persons or organizations related to its mission statement, learning outcomes, educational programs, and student support services. The institution gives accurate information to students and the public about its accreditation status with all of its accreditors. (ER 20)
2. The institution provides a print or online catalog for students and prospective students with precise, accurate, and current information on all facts, requirements, policies, and procedures listed in the “Catalog Requirements” (see endnote). (ER 20)
3. The institution uses documented assessment of student learning and evaluation of student achievement to communicate matters of academic quality to appropriate constituencies, including current and prospective students and the public. (ER 19)
4. The institution describes its certificates and degrees in terms of their purpose, content, course requirements, and expected learning outcomes.
5. The institution regularly reviews institutional policies, procedures, and publications to assure integrity in all representations of its mission, programs, and services.
6. The institution accurately informs current and prospective students regarding the total cost of education, including tuition, fees, and other required expenses, including textbooks, and other instructional materials.
7. In order to assure institutional and academic integrity, the institution uses and publishes governing board policies on academic freedom and responsibility. These policies make clear the institution’s commitment to the free pursuit and dissemination

of knowledge, and its support for an atmosphere in which intellectual freedom exists for all constituencies, including faculty and students. (ER 13)

8. The institution establishes and publishes clear policies and procedures that promote honesty, responsibility and academic integrity. These policies apply to all constituencies and include specifics relative to each, including student behavior, academic honesty and the consequences for dishonesty.
9. Faculty distinguish between personal conviction and professionally accepted views in a discipline. They present data and information fairly and objectively.
10. Institutions that require conformity to specific codes of conduct of staff, faculty, administrators, or students, or that seek to instill specific beliefs or world views, give clear prior notice of such policies, including statements in the catalog and/or appropriate faculty and student handbooks.
11. Institutions operating in foreign locations operate in conformity with the Standards and applicable Commission policies for all students. Institutions must have authorization from the Commission to operate in a foreign location.
12. The institution agrees to comply with Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, Commission policies, guidelines, and requirements for public disclosure, institutional reporting, team visits, and prior approval of substantive changes. When directed to act by the Commission, the institution responds to meet requirements within a time period set by the Commission. It discloses information required by the Commission to carry out its accrediting responsibilities. (ER 21)
13. The institution advocates and demonstrates honesty and integrity in its relationships with external agencies, including compliance with regulations and statutes. It describes itself in consistent terms to all of its accrediting agencies and communicates any changes in its accredited status to the Commission, students, and the public. (ER 21)
14. The institution ensures that its commitments to high quality education, student achievement and student learning are paramount to other objectives such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization, or supporting external interests.

Standard II: Student Learning Programs and Support Services

The institution offers instructional programs, library and learning support services, and student support services aligned with its mission. The institution's programs are conducted at levels of quality and rigor appropriate for higher education. The institution assesses its educational quality through methods accepted in higher education, makes the results of its assessments available to the public, and uses the results to improve educational quality and institutional effectiveness. The institution defines and incorporates into all of its degree programs a substantial component of general education designed to ensure breadth of knowledge and to promote intellectual inquiry. The provisions of this standard are broadly applicable to all instructional programs and student and learning support services offered in the name of the institution.

A. Instructional Programs

1. All instructional programs, regardless of location or means of delivery, including distance education and correspondence education, are offered in fields of study consistent with the institution's mission, are appropriate to higher education, and culminate in student attainment of identified student learning outcomes, and achievement of degrees, certificates, employment, or transfer to other higher education programs. (ER 9 and ER 11)
2. Faculty, including full time, part time, and adjunct faculty, ensure that the content and methods of instruction meet generally accepted academic and professional standards and expectations. Faculty and others responsible act to continuously improve instructional courses, programs and directly related services through systematic evaluation to assure currency, improve teaching and learning strategies, and promote student success.
3. The institution identifies and regularly assesses learning outcomes for courses, programs, certificates and degrees using established institutional procedures. The institution has officially approved and current course outlines that include student learning outcomes. In every class section students receive a course syllabus that includes learning outcomes from the institution's officially approved course outline.
4. If the institution offers pre-collegiate level curriculum, it distinguishes that curriculum from college level curriculum and directly supports students in learning the knowledge and skills necessary to advance to and succeed in college level curriculum.
5. The institution's degrees and programs follow practices common to American higher education, including appropriate length, breadth, depth, rigor, course sequencing, time to completion, and synthesis of learning. The institution ensures that minimum degree requirements are 60 semester credits or equivalent at the associate level, and 120 credits or equivalent at the baccalaureate level. (ER 12)
6. The institution schedules courses in a manner that allows students to complete certificate and degree programs within a period of time consistent with established expectations in higher education. (ER 9)
7. The institution effectively uses delivery modes, teaching methodologies and learning support services that reflect the diverse and changing needs of its students, in support of equity in success for all students.

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8. The institution validates the effectiveness of department-wide course and/or program examinations, where used, including direct assessment of prior learning. The institution ensures that processes are in place to reduce test bias and enhance reliability.
 9. The institution awards course credit, degrees and certificates based on student attainment of learning outcomes. Units of credit awarded are consistent with institutional policies that reflect generally accepted norms or equivalencies in higher education. If the institution offers courses based on clock hours, it follows Federal standards for clock-to-credit-hour conversions. (ER 10)
 10. The institution makes available to its students clearly stated transfer-of-credit policies in order to facilitate the mobility of students without penalty. In accepting transfer credits to fulfill degree requirements, the institution certifies that the expected learning outcomes for transferred courses are comparable to the learning outcomes of its own courses. Where patterns of student enrollment between institutions are identified, the institution develops articulation agreements as appropriate to its mission. (ER 10)
 11. The institution includes in all of its programs, student learning outcomes, appropriate to the program level, in communication competency, information competency, quantitative competency, analytic inquiry skills, ethical reasoning, the ability to engage diverse perspectives, and other program-specific learning outcomes.
 12. The institution requires of all of its degree programs a component of general education based on a carefully considered philosophy for both associate and baccalaureate degrees that is clearly stated in its catalog. The institution, relying on faculty expertise, determines the appropriateness of each course for inclusion in the general education curriculum, based upon student learning outcomes and competencies appropriate to the degree level. The learning outcomes include a student's preparation for and acceptance of responsible participation in civil society, skills for lifelong learning and application of learning, and a broad comprehension of the development of knowledge, practice, and interpretive approaches in the arts and humanities, the sciences, mathematics, and social sciences. (ER 12)
 13. All degree programs include focused study in at least one area of inquiry or in an established interdisciplinary core. The identification of specialized courses in an area of inquiry or interdisciplinary core is based upon student learning outcomes and competencies, and include mastery, at the appropriate degree level, of key theories and practices within the field of study.
 14. Graduates completing career-technical certificates and degrees demonstrate technical and professional competencies that meet employment standards and other applicable standards and preparation for external licensure and certification.
 15. When programs are eliminated or program requirements are significantly changed, the institution makes appropriate arrangements so that enrolled students may complete their education in a timely manner with a minimum of disruption.
 16. The institution regularly evaluates and improves the quality and currency of all instructional programs offered in the name of the institution, including collegiate, pre-

collegiate, career-technical, and continuing and community education courses and programs, regardless of delivery mode or location. The institution systematically strives to improve programs and courses to enhance learning outcomes and achievement for students.

B. Library and Learning Support Services

1. The institution supports student learning and achievement by providing library, and other learning support services to students and to personnel responsible for student learning and support. These services are sufficient in quantity, currency, depth, and variety to support educational programs, regardless of location or means of delivery, including distance education and correspondence education. Learning support services include, but are not limited to, library collections, tutoring, learning centers, computer laboratories, learning technology, and ongoing instruction for users of library and other learning support services. (ER 17)
2. Relying on appropriate expertise of faculty, including librarians, and other learning support services professionals, the institution selects and maintains educational equipment and materials to support student learning and enhance the achievement of the mission.
3. The institution evaluates library and other learning support services to assure their adequacy in meeting identified student needs. Evaluation of these services includes evidence that they contribute to the attainment of student learning outcomes. The institution uses the results of these evaluations as the basis for improvement.
4. When the institution relies on or collaborates with other institutions or other sources for library and other learning support services for its instructional programs, it documents that formal agreements exist and that such resources and services are adequate for the institution's intended purposes, are easily accessible and utilized. The institution takes responsibility for and assures the security, maintenance, and reliability of services provided either directly or through contractual arrangement. The institution regularly evaluates these services to ensure their effectiveness. (ER 17)

C. Student Support Services

1. The institution regularly evaluates the quality of student support services and demonstrates that these services, regardless of location or means of delivery, including distance education and correspondence education, support student learning, and enhance accomplishment of the mission of the institution. (ER 15)
2. The institution identifies and assesses learning support outcomes for its student population and provides appropriate student support services and programs to achieve those outcomes. The institution uses assessment data to continuously improve student support programs and services.
3. The institution assures equitable access to all of its students by providing appropriate, comprehensive, and reliable services to students regardless of service location or delivery method. (ER 15)

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4. Co-curricular programs and athletics programs are suited to the institution's mission and contribute to the social and cultural dimensions of the educational experience of its students. If the institution offers co-curricular or athletic programs, they are conducted with sound educational policy and standards of integrity. The institution has responsibility for the control of these programs, including their finances.
 5. The institution provides counseling and/or academic advising programs to support student development and success and prepares faculty and other personnel responsible for the advising function. Counseling and advising programs orient students to ensure they understand the requirements related to their programs of study and receive timely, useful, and accurate information about relevant academic requirements, including graduation and transfer policies.
 6. The institution has adopted and adheres to admission policies consistent with its mission that specify the qualifications of students appropriate for its programs. The institution defines and advises students on clear pathways to complete degrees, certificate and transfer goals. (ER 16)
 7. The institution regularly evaluates admissions and placement instruments and practices to validate their effectiveness while minimizing biases.
 8. The institution maintains student records permanently, securely, and confidentially, with provision for secure backup of all files, regardless of the form in which those files are maintained. The institution publishes and follows established policies for release of student records.

Standard III: Resources

The institution effectively uses its human, physical, technology, and financial resources to achieve its mission and to improve academic quality and institutional effectiveness. Accredited colleges in multi-college systems may be organized so that responsibility for resources, allocation of resources, and planning rests with the district/system. In such cases, the district/system is responsible for meeting the Standards, and an evaluation of its performance is reflected in the accredited status of the institution(s).

A. Human Resources

1. The institution assures the integrity and quality of its programs and services by employing administrators, faculty and staff who are qualified by appropriate education, training, and experience to provide and support these programs and services. Criteria, qualifications, and procedures for selection of personnel are clearly and publicly stated and address the needs of the institution in serving its student population. Job descriptions are directly related to institutional mission and goals and accurately reflect position duties, responsibilities, and authority.
2. Faculty qualifications include knowledge of the subject matter and requisite skills for the service to be performed. Factors of qualification include appropriate degrees, professional experience, discipline expertise, level of assignment, teaching skills, scholarly activities, and potential to contribute to the mission of the institution. Faculty job descriptions include development and review of curriculum as well as assessment of learning. (ER 14)
3. Administrators and other employees responsible for educational programs and services possess qualifications necessary to perform duties required to sustain institutional effectiveness and academic quality.
4. Required degrees held by faculty, administrators and other employees are from institutions accredited by recognized U.S. accrediting agencies. Degrees from non-U.S. institutions are recognized only if equivalence has been established.
5. The institution assures the effectiveness of its human resources by evaluating all personnel systematically and at stated intervals. The institution establishes written criteria for evaluating all personnel, including performance of assigned duties and participation in institutional responsibilities and other activities appropriate to their expertise. Evaluation processes seek to assess effectiveness of personnel and encourage improvement. Actions taken following evaluations are formal, timely, and documented.
6. The evaluation of faculty, academic administrators, and other personnel directly responsible for student learning includes, as a component of that evaluation, consideration of how these employees use the results of the assessment of learning outcomes to improve teaching and learning.
7. The institution maintains a sufficient number of qualified faculty, which includes full time faculty **and** may include part time and adjunct faculty, to assure the fulfillment of faculty responsibilities essential to the quality of educational programs and services to achieve institutional mission and purposes. (ER 14)

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8. An institution with part time and adjunct faculty has employment policies and practices which provide for their orientation, oversight, evaluation, and professional development. The institution provides opportunities for integration of part time and adjunct faculty into the life of the institution.
 9. The institution has a sufficient number of staff with appropriate qualifications to support the effective educational, technological, physical, and administrative operations of the institution. (ER 8)
 10. The institution maintains a sufficient number of administrators with appropriate preparation and expertise to provide continuity and effective administrative leadership and services that support the institution's mission and purposes. (ER 8)
 11. The institution establishes, publishes, and adheres to written personnel policies and procedures that are available for information and review. Such policies and procedures are fair and equitably and consistently administered.
 12. Through its policies and practices, the institution creates and maintains appropriate programs, practices, and services that support its diverse personnel. The institution regularly assesses its record in employment equity and diversity consistent with its mission.
 13. The institution upholds a written code of professional ethics for all of its personnel, including consequences for violation.
 14. The institution plans for and provides all personnel with appropriate opportunities for continued professional development, consistent with the institutional mission and based on evolving pedagogy, technology, and learning needs. The institution systematically evaluates professional development programs and uses the results of these evaluations as the basis for improvement.
 15. The institution makes provision for the security and confidentiality of personnel records. Each employee has access to his/her personnel records in accordance with law.

B. Physical Resources

1. The institution assures safe and sufficient physical resources at all locations where it offers courses, programs, and learning support services. They are constructed and maintained to assure access, safety, security, and a healthful learning and working environment.
2. The institution plans, acquires or builds, maintains, and upgrades or replaces its physical resources, including facilities, equipment, land, and other assets, in a manner that assures effective utilization and the continuing quality necessary to support its programs and services and achieve its mission.
3. To assure the feasibility and effectiveness of physical resources in supporting institutional programs and services, the institution plans and evaluates its facilities and equipment on a regular basis, taking utilization and other relevant data into account.
4. Long-range capital plans support institutional improvement goals and reflect projections of the total cost of ownership of new facilities and equipment.

C. Technology Resources

1. Technology services, professional support, facilities, hardware, and software are appropriate and adequate to support the institution's management and operational functions, academic programs, teaching and learning, and support services.
2. The institution continuously plans for, updates and replaces technology to ensure its technological infrastructure, quality and capacity are adequate to support its mission, operations, programs, and services.
3. The institution assures that technology resources at all locations where it offers courses, programs, and services are implemented and maintained to assure reliable access, safety, and security.
4. The institution provides appropriate instruction and support for faculty, staff, students, and administrators, in the effective use of technology and technology systems related to its programs, services, and institutional operations.
5. The institution has policies and procedures that guide the appropriate use of technology in the teaching and learning processes.

D. Financial Resources

Planning

1. Financial resources are sufficient to support and sustain student learning programs and services and improve institutional effectiveness. The distribution of resources supports the development, maintenance, allocation and reallocation, and enhancement of programs and services. The institution plans and manages its financial affairs with integrity and in a manner that ensures financial stability. (ER 18)
2. The institution's mission and goals are the foundation for financial planning, and financial planning is integrated with and supports all institutional planning. The institution has policies and procedures to ensure sound financial practices and financial stability. Appropriate financial information is disseminated throughout the institution in a timely manner.
3. The institution clearly defines and follows its guidelines and processes for financial planning and budget development, with all constituencies having appropriate opportunities to participate in the development of institutional plans and budgets.

Fiscal Responsibility and Stability

4. Institutional planning reflects a realistic assessment of financial resource availability, development of financial resources, partnerships, and expenditure requirements.
5. To assure the financial integrity of the institution and responsible use of its financial resources, the internal control structure has appropriate control mechanisms and widely disseminates dependable and timely information for sound financial decision making. The institution regularly evaluates its financial management practices and uses the results to improve internal control systems.

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6. Financial documents, including the budget, have a high degree of credibility and accuracy, and reflect appropriate allocation and use of financial resources to support student learning programs and services.
 7. Institutional responses to external audit findings are comprehensive, timely, and communicated appropriately.
 8. The institution's financial and internal control systems are evaluated and assessed for validity and effectiveness, and the results of this assessment are used for improvement.
 9. The institution has sufficient cash flow and reserves to maintain stability, support strategies for appropriate risk management, and, when necessary, implement contingency plans to meet financial emergencies and unforeseen occurrences.
 10. The institution practices effective oversight of finances, including management of financial aid, grants, externally funded programs, contractual relationships, auxiliary organizations or foundations, and institutional investments and assets.

Liabilities

11. The level of financial resources provides a reasonable expectation of both short-term and long-term financial solvency. When making short-range financial plans, the institution considers its long-range financial priorities to assure financial stability. The institution clearly identifies, plans, and allocates resources for payment of liabilities and future obligations.
12. The institution plans for and allocates appropriate resources for the payment of liabilities and future obligations, including Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB), compensated absences, and other employee related obligations. The actuarial plan to determine Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) is current and prepared as required by appropriate accounting standards.
13. On an annual basis, the institution assesses and allocates resources for the repayment of any locally incurred debt instruments that can affect the financial condition of the institution.
14. All financial resources, including short- and long-term debt instruments (such as bonds and Certificates of Participation), auxiliary activities, fund-raising efforts, and grants, are used with integrity in a manner consistent with the intended purpose of the funding source.
15. The institution monitors and manages student loan default rates, revenue streams, and assets to ensure compliance with federal requirements, including Title IV of the Higher Education Act, and comes into compliance when the federal government identifies deficiencies.

Contractual Agreements

16. Contractual agreements with external entities are consistent with the mission and goals of the institution, governed by institutional policies, and contain appropriate provisions to maintain the integrity of the institution and the quality of its programs, services, and operations.

Standard IV: Leadership and Governance

The institution recognizes and uses the contributions of leadership throughout the organization for promoting student success, sustaining academic quality, integrity, fiscal stability, and continuous improvement of the institution. Governance roles are defined in policy and are designed to facilitate decisions that support student learning programs and services and improve institutional effectiveness, while acknowledging the designated responsibilities of the governing board and the chief executive officer. Through established governance structures, processes, and practices, the governing board, administrators, faculty, staff, and students work together for the good of the institution. In multi-college districts or systems, the roles within the district/system are clearly delineated. The multi-college district or system has policies for allocation of resources to adequately support and sustain the colleges.

A. Decision-Making Roles and Processes

1. Institutional leaders create and encourage innovation leading to institutional excellence. They support administrators, faculty, staff, and students, no matter what their official titles, in taking initiative for improving the practices, programs, and services in which they are involved. When ideas for improvement have policy or significant institution-wide implications, systematic participative processes are used to assure effective planning and implementation.
2. The institution establishes and implements policy and procedures authorizing administrator, faculty, and staff participation in decision-making processes. The policy makes provisions for student participation and consideration of student views in those matters in which students have a direct and reasonable interest. Policy specifies the manner in which individuals bring forward ideas and work together on appropriate policy, planning, and special-purpose committees.
3. Administrators and faculty, through policy and procedures, have a substantive and clearly defined role in institutional governance and exercise a substantial voice in institutional policies, planning, and budget that relate to their areas of responsibility and expertise.
4. Faculty and academic administrators, through policy and procedures, and through well-defined structures, have responsibility for recommendations about curriculum and student learning programs and services.
5. Through its system of board and institutional governance, the institution ensures the appropriate consideration of relevant perspectives; decision-making aligned with expertise and responsibility; and timely action on institutional plans, policies, curricular change, and other key considerations.
6. The processes for decision-making and the resulting decisions are documented and widely communicated across the institution.
7. Leadership roles and the institution's governance and decision-making policies, procedures, and processes are regularly evaluated to assure their integrity and effectiveness. The institution widely communicates the results of these evaluations and uses them as the basis for improvement.

B. Chief Executive Officer

1. The institutional chief executive officer (CEO) has primary responsibility for the quality of the institution. The CEO provides effective leadership in planning, organizing, budgeting, selecting and developing personnel, and assessing institutional effectiveness.
2. The CEO plans, oversees, and evaluates an administrative structure organized and staffed to reflect the institution's purposes, size, and complexity. The CEO delegates authority to administrators and others consistent with their responsibilities, as appropriate.
3. Through established policies and procedures, the CEO guides institutional improvement of the teaching and learning environment by:
 - establishing a collegial process that sets values, goals, and priorities;
 - ensuring the college sets institutional performance standards for student achievement;
 - ensuring that evaluation and planning rely on high quality research and analysis of external and internal conditions;
 - ensuring that educational planning is integrated with resource planning and allocation to support student achievement and learning;
 - ensuring that the allocation of resources supports and improves learning and achievement; and
 - establishing procedures to evaluate overall institutional planning and implementation efforts to achieve the mission of the institution.
4. The CEO has the primary leadership role for accreditation, ensuring that the institution meets or exceeds Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies at all times. Faculty, staff, and administrative leaders of the institution also have responsibility for assuring compliance with accreditation requirements.
5. The CEO assures the implementation of statutes, regulations, and governing board policies and assures that institutional practices are consistent with institutional mission and policies, including effective control of budget and expenditures.
6. The CEO works and communicates effectively with the communities served by the institution.

C. Governing Board

1. The institution has a governing board that has authority over and responsibility for policies to assure the academic quality, integrity, and effectiveness of the student learning programs and services and the financial stability of the institution. (ER 7)
2. The governing board acts as a collective entity. Once the board reaches a decision, all board members act in support of the decision.
3. The governing board adheres to a clearly defined policy for selecting and evaluating the CEO of the college and/or the district/system.
4. The governing board is an independent, policy-making body that reflects the public interest in the institution's educational quality. It advocates for and defends the institution and protects it from undue influence or political pressure. (ER 7)
5. The governing board establishes policies consistent with the college/district/system mission to ensure the quality, integrity, and improvement of student learning programs and services and the resources necessary to support them. The governing board has ultimate responsibility for educational quality, legal matters, and financial integrity and stability.
6. The institution or the governing board publishes the board bylaws and policies specifying the board's size, duties, responsibilities, structure, and operating procedures.
7. The governing board acts in a manner consistent with its policies and bylaws. The board regularly assesses its policies and bylaws for their effectiveness in fulfilling the college/district/system mission and revises them as necessary.
8. To ensure the institution is accomplishing its goals for student success, the governing board regularly reviews key indicators of student learning and achievement and institutional plans for improving academic quality.
9. The governing board has an ongoing training program for board development, including new member orientation. It has a mechanism for providing for continuity of board membership and staggered terms of office.
10. Board policies and/or bylaws clearly establish a process for board evaluation. The evaluation assesses the board's effectiveness in promoting and sustaining academic quality and institutional effectiveness. The governing board regularly evaluates its practices and performance, including full participation in board training, and makes public the results. The results are used to improve board performance, academic quality, and institutional effectiveness.
11. The governing board upholds a code of ethics and conflict of interest policy, and individual board members adhere to the code. The board has a clearly defined policy for dealing with behavior that violates its code and implements it when necessary. A majority of the board members have no employment, family, ownership, or other personal financial interest in the institution. Board member interests are disclosed and 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.
(ER 7)

12. The governing board delegates full responsibility and authority to the CEO to implement and administer board policies without board interference and holds the CEO accountable for the operation of the district/system or college, respectively.
13. The governing board is informed about the Eligibility Requirements, the Accreditation Standards, Commission policies, accreditation processes, and the college's accredited status, and supports through policy the college's efforts to improve and excel. The board participates in evaluation of governing board roles and functions in the accreditation process.

D. Multi-College Districts or Systems

1. In multi-college districts or systems, the district/system CEO provides leadership in setting and communicating expectations of educational excellence and integrity throughout the district/system and assures support for the effective operation of the colleges. Working with the colleges, the district/system CEO establishes clearly defined roles, authority and responsibility between the colleges and the district/system.
2. The district/system CEO clearly delineates, documents, and communicates the operational responsibilities and functions of the district/system from those of the colleges and consistently adheres to this delineation in practice. The district/system CEO ensures that the colleges receive effective and adequate district/system provided services to support the colleges in achieving their missions. Where a district/system has responsibility for resources, allocation of resources, and planning, it is evaluated against the Standards, and its performance is reflected in the accredited status of the institution.
3. The district/system has a policy for allocation and reallocation of resources that are adequate to support the effective operations and sustainability of the colleges and district/system. The district/system CEO ensures effective control of expenditures.
4. The CEO of the district or system delegates full responsibility and authority to the CEOs of the colleges to implement and administer delegated district/system policies without interference and holds college CEO's accountable for the operation of the colleges.
5. District/system planning and evaluation are integrated with college planning and evaluation to improve student learning and achievement and institutional effectiveness.
6. Communication between colleges and districts/systems ensures effective operations of the colleges and should be timely, accurate, and complete in order for the colleges to make decisions effectively.
7. The district/system CEO regularly evaluates district/system and college role delineations, governance and decision-making processes to assure their integrity and effectiveness in assisting the colleges in meeting educational goals for student achievement and learning. The district/system widely communicates the results of these evaluations and uses them as the basis for improvement.

End Note - Catalog Requirements

The following list of required information must be included in the college catalog.

1. 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

2. Requirements

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

3. Major Policies and Procedures Affecting Students

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

4. Locations or Publications Where Other Policies may be Found

List of Policies Referenced in the Standards

1. Policy on Distance Education and on Correspondence Education
2. Policy on Principles of Good Practice in Overseas International Education Programs for Non-U.S. Nationals
3. Policy on Transfer of Credit; Policy on Award of Credit
4. Policy on Closing an Institution
5. Policy on Institutional Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Representation of Accredited Status
6. Policy on Contractual Relationships with Non-Regionally Accredited Organizations
7. Policy and Procedures for the Evaluation of Institutions in Multi-College/Multi-Unit Districts or Systems

Appendix C: Policy on Eligibility to Apply for Accredited Status

ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR COMMUNITY AND JUNIOR COLLEGES
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

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.

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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 ACCJC¹. 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.

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