ACS WASC
BYLAWS AND POLICY MANUAL

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ACS WASC BYLAWS AND POLICY MANUAL

BYLAWS

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Accrediting Commission for Schools
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

BYLAWS

ARTICLE I: PURPOSE

SECTION 1 NAME

The name of this nonprofit corporation shall be the Accrediting Commission for Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACS WASC). This corporation shall be referred to throughout these bylaws as ACS.

SECTION 2 PURPOSE

ACS is a nonprofit, public benefit corporation and is not organized for the private gain of any person. It is organized under the Nonprofit Public Benefit Corporations Law of the State of California for public and charitable purposes. Those public purposes include improving and validating the quality of education at public and private, secular and non-secular elementary, secondary, and non-profit postsecondary educational institutions, through the creation and application of standards of accreditation and related policies, and through a process of review by education professionals and public members. Through ACS’s evaluation of institutions, ACS accreditation assures the educational community, the general public, and other organizations and agencies that an institution has clearly defined objectives appropriate to education; has established conditions under which their achievement can reasonably be expected; appears in fact to be accomplishing them substantially; is so organized, staffed, and supported that it can be expected to continue to do so; and demonstrates that it meets ACS’s criteria and accreditation standards. ACS encourages and supports institutional development and improvement through an institutional self-evaluation using the accreditation criteria and Policies, as well as mid-cycle, follow-up, and special reports, and periodic evaluation of institutional quality by qualified peer professionals.

SECTION 3 PRINCIPAL OFFICE

The principal office of ACS is located at 533 Airport Blvd, Suite 200, Burlingame, CA, 94010-2009, or at such other location as the Commission shall decide. The Commission may establish branch or subordinate offices.

SECTION 4 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Board of Directors shall at all times consist of the Commission Chair and Vice Chair, the Executive Director of ACS, and each of the respective committee chairs for the Audit Committee, Finance Committee, and Nominating Committee.

SECTION 5 FISCAL YEAR

The fiscal year of the Commission is July 1 through June 30.
ARTICLE II: THE COMMISSION

SECTION 1 RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COMMISSION

The Commission believes that the goal of any school should be to provide for successful student learning. Programs encompassing both the cognitive and affective components of learning should foster human growth and development and enable students to become responsible, productive members of the school community and our democratic society. Each school should develop a school purpose to reflect its beliefs. For ongoing program improvement, each school should engage in objective and subjective internal and external evaluations to assess progress in achieving its purpose. It is the intent of the Commission to collaborate with interested schools, organizations, or institutions to fulfill those goals through the accreditation process.

1.1 Scope of Activities
   a. To accredit institutions offering elementary education;
   b. To accredit institutions offering secondary education;
   c. To accredit public adult schools and/or non-degree granting, non-profit postsecondary institutions of higher education; and;
   d. To accredit supplementary education programs.

1.2 Bylaws
To establish Bylaws for the governance of the Commission.

1.3 Policy Development
To establish policies, procedures, and protocols for the accreditation activities described in these Bylaws.

1.4 Criteria
To establish Criteria for accreditation.

1.5 Terms or Status
To grant terms or status of accreditation.

1.6 Finances
The Commission shall maintain adequate financial resources to carry out its accrediting responsibilities, taking into account the funds required to conduct current accrediting activities and the income necessary to meet the anticipated costs of its activities in the future.

1.7 Maintenance of Records
The Commission shall maintain complete and accurate records of the last full accreditation or pre-accreditation reviews of each institution or program, including on-site evaluation team reports, institution responses to on-site reports, periodic review reports, any reports of special reviews conducted by the agency between full accreditation reviews, and the institution’s or program’s most recent self-study report; and all pre-accreditation and accreditation decisions, including all adverse actions.
1.8 Other Functions
To perform other functions consistent with the Bylaws and Operational Guidelines.

SECTION 2 COMPOSITION OF THE COMMISSION

The Commission will carry out the purpose of ACS as described in Article I, Section 2 of these bylaws, by encouraging school improvement through a process of continuous evaluation which includes rigorous and relevant self-evaluation and peer review that focuses on student learning.

The Commission shall be comprised of up to thirty-two (32) persons, representing various constituencies of ACS, selected by the Commission’s Nomination Review Committee from candidates nominated by member organizations or the Commission. Representatives shall be nominated as follows:

- Seven (7) by the Association of California School Administrators;
- One (1) by the Association of Christian Schools International;
- One (1) school board member by the California School Boards’ Association;
- One (1) by the California Teachers Association;
- One (1) by the California Department of Education;
- One (1) by the California Federation of Teachers;
- One (1) parent by the California State PTA;
- One (1) by the California Association of Independent Schools;
- One (1) practicing classroom teacher from the California Association of Private School Organizations;
- One (1) from Charter Schools;
- One (1) by the East Asia Regional Council of Schools;
- One (1) by the Hawaii Association of Independent Schools;
- One (1) by the Hawaii Complex Area Superintendents;
- One (1) by the Hawaii Government Employees’ Association;
- One (1) by the Hawaii State Department of Education;
- One (1) on a rotational basis by the Hawaii Public and Private Schools;
- One (1) by the National Lutheran School Accreditation;
- One (1) from the Pacific Islands;
- One (1) by the Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists;
- Four (4) by the Western Catholic Education Association: one (1) of whom must be a practicing classroom teacher and one (1) of whom must be an Elementary Commissioner;
- One (1) teacher from Postsecondary Institutions;
- Two (2) non-school public members: one (1) from California business, community, or public organizations and one (1) from Hawaii business, community, or public organizations.
The California Department of Education and the Hawaii Department of Education will each have an ex-officio seat on the Commission. The Commission shall determine which organizations shall be represented by voting Commission members and which shall be represented by non-voting ex-officio members.

If a change in eligibility status for constituency appointments of any of the above appointees occurs during the term of office, the individual may at the discretion of the appointing agency, serve the remainder of the term or may be replaced. A person completing a term after a change of status may not be reappointed.

SECTION 3  CHANGES IN CONSTITUENCIES

The constituent composition of the Commission can be changed by the Commission.

SECTION 4  REVIEW OF COMPOSITION

The Commission shall review its standards for membership and its composition at five-year intervals beginning in January 1993. It is the intent of the Commission to maintain a membership which is representative of its constituents and which operates effectively and collaboratively. The size of the Commission needs to be consistent with its mission so that its duties can be accomplished in a thoughtful and efficient manner. Consistent with the standards established by the Commission, the following procedure shall be required of organizations seeking a change in the Commission’s composition.

a. A written request shall be delivered to the Commission office prior to the annual policy meeting.

b. The request will include a description and history of the petitioning organization, the number of schools/memberships represented, a projection of its growth in the next five years, and a rationale for its request.

c. Upon the recommendation of the Executive Director or the Chairperson, and with the approval of the Commission, a representative of the requesting organization may be asked to appear before the Commission.

d. The Commission shall consider all relevant information and will make the final determination relative to the proposal.

SECTION 5  OFFICERS OF THE COMMISSION

5.1  Titles of Officers

The officers of the Commission shall be a Chairperson and a Vice Chairperson.

5.2  Election of Officers

The officers shall be elected at an Annual Meeting held in June.

5.3  Terms of Office

The Vice Chairperson shall be elected for a two-year term after which he or she shall become the chairperson for a two-year non-renewable term. The Chairperson and Vice Chairperson shall be from different constituent organizations.
5.4 Vacancies
Any vacancy occurring before the end of a term shall be filled by the Commission at its next meeting.

5.5 Duties of Commission Officers
In addition to the duties specified elsewhere in these Bylaws, the Chairperson shall preside over meetings of the Commission, shall assist the Executive Director of the Commission in preparing agendas of meetings, shall ensure that the Executive Director has notified in writing each school concerning its term or status of accreditation.

SECTION 6 COMMITTEES OF THE COMMISSION

6.1 Appointment of Members
Except as noted, the Commission Chairperson shall appoint each committee chairperson. The Commission Chairperson, in consultation with the committee chairperson, shall appoint the committee members. The Chairperson and Vice Chairperson of the Commission shall be an ex-officio members of all committees.

6.2 Standing Committees
Standing committees shall be appointed in January for a term of two years.

6.3 Nomination Review Committee
The Nomination Review Committee shall be comprised of five members. The Executive Director of the Commission shall serve on this committee in an ex-officio capacity. The committee’s responsibilities are:

- To present for Commission action one or more nominees for vacant positions of Commission officers and appointments; and
- To review and select applicants suggested by sending organizations to fill Commission seats. The review should include analysis of sending organizations’ proposals in support of nominees, and interviews wherever practicable.

6.4 Finance Committee
The Finance Committee shall be comprised of three to seven members. Its responsibility is to review and advise the Commission on the financial proposals of the Executive Director. In addition, the committee advises the Commission on the compensation for staff.

6.5 Executive Committee
The Executive Committee shall be comprised of the Commission Chairperson and Vice Chairperson, the Executive Director and each of the respective committee chairs for the Audit Committee, Finance Committee, and Nominating Committee. It is the Executive Committee’s responsibility to develop the Commission Meeting Agenda, consider proposed actions brought to it by members of the Committee, and to conduct Commission business as necessary between meetings. The Executive Committee actions on behalf of the Commission are subject to Commission ratification.
6.6 **Audit Committee**

The Audit Committee shall be comprised of three to seven members. Its responsibility is to review the ACS Annual audit. The Executive Director of the Commission shall serve on this committee in an ex-officio capacity.

6.7 **Ad hoc Committees**

Other committees may be established for designated tasks or purposes. The term of the committee shall end with the completion of the assigned task and/or at the direction of the chairperson.

**SECTION 7  THE COMMISSIONERS**

7.1 **Nomination of Commissioners**

The Nomination Review Committee will review and select applicants suggested by sending organizations. The Executive Director of the Commission shall serve on this committee in an ex-officio capacity.

7.2 **Length of Appointment**

Appointments shall be for a three-year term, and organizations may propose reappointing an incumbent representative for a second term. Commissioners whose appointments arise from their positions within sending organizations may serve longer if their organizations so desire, with the consent of the Commission.

7.3 **Vacancies**

Sending organizations with seats which have become vacant will be requested to submit a candidate or a list of candidates, from which the Nomination Review Committee will select.

7.4 **Responsibilities of Individual Commissioners**

Sitting Commissioners should participate on or accompany a Visiting Committee as least once every other year during their term of office on the Commission. A new public sector Commissioner who has never been on a Visiting Committee before is expected to accompany a Visiting Committee into the field at the beginning of his or her first term on the Commission. Additionally, whenever practicable, a potential new Commissioner without Visiting Committee experience should be given the opportunity of accompanying a Visiting Committee before a final selection and commitment have been made.

7.5 **Training of New and Continuing Commissioners**

Prior to beginning service, new Commissioners shall receive training on the Commission’s standards, policies, and procedures regarding the conduct of on-site evaluations, the establishment of Commission policies, and the processes used for making accrediting and pre-accrediting decisions. All Commissioners shall receive regular training on trends, issues, policies, and procedures pertaining to accrediting and pre-accrediting decision-making for the various types of schools and institutions served by the Commission.
SECTION 8  MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSION

8.1 Frequency
The Commission shall schedule meetings three times each year and/or as needed. A Mid-Winter Meeting shall be devoted primarily to policy matters. The Spring and Annual Meetings (generally held in April and June) shall be devoted primarily to actions on terms or status of accreditation.

8.2 Location
April and June Commission meetings shall generally be held near the Commission Offices. The Commission shall schedule a Mid-Winter Policy Meeting in Southern California; such meeting shall be held in the state of Hawaii approximately every three years.

8.3 Open Meetings
Meetings of the Commission are open to the public except when the Commission is deliberating and acting on matters concerning the accreditation of specific schools or personnel matters or where it has been deemed necessary to consult with legal counsel.

8.4 Presentations to the Commission
Presentations may be made to the Commission with prior approval of the Executive Director and Commission Chairperson. Such presentations shall be made in open meeting unless they involve matters concerning the accreditation of specific schools.

8.5 Executive Sessions
Executive sessions of either the Board of Directors or the Commission to discuss matters involving confidential personnel matters as well as any matter where it has been deemed necessary to consult with legal counsel may be called by the Chairperson of the Commission or the Executive Director.

8.6 Presence of Staff
The Executive Director shall be in attendance at all Commission meetings except when his or her salary or evaluation is being discussed.

8.7 Quorum
A quorum shall consist of a majority of Commission members.

8.8 Meeting Rules
Meetings shall be conducted in accordance with the Roberts Rules of Order except where otherwise specified in these Bylaws.
SECTION 9  ACCREDITATION ACTIVITIES

9.1 Basis for Accreditation
The Commission grants accreditation to a school based upon the criteria, procedures, and policies set forth in the ACS Policy Manual. However, in general, accreditation is based on the following:

a. The presumption that primary goals of accreditation are:
   1) The improvement of the school; and
   2) Certification to the public that the school is a trustworthy institution of learning.

b. The school’s self-study and the visiting committee’s report provide compelling evidence that:
   1) The school is substantially accomplishing its stated purposes and functions identified as appropriate for an institution of its type, and;
   2) The school is meeting an acceptable level of quality in accordance with the general Criteria adopted by the Commission as set forth in the ACS Policy Manual.

9.2 Types of Schools Eligible
Eligibility for accreditation is determined by the standards, policies, procedures, and requirements set forth in the ACS Policy Manual.

9.3 Regions Served
The ACS accredits primarily public and private schools located in California, Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, the Republic of Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and American and international schools in Asia and the Pacific. When invited and when circumstances suggest the feasibility and appropriateness of the relationship, the Commission will authorize staff to work with schools in the Middle East, Africa, and Europe.

9.4 Commission Rights
The Commission reserves the right to grant, deny or revoke candidacy or accreditation. The Commission also reserves the right to make special visits when deemed necessary in order to validate conditions at the school or confirm appropriate progress on implementation of accreditation recommendations.

9.5 Basis for Decisions
The Commission shall base its decisions regarding accreditation or pre-accreditation on the criteria published in the ACS Policy Manual, and shall evaluate a school’s adherence to the criteria through the examination of the school’s self-study and the visiting team report.

9.6 Accredited Organizations
Accreditation will continue for so long as an institution remains in compliance with all ACS policies, procedures, published accreditation criteria, and these bylaws and remains current on
payment of any dues or special assessment obligations. In the event an institution falls out of compliance with the aforementioned ACS policies or accreditation criteria for any reason, its accreditation status shall cease immediately and without further notice. In the event an institution resigns its accreditation, its accreditation status shall cease immediately and none of the review or appeal rights which might otherwise be applicable shall apply. The ACS Policy Manual provides a comprehensive description of the requirements and procedures attendant to receipt and maintenance of accreditation status. These bylaws do not serve to circumvent, replace, expand, contract or otherwise alter the rights and obligations contained therein.

9.7 Review of Accreditation Criteria

The Commission shall review its criteria every six years to ensure that its criteria are valid and reliable indicators of the quality of the education or training provided by the institutions or programs it accredits and are relevant to the education or training needs of affected students. The review process shall involve both feedback from participants in the accreditation process and examination of the process by evaluation experts who are not involved in the ACS.

9.8 Review of Criteria

The Commission shall take necessary actions to ensure that as a result of its program of criteria review, each of its standards provides:

a. A valid measure of the aspects of educational quality it is intended to measure; and

b. A consistent basis for determining the educational quality of different institutions and programs.

SECTION 10 STAFF OF THE COMMISSION

10.1 Composition of Staff

The administrative staff shall consist of an Executive Director, and such other administrative staff as is deemed necessary to carry on the work of the Commission. Administrative personnel shall be appointed by the Commission and serve on a contractual basis. The Executive Director shall be responsible for employing other staff as needed to further the mission of the organization.

10.2 Duties of Staff

The Executive Director shall serve as the Commission’s chief administrator and be responsible for the overall management, direction, and supervision of the Commission operations. His or her responsibility shall be performed in accordance with the Commission Bylaws and Operational Guidelines.

10.3 Financial Responsibilities

The Executive Director is specifically authorized and charged to open and maintain an account or accounts in the name of this organization in any banks or financial institutions, deposit the organization’s funds in such accounts, and withdraw funds therefrom in the name of the organization. The Executive Director shall submit an annual budget for approval of the Commission and shall arrange for an annual external audit of accounts to be presented to the Commission for review and approval.
10.4 **Authorization to Sign**

It is resolved that the Executive Director of the ACS is hereby authorized to sign all official documents of the Commission as have been duly approved by the Commission. This authorization includes, but is not limited to, contracts with employees. It is further resolved that the Executive Director is authorized to sign such contracts and agreements as are necessary to carrying out the normal and customary business of the Commission in an amount not to exceed $10,000 per month for any lease/purchase or not exceeding $50,000 for any single purchase. All other contracts shall require the signature of the Executive Director and either the Chairperson or Vice Chair of the Commission, or such other Commissioner as may be designated in writing by the Chairperson of the Commission.

10.5 **Appointments to Other Organizations**

The Executive Director shall serve as a Commission appointee to the East Asia Regional Council of Schools, and other appropriate organizations subject to Commission approval.

10.6 **Employee Supervision**

The employment, evaluation, and termination of clerical and support staff shall be the responsibility of the Executive Director working within the personnel policies and budgetary guidelines of the Commission.

10.7 **Notification of Actions**

It shall be the responsibility of the Executive Director to notify institutions of any Commission actions pertaining to the institutions’ accreditation status in writing within 30 days of such Commission action.

SECTION 11 **ADOPTION OF POLICIES AND CRITERIA**

11.1 **Policies and Accreditation Criteria**

The Commission shall adopt such policies and accreditation criteria as are necessary to carry out the Commission’s programs and implement the Bylaws.

11.2 **Votes Required for Policy or Criteria Change**

A majority vote of Commission members present is required for adoption or revision of policies and accreditation criteria.

SECTION 12 **ADOPTION OF OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES**

12.1 **Develop Operational Guidelines**

The Executive Director shall develop operational guidelines as necessary to carry out the Commission’s programs and implement the Bylaws.
SECTION 13  CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

13.1 Controls Against Conflict of Interest
The ACS shall maintain clear and effective controls against conflicts of interest or the appearance of conflicts of interest by the Commission’s board members, commissioners, evaluation team members, consultants, administrative staff, and other agency representatives.

13.2 Conflicts Involving Commissioners
Commissioners shall abstain from voting on terms or status of accreditation for any school with which they have an administrative, supervisory, governing, or other relationship that might prejudice the vote. Commissioners with such conflicts of interest shall exclude themselves from the deliberations as well as the voting whenever there is a debate regarding the term or status of accreditation.

13.3 Commissioners Who Serve on Visiting Teams
Commissioners who serve as members of Visiting Committees to schools accredited by ACS shall abstain from voting on the terms or status of accreditation for those schools.

13.4 Conflict of Interest Statements
The ACS Policy Manual set forth the policies and procedures regarding Conflicts of Interests. However, generally, it is expected that Commissioners shall sign a conflict-of-interest statement upon the date of commencement of each new term of office. Commission staff and consultants shall sign a conflict of interest statement on commencement of duties. Visiting team members and chairs shall sign a conflict-of-interest statement upon acceptance of each invitation to serve on a visiting team.

SECTION 14  AMENDMENTS TO BYLAWS

14.1 Changes to Bylaws
Proposed amendments or additions to these Bylaws must be included in the written agenda mailed prior to any scheduled meeting of the Commission.

14.2 Votes Required for Bylaws Change
The requirement to change bylaws shall be a two-thirds’ affirmative vote of Commission members present or a majority vote of all Commissioners, whichever is larger.
ACS WASC Policy Manual

SECTION A: COMMISSION POLICIES

A1 PROCESS FOR SEEKING ACCREDITATION

Schools may apply for accreditation at any time. A school may become accredited by ACS WASC by successfully completing the following steps:

A1.1 Conditions and Expectations for Membership in ACS WASC

- School to meet all of the criteria for being accredited by the Commission
- Pay the membership fees and evaluation fees in a timely manner
- Annually contribute members from the school staff or district to participate on visiting committees.

A1.2 Initial Visit

Host a one-day visit by a one- or two-person team to assess the efficacy of the school’s educational program and administrative and support services. Based upon the findings of the one-day visit, the visiting committee may recommend for Commission approval Candidate Status, Initial Accreditation Status, or denial.

In order to be eligible for an ACS WASC Initial Visit (for the purposes of establishing accreditation for a school) student enrollment at said school must reach 15 full-time students. The school’s program must also include at least two grade levels prior to an Initial Visit. (One exception would involve a new high school that opts to begin only with grade 9.) No Initial Visits to newly established schools should occur prior to the second semester of operation, i.e., spring visit if the schools opens in the fall.

A1.3 Candidate Status

Schools which are progressing toward meeting the criteria for accreditation and can be expected to meet those criteria within three years may be granted candidacy status.

A1.4 Initial Accreditation Status

Schools which meet the organizational and support criteria for full accreditation and have a history and support system which indicate that a high-quality program can be sustained into the foreseeable future may be granted Initial Accreditation status for up to three years. Tentative Candidacy or Initial Accreditation status may be granted by the Executive Director prior to ratification by the Commission, when the timing may impact senior graduation status.

A2 CANDIDACY AND INITIAL ACCREDITATION STATUS

A2.1 Candidates for Accreditation

Candidacy for accreditation is a status of affiliation which indicates that an institution has achieved initial recognition and is progressing toward, but does not assume, accreditation. The candidate for accreditation classification is designed for institutions which are not yet ready for the full evaluation based on the ACS WASC Criteria for accreditation. The institution must provide evidence of sound planning, provide evidence of resources to implement these plans, and
appear to have the potential for attaining its goals within a reasonable time. A candidate school is required to submit an annual report and is expected to apply for full accreditation by the third year of candidacy. Candidacy status shall expire at the end of three years. By the end of three years, the school in candidacy status should conduct a full self-study or host a second one-day visit to determine if the school should remain in candidacy for accreditation. An extension of candidacy status may be given once for one additional year pending a positive one-day visit or when deemed necessary by the Executive Director. In some limited circumstances, the ACS WASC Executive Director is authorized to change a school’s “Candidacy” status to “Initial Accreditation” when conditions at the school have been sufficiently enhanced (based on the Initial Visit Rubric) to justify such a change.

A2.2 Commission of Jurisdiction of Multi-Level Institutions

Where a single institution offers work at both the high school and junior college levels, the institution may, at its option, seek separate accreditation of its respective divisions by the ACS WASC and the Community and Junior College Commission, or it may seek accreditation for its total program by the Community and Junior College Commission which shall consult with the Schools Commission.

A2.3 Availability of Joint Accreditation

Schools which are now accredited by affiliated organizations but not by ACS WASC: Schools which are accredited solely by organizations which have joint accreditation processes with ACS WASC may elect to become jointly accredited. Any such school may be granted initial accreditation by ACS WASC (first time only) after a successful initial review team visit by ACS WASC. This accreditation would be under the category “Immediate Affiliation and Listing” upon payment of the annual membership and listing fee appropriate for the grade levels of the school.

A2.4 Initial Joint Accreditation Status

The Initial Accreditation will be coterminous with the last term of accreditation granted to the school by the joint accreditation agency.

A3 TERMS OR STATUS OF ACCREDITATION

Note: This prior policy on terms will be phased out by June 30, 2015 for ACS WASC only schools.

The Commission shall grant a term or status of accreditation that shows a strong correlation to existing student achievement results and growth and current programmatic and operational actions based on the ACS WASC criteria and accreditation term or status factors as noted in the content of the visiting committee report and the term or status recommendation of the visiting committee.

The visiting committee will base its term or status recommendation on evidence contained in the self-study and encountered during the school visit that indicates:

- The degree to which high achievement by all students is occurring
- The capacity of the school to implement, monitor, and accomplish the action plan aligned to the areas of greatest need impacting student achievement
• The school’s status with respect to institutional and/or governing authority expectations

The visiting committee must provide strong evidence to support a term or status greater than three years for those schools that are not meeting the established expectations of the institutional and/or governing authorities.

**A3.1 Term or Status Calendar**

All regular terms of accreditation which are granted by action of the Commission start on July 1 and expire on June 30.

**A3.2 Duration of Terms or Status**

Terms or status of accreditation may be granted for one, two, three, five, six, or seven years. The Commission does reserve the right to grant terms or status other than these terms at any time.

**A3.3 Six-Year Term or Status**

A term or status of six years with a written mid-cycle progress report to the school’s governing board demonstrating that the school has:

- Addressed the critical areas for improvement through the schoolwide action plan
- Made appropriate progress on implementation of the schoolwide action plans
- Improved student achievement relative to the schoolwide learner outcomes

Upon review and formal acceptance by the board, the report will be filed with the ACS WASC Office.

**A3.4 Six-Year Term With Review**

A term of six years with a written progress report and one-day on-site review by a two-member committee to be completed not later than the third year of the six-year term. The progress report and review visit shall focus on demonstrating that the school has:

- Addressed the critical areas for improvement through the schoolwide action plan
- Made appropriate progress on implementation of schoolwide action plan
- Improved student achievement relative to the schoolwide learner outcomes

The visiting committee shall reaffirm the six-year term, require an additional report, an additional visit, or other action to be determined by the Commission.

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*Schools that are WASC/CIS, WASC/IBO, WASC/NCCT, WASC/CIS/NCCT, or WASC/ONESQA accredited will be granted a five-year term or status rather than a six-year term or status for full accreditation (CIS: Council of International Schools; IBO: International Baccalaureate Organization, NCCT: National Center for Curriculum and Textbook, ONESQA: Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment).
†Huntington Learning Centers may be granted seven years of accreditation. Schools that are WASC/CAIS and WASC/HAIS accredited may also be granted seven years of accreditation.
‡Schools in the East Asia Council of Schools (EARCOS) region that receive six-year terms or status have a two-day midterm review in the third year of the six-year cycle.
A3.5 Three-Year Term

A term of three years with a written progress report and a two-day visit by a two- to five-member committee during the third year. The progress report and revisit shall focus on demonstrating that the school has:

- Improved the critical areas for improvement through the schoolwide action plan
- Made appropriate progress on implementation of schoolwide action plan
- Improved student achievement relative to the schoolwide learner outcomes.

The visiting committee shall recommend an extension of accreditation for one year, three years, or denial.

Schools granted three years or less will submit annual progress reports that show the impact of schoolwide action plan implementation on student achievement. These reports will be approved by the local governing authority and submitted to the appropriate membership organizations and the Commission. Upon review by staff, the Commission reserves the right to adjust terms of accreditation or add specific conditions if 1) schools are not making sufficient progress, or 2) the status with respect to governing authority sanctions has changed.

A3.6 One- or Two-Year Term

A term of one or two years with a written progress report and revisit to serve as a “warning” that, unless prompt attention is given to these recommendations, accreditation may be denied. The progress report and revisit shall focus on demonstrating that the school has:

- Improved the critical areas for improvement through the schoolwide action plan
- Made appropriate progress on implementation of the schoolwide action plan
- Improved student achievement relative to the schoolwide learner outcomes.

A3.7 Denial of Accreditation

Denial of accreditation based on conditions detailed in the visiting committee report.

A3.8 Interim Evaluations

The Commission may request interim written progress reports, special revisits, or full self-studies at any time.

A3.9 Status During Evaluation

The accredited status of a school shall not be changed pending deliberation and decision by the Commission on the granting of a term of accreditation.

A4 Accreditatio.n Status

Note: The accreditation status policy was implemented as of June 2012. It is being used for all accreditation actions except for a few joint processes that have not yet transitioned to the new accreditation status options and are still using the accreditation terms.

*The Western Catholic Educational Association (WCEA) elementary schools are to prepare a progress report on critical areas of improvement integrated into the action plan and host a one-day revisit by a two-member team.
The Commission shall grant an accreditation status that shows a strong correlation to existing student achievement results and growth and current programmatic and operational actions based on the ACS WASC criteria and accreditation status factors as noted in the content of the visiting committee report and the accreditation status recommendation of the visiting committee.

The visiting committee will base its status recommendation on evidence contained in the self-study and encountered during the school visit that indicates:

- The degree to which high achievement by all students is occurring
- The capacity of the school to implement, monitor, and accomplish the action plan aligned to the areas of greatest need impacting student achievement
- The school’s status with respect to institutional and/or governing authority expectations.

The visiting committee must provide strong evidence to support an accreditation status recommendation greater than two years for those schools that are not meeting the established expectations of the institutional and/or governing authorities.

A4.1 Accreditation Status Calendar

All regular accreditation status which are granted by action of the Commission start on July 1 and expire on June 30.

A4.2 Duration of Accreditation Status

Accreditation status may be granted for one, two, three, five, six, or seven years. The Commission reserves the right to grant accreditation status options other than these status options at any time.

A4.3 Six-Year Accreditation Status with a Mid-cycle Progress Report

Based on the ACS WASC criteria, indicators, and other accreditation factors/rubrics, there is compelling evidence that the school needs little, if any, additional support for high-quality student learning and the implementation, monitoring, and accomplishment of the schoolwide action plan, including addressing the identified critical areas for follow-up. The school is expected annually to report progress to its governing body and stakeholders, update the student/community profile, and refine its schoolwide action plan as needed.

The school will be required to submit a comprehensive mid-cycle progress report demonstrating that the school has:

1) Addressed the critical areas for follow-up through the schoolwide action plan
2) Made appropriate progress on the implementation of the schoolwide action plan

*Schools that are WASC/CIS, WASC/IBO, WASC/NCCT, WASC/CIS/NCCT, or WASC/ONESQA accredited will be granted a five-year accreditation status rather than a six-year accreditation status (CIS: Council of International Schools; IBO: International Baccalaureate Organization, NCCT: National Center for Curriculum and Textbook, ONESQA: Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment).
† Huntington Learning Centers may be granted seven years of accreditation. Schools that are WASC/CAIS or WASC/HAIS accredited may also be granted seven years of accreditation.
‡ International schools that receive six-year accreditation status are required to have a two-day mid-cycle visit in the third year of the six-year cycle.
3) Improved student achievement relative to the schoolwide learner outcomes and the academic standards.

WASC will review the mid-cycle progress report to affirm the accreditation status and determine whether any additional reports, visits, or other conditions will be required.

**A4.4 Six-Year Accreditation Status with a Mid-cycle Progress Report and One-Day Visit**

Based on the *ACS WASC criteria, indicators, and other accreditation factors/rubrics*, there is compelling evidence that the school needs additional support in strengthening student achievement and the school’s program through the schoolwide action plan, including addressing the identified critical areas for follow-up. A *one-day visit* is recommended, based on the scope and seriousness of the issues and the size of the school. The school is expected to report annual progress to its governing body and stakeholders, update the student/community profile, and refine its schoolwide action plan as needed.

The school will be required to host a one-day visit after submitting a comprehensive mid-cycle progress report demonstrating that the school has:

- Addressed the critical areas for follow-up throughout the schoolwide action plan
- Made appropriate progress on the implementation of the schoolwide action plan
- Improved student achievement relative to the schoolwide learner outcomes and the academic standards.

ACS WASC will review the progress report and the results of the visit to affirm the accreditation status and determine whether any additional reports, visits, or other conditions will be required.

**A4.5 Six-Year Accreditation Status with a Mid-cycle Progress Report and Two-Day Visit**

Based on the *ACS WASC criteria, indicators, and other accreditation factors/rubrics*, there is compelling evidence that there needs to be more time spent at the mid-cycle in reviewing the schoolwide action plan progress in areas such as the analysis and use of student achievement data, the instructional program, the growth and development of the leadership and staff, governance, and resource allocation. A *two-day visit* is given, based on the scope and seriousness of the issues and the size of the school. The school is expected to report annual progress to its governing body and stakeholders, update the student/community profile, and refine its schoolwide action plan as needed.

The school will be required to host a two-day visit and submit a comprehensive mid-cycle progress report demonstrating that the school has:

- Addressed the critical areas for follow-up through the schoolwide action plan
- Made appropriate progress on implementation of the schoolwide action plan
- Improved student achievement relative to the schoolwide learner outcomes and the academic standards.

ACS WASC will review the progress report and the results of the visit to affirm the accreditation status and determine whether any additional reports, visits, or other conditions will be required.
A4.6 One- or Two-Year Probationary Accreditation Status with an In-depth Progress Report and Two-Day Visit

Based on the ACS WASC criteria, indicators, and other accreditation factors/rubrics, there is compelling evidence that the school deviates significantly from the ACS WASC criteria in one or more critical areas and needs serious additional support, feedback, and encouragement in meeting the identified critical areas for follow-up in the visiting committee report. A one-year probationary status indicates there is a need for immediate attention and support. A two-year probationary status signifies the need for prompt attention and support, but more time may be needed to address the identified issue(s).

The school will be required to host a two-day visit in one or two years and submit an in-depth progress report demonstrating that the school has:

- Addressed the critical areas for follow-up in the schoolwide action plan
- Made appropriate progress on the implementation of the schoolwide action plan
- Improved student achievement relative to the schoolwide learner outcomes and the academic standards.

After the probationary visit, the ACS WASC Commission may grant one of the following:

- Continued probationary accreditation for one additional year of the accreditation cycle (applicable for one-year probationary accreditation only)
- Probation removed and accreditation status restored; the accreditation cycle continues with an in-depth progress report and two-day mid-cycle visit
- Accreditation status withheld.

A4.7 Accreditation Status Withheld

Based on the ACS WASC criteria, indicators, and other accreditation factors/rubrics, this option is appropriate if there is compelling evidence that the school does not meet one or more of the ACS WASC criteria and deviates significantly in critical areas that impact student learning and well-being, the school’s program, and/or supporting operations.

In order to be reinstated, the school must address the critical areas for follow-up identified by the visiting committee and update the self-study report to provide evidence of the progress made. ACS WASC will then decide upon an appropriate time for a two-day reinstatement visit. The visit must occur within 12 to 18 months from the date of the original visit or the school will need to reapply for accreditation through the initial visit process.

After the reinstatement visit, the ACS WASC Commission may grant one of the following:

- Accreditation status with annual in-depth progress reports and a full self-study within three years of reinstatement
- Accreditation status with an in-depth progress report and two-day visit in one year and a full self-study within three years of reinstatement
- Accreditation status withheld.
A4.8 Interim Evaluations
The Commission may request interim written progress reports, special revisits, or full self-studies at any time.

A4.9 Status During Evaluation
The accredited status of a school shall not be changed pending deliberation and decision by the Commission on the granting of an accreditation status.

A4.10 Interim Evaluations
The Commission may request interim written progress reports, special revisits, or full self-studies at any time.

A4.11 Status During Evaluation
The accredited status of a school shall not be changed pending deliberation and decision by the Commission on the granting of a term of accreditation.

A5 TERM OR STATUS FOR POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS OFFERING SHORT-TERM PROGRAMS

A6 APPEAL PROCEDURES

A6.1 Grounds for Appeal
A school may only appeal the decision of the Commission to grant:

1. Probationary Accreditation Status
2. Accreditation Status Withheld.

A six-year status with a review may not be appealed. In addition, initial visit decisions on candidacy and/or initial accreditation cannot be appealed. The action of the Accrediting Commission on an appeal shall be final.

The appeal must be based on one or more of the following grounds:

1. There were errors or omissions in carrying out prescribed procedures on the part of the evaluation team and/or the Commission;
2. There was demonstrable bias or prejudice on the part of one or more members of the evaluation team or Commission which materially affected the Commission’s decision;
3. The evidence before the Commission prior to and on the date when it made the decision which is being appealed was materially in error; or
4. The decision of the Commission was not supported by substantial evidence.

A6.2 Timeline to File Appeal
A letter is to be directed to the Commission by the chief administrator(s) of the district and school within sixty (60) calendar days of receipt of the letter of notification of the action by the
Commission, stating the basis for the appeal. A check in the amount of the appeal fee shall accompany the letter of appeal.

A6.3 Appeal Team

Upon the receipt of a letter of appeal, the Executive Director shall appoint an appeal team to visit the school, review recommendations, and submit a report to the Commission with a recommendation for action. The appeal team shall consist of three members. One shall be the chairperson or a member of the original committee, and the second shall be a member of the Commission. An experienced chairperson not previously involved with the school shall serve as chairperson of the appeal team. If the three members of the appeal team are unable to reach agreement on a recommendation, a minority and a majority report setting forth the recommendations and the reasons therefore may be submitted.

A6.4 Appeal Team Report

The Appeal Team acts as a confidential agent of the Commission. The Appeal Team’s report shall be provided directly to the Commission for their action. Copies of the appeal team’s report shall not be made available to the school prior to the Commission action.

A6.5 Justification Statement to School

Prior to the visit of the appeal team, a copy of the Recommendation for a Term or Status of Accreditation form containing the Justification Statement shall be provided to the chief administrator of the school submitting the appeal.

A6.6 Changed Conditions

In the hearing of an appeal, the appeal team is to base its recommendations on conditions which existed at the time the visiting committee was at the school.

A6.7 Commission Action

The Commission shall act on the appeal and shall inform the school in writing regarding the result of the appeal, the basis for that result. The action of the Commission on an appeal of a term of accreditation shall be final.

A6.8 Status During Appeal

The accredited status of the appealing school shall remain as it was prior to the most recent Commission action under appeal.

A7 SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES IN ACCREDITED SCHOOLS

If a substantive change occurs in an accredited school, continuation of accredited status or inclusion of the substantive change in the institution’s previous grant of accreditation or pre-accreditation shall require:

- Prior application to the Commission regarding the proposed change
- Approval of the application by the Executive Director
- A one-day revisit by a one- or two-member team appointed by the Executive Director
- Subsequent approval by the Commission.
A7.1  Examples of Substantive Change

A school shall be considered to undergo a substantive change and be required to initiate a substantive change procedure with ACS WASC if the school experiences a change in:

- Location of school
- Addition of or transfer of programs to new or different buildings
- Grade level configuration
- Type of school
- Change in ownership and/or control
- Change in legal status or form of control of the institution
- Opening a branch or classroom extension
- Change in established mission or purposes
- Addition of courses or programs that represent a significant departure, in terms of either the content or method of delivery, from those that were offered when the ACS WASC most recently evaluated the institution.

A7.2  Substantive Change Timelines

All changes should be reported within ten days to the Commission, and the visit must occur within 90 days. An independent audit of the school’s financial condition may be required at the discretion of the Executive Director. Failure to notify ACS WASC as required of substantive changes as described above is grounds for the Commission to issue a show cause as to why the institution’s accreditation should not be revoked.

A8  ETHICS AND INTEGRITY

A8.1  Conflicts of Interest

ACS WASC shall maintain clear and effective controls against conflicts of interest or the appearance of conflicts of interest by the Commission’s board members, Commissioners, evaluation team members, consultants, administrative staff, and other agency representatives.

A8.2  Staff or Consultants with Professional Relationships

Any consultant or staff having a professional relationship with any related, associated, or affiliated trade association or membership organization shall consult with the Executive Director of ACS WASC about duties and responsibilities within each organization to ensure that there is no conflict of interest or improper influence by the related, associated, or affiliated trade association or membership organization on the work or decision making processes of ACS WASC.

A8.3  Visiting Committee Members

No member of a visiting committee shall have any interest in the school being visited which could be seen as a conflict of interest. The Executive Director shall endeavor to avoid such committee assignments and immediately investigate any allegations of same brought to his/her attention.
A8.4 Commissioners

No member of the Commission may vote on terms or status of accreditation for any school with which the member has an administrative, supervisory, governing, or other relationship which might prejudice his or her vote. Commissioners with such conflicts of interest shall exclude themselves from the deliberations as well as the voting whenever there is a debate regarding the term or status of accreditation.

A8.5 Integrity of Member Schools

The Commission has an obligation to ensure that any school which seeks candidacy, accreditation, extension of candidacy, or reaffirmation of accreditation, conducts its affairs with integrity.

a. If any institution accredited by ACS WASC elects to make a public disclosure of its accreditation or pre-accreditation status, the institution or program must disclose that status accurately, including the specific academic or instructional programs covered by that status and the name, address, and telephone number of ACS WASC.

b. The school must make a public correction of incorrect or misleading information released by an accredited or pre-accredited institution or program about
   1) The accreditation status of the institution or program;
   2) The contents of visiting team reports; and
   3) ACS WASC’s accrediting actions with respect to the institution or program.

c. If the Commission has reason to believe that any school with which it is concerned is acting in an unethical manner or is deliberately misrepresenting itself to students or public, it shall review the basis of the concerns. If after such review and opportunity for the school to respond, the Commission finds that the school has engaged in unethical conduct or that its integrity has been seriously undermined, the Commission shall:
   1) Break off relations with an applicant school.
   2) Issue a show cause order with a time stated to a candidate or an accredited school. The school must be notified of the specific grounds for adverse action, the specific standard(s) for which there has not been compliance, the nature of the action, and the right of the school to appeal.
   3) Disseminate to appropriate media a notice publicly correcting incorrect or misleading information.
   4) In extreme cases, immediately sever its relationship with the school by denying or terminating candidacy or accreditation.
   5) The school may appeal the decision of the Commission in accordance with the complaints process. (Subsection A6)
A8.6 Statements About Accreditation

If a school has made misleading or incorrect statements about its accreditation status or about ACS WASC, and such statements appear to be unintentional, the school must still make public correction of any misleading or incorrect statements. In such cases the ACS WASC may choose not to take disciplinary action beyond requiring the public correction of erroneous statements.

A8.7 Announcing Accreditation Status

Any school which has been granted accreditation status is authorized to use the term “Fully Accredited by (or) Accredited by the Schools Commission of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges” until such time as its accreditation has either lapsed or been denied. If all grade levels operated by the school were included in the self-study and evaluation, the above statement is sufficient. In other cases, the statement must specify the grade levels accredited, i.e., “Fully Accredited (or) Accredited for Grades (9–12, for example) by the Schools Commission of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges.”

A8.8 Information Accompanying Accreditation Status

Any school which makes public disclosure of its accreditation status must disclose that status accurately, including the programs and grade levels covered by the status and the name, address, and website of the Accrediting Commission for Schools.

A8.9 Transcripts

Transcripts of students who are graduating or transferring from grades covered by the accreditation can be printed, stamped, or embossed with the WASC logo which can be obtained from the WASC Office, or the “Accredited by......” phrase can be typed on the transcript.

A8.10 Announcing Candidacy Status

Any school which has been granted candidacy for accreditation is authorized to use the term “Candidate for Accreditation. Approved by the Schools Commission of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges,” until such time as its candidacy has either lapsed or been denied. Candidate schools MAY NOT use the WASC logo accreditation stamp on transcripts, but the above phrase should be typed thereon.

A9 DISCLOSURE AND CONFIDENTIALITY OF INFORMATION

A9.1 Disclosure of Information

It is the obligation of every school applying for candidacy, extension of candidacy, accreditation, or reaffirmation of accreditation, and of every candidate or accredited school to provide the Commission with access to all parts of its operation, with due regard for the rights of individual privacy, and with complete and accurate information with respect to the school, including reports of other accrediting licensing, and auditing agencies.

Failure to do so, or to make complete, accurate, and honest disclosure, is sufficient reason in and of itself to deny or revoke candidacy or accreditation.
A9.2 Confidentiality

The Commission shall maintain confidentiality of information supplied by the school except, when it is judged necessary, the Commission may announce through its Executive Director any action the Commission has taken and the basis for that action, making public any pertinent information available to the Commission.

A10 EXTENSION OF ACCREDITATION

A10.1 Extension of Term or Status

The Executive Director may grant a one-year extension of accreditation.

A10.2 Postponement of Evaluations

Postponement of subsequent evaluations, because of extenuating circumstances, and the extension of accreditation, may be granted by the Commission. The Executive Director may approve requests for extension to facilitate district evaluation schedules.

A10.3 Long-Term Extensions

Extensions of accreditation may not be granted to schools requesting extension for the third successive year without the preparation of a full progress report and an on-site visit by a two-member committee which shall prepare a report on a recommendation to the Commission.

A10.4 Assessment Fee

There will be an assessment fee for any postponement of visit, restructuring of visiting committee, or cancellation of visit after 50% of the visiting committee is in place.

A11 LAPSE OF ACCREDITATION

A11.1 Re-admission of Lapsed Members

Where a term of accreditation has not expired: Where a school has allowed its accreditation to lapse and the prior term of accreditation has not expired, a school may be readmitted upon the recommendation of a revisit committee comprised, generally, of a member of the Commission and a member of the Commission staff, and subsequent action by the Commission. Such a school shall be required to pay past-due annual fees.

A11.2 Lapsed Members with Expired Terms or Status

When a school has allowed its accreditation to lapse and the term or status of accreditation has expired, a school must restart the entire process with an Initial Visit in order to reestablish accredited status with ACS WASC.

A12 PUBLIC NOTICES

A12.1 Annual Member Directory

The Executive Director shall publish an annual ACS WASC Directory of Schools containing a current list of accredited and candidate schools. The list shall indicate the date when the current accreditation expires for each institution. The Directory shall be distributed to any person requesting a copy. This information is also available on the ACS WASC website.
**A12.2 Public Information**

The Commission shall maintain and make publicly available written materials describing:

a. Each type of accreditation and pre-accreditation granted by the Commission;

b. Commission procedures for applying for accreditation or pre-accreditation;

c. The criteria and procedures used by the Commission for determining whether to grant, reaffirm, reinstate, deny, restrict, revoke, or take any other action related to each type of accreditation and pre-accreditation that the Commission grants;

d. The names, academic and professional qualifications, and relevant employment and organizational affiliations of the members of the Commission as well as the agency’s principal administrative staff;

e. The institutions or programs that the Commission currently accredits or pre-accredits and the date when the agency will review or reconsider the accreditation or pre-accreditation of each institution or program; and

f. The procedures for third-party comments for postsecondary institutions being considered for accreditation or pre-accreditation.

**A13 REGARD FOR THE DECISIONS OF STATES AND OTHER ACCREDITING AGENCIES**

**A13.1 Requirement of Legal Authority**

Accreditation or candidate status shall only be provided to schools that are legally authorized under applicable state law to provide education at the grade levels for which accreditation is being sought. No accreditation or candidate status shall be renewed for any institution which has been subject to the following adverse actions by states and other accrediting agencies:

a. Is the subject of an interim action by an institutional accrediting agency potentially leading to the suspension, revocation, or termination of accreditation or pre-accreditation;

b. Is the subject of an interim action by a State agency potentially leading to the suspension, revocation, or termination of the institution’s legal authority to provide education;

c. Has been notified of a threatened loss of accreditation, and the due process procedures required by the action have not been completed; or

d. Has been notified of threatened suspension, revocation, or termination by the State of the institution’s legal authority to provide education, and the due process procedures required by the action have not been completed.
A13.2 Actions by Other Accrediting Agencies

The Commission shall take into account the following actions by states and other accrediting agencies in considering whether to grant initial accreditation or candidate status. Those actions by:

a. Institutional accrediting agencies that have denied accreditation or pre-accreditation to the institution, placed the institution on public probationary status or revoked the accreditation or pre-accreditation of the institution; and

b. A state agency that has suspended, revoked, or terminated the institution’s legal authority to provide education.

A13.3 Review of Adverse Actions by Other Agencies

When a school accredited by the Commission that is also accredited by another accrediting agency has an adverse action taken against it by the other agency, the Commission shall undertake a prompt review of that institution. The initial review shall consist of a request for a written statement by the school about the circumstances of the adverse action and whether they believe the circumstances on which that action is based constitutes non-compliance with the standards of the Commission. The report shall be filed with the Commission within 30 days. The director of the Commission, at his or her discretion, may also revisit the institution within 90 days of the receipt of the statement to make a compliance determination.

A13.4 Sharing Information with Other Agencies

The Commission shall routinely share with other appropriate State education or accrediting agencies information about Commission decisions, including those granting accreditation or candidate status or those involving adverse action against a school.

A14 SCHOOL SELF-STUDY AND VISITING COMMITTEE REPORTS

A14.1 Maintenance of Records by Schools

The school’s self-study report and the visiting committee report shall be under the control of the school except as designated in this section. Schools shall present these reports to their respective governing boards and are encouraged to make them available to staff, students, and patrons of the school.

A14.2 Permanent Storage of Accreditation Records

The accredited school shall maintain at least one copy of the most recent school self-study report and the report of the visiting committee in its permanent file.

A14.3 Maintenance of Records by ACS WASC

The Commission shall retain in its library the most recent copy of each school’s self-study and visiting committee report. (See Policy Manual, Subsection E11 for postsecondary requirements.)

A14.4 Adequacy of School Self-Study Report

The school self-study report is a fundamental document in the process of ACS WASC evaluation/accreditation. It provides the basis on which the visiting committee conducts its visit of the school and prepares its report. If the chairperson of the visiting committee and the
Executive Director of the Commission concur that the school self-study report is inadequate or that it has not been received in time for the visiting committee to prepare adequately, the visit may be canceled or postponed until such time as an adequate self-study is made available at least two weeks in advance of the visit. Any additional costs incurred by such cancellation or rescheduling of the visit shall be assumed by the school.

A14.5 Records Relating to Term or Status Recommendation

The Recommendation for a Term or Status of Accreditation form, which contains the visiting committee’s recommendation for a term or status of accreditation, shall be under the control of the Commission. In the event of an appeal, a copy of this document shall be provided to the school.

A15 STUDENT AND PUBLIC COMPLAINTS AGAINST INSTITUTIONS

A15.1 Complaints Regarding Quality, Integrity, and Effectiveness

Accreditation by the ACS WASC is an expression of confidence that an institution is satisfactorily achieving its objectives and that it meets or exceeds the Commission’s standards of quality, integrity, and effectiveness. The Commission is concerned with institutional integrity and with performance consistent with Commission standards and policies. While it cannot intervene in the internal procedures of institutions or act as a regulatory body, the Commission can and does respond to complaints regarding allegations of conditions at affiliated institutions that raise significant questions about the institution’s compliance with the standards of conduct expected of an accredited institution.

A15.2 Allegations Not Under ACS WASC Jurisdiction

ACS WASC does not consider allegations concerning the personal lives of individuals connected with its affiliated institutions. It assumes no responsibility for adjudicating isolated individual grievances between students, faculty, or members of the public and individual institutions. The Commission will not act as a court of appeal in matters of admission, granting or transfer of academic credit, grades, fees, student financial aid, student discipline, collective bargaining, faculty appointments, promotion, tenure, and dismissals or similar matters. With regard to an affiliated institution operated or governed by a religious organization, the Commission will not respond to any complaint regarding the religious nature or programs of the school (e.g., a complaint about the orthodoxy of a religious service, textbook, or class will not be adjudicated by the Commission). If the complainant has instituted or has threatened to institute litigation against the institution, no action under this procedure will be taken by the Commission while the matter is under judicial consideration.

A15.3 Initial Complaint Requirements

Complaints are considered only when made in writing and when the complainant is clearly identified. Substantial evidence should be included in support of the allegation that the institution is in significant violation of the rules of good practice as stated in the Commission’s criteria, standards, and policies. Such evidence should state relevant and provable facts. The Commission requires that each affiliated institution have in place student grievance and public complaint policies and procedures that are reasonable, fairly administered, and well publicized. A record of all written complaints received by the institution must be maintained and made available for
review by ACS WASC upon request. The complainant should demonstrate that a serious effort has been made to pursue all review procedures provided by the institution.

**A15.4 Review of Complaint Information**

When the Commission receives a complaint about a candidate or accredited institution, it reviews that information to determine if it is relevant to the compliance of that institution with Commission standards. If appropriate, such information may be referred to the institution or to the visiting team next scheduled to evaluate the institution. The Commission at all times reserves the right to request information of an affiliated institution and to visit that institution for purposes of fact finding consistent with Commission policy. A pattern of concern which may evidence a significant lack of compliance with standards could cause the Commission to renew its consideration of the matter for whatever action may be appropriate. If information is received raising issues of institutional integrity, the Commission may invoke the sanctions provided for in policy.

**A15.5 Procedures**

The Executive Director shall draft procedures for implementation of the complaints policy. The procedures shall adhere to the following criteria:

a. Protect the rights of both parties to be heard and to present evidence.

b. Take all reasonable measures to assure prompt resolution of the complaint.

c. Communicate in a timely manner to all parties regarding findings, conclusions, or rulings which are a result of investigation of the complaint.


**A15.6 Possible Actions**

If the results of the investigation corroborate the complaint the Executive Director may direct the school to rectify the situation or take such other immediate action as he/she deems appropriate subject to ratification of the action by the Commission at its next meeting. Examples of such other action might be:

a. An administrative letter of censure.

b. A written order to the school to show cause why accreditation should not be denied. The school must be notified of the specific grounds for adverse action, the specific standard(s) for which there has not been compliance, the nature of the action, and the right of the school to appeal.

c. A requirement that the school make official rectification to the complainant.

d. Other actions as deemed appropriate by the Executive Director in consultation with the Commission Chairperson.
SECTION B: ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

B1 CRITERIA FOR ACCREDITATION: GENERAL CRITERIA

A school shall be evaluated on the basis of the degree to which it is accomplishing the purposes and functions outlined in its own statement of purpose, and on the appropriateness of those purposes and functions for an institution of its type. To qualify for accreditation, a school must give evidence of adequately meeting the following criteria that are established as general guidelines to determine the effectiveness of a school’s educational program and services.

Fundamental to accreditation is the quality of the educational program experienced by the students. The relative weight of each criterion depends upon its effect on the educational program experienced by students at the school. In addition, a school must give evidence of an ongoing process for improving its educational program. The criteria are:

Focus on Learning: WASC Criteria

A. Organization for Student Learning

School Purpose

1. The school has established a clear vision and mission (purpose) that reflects the beliefs and philosophy of the institution. The purpose is defined further by adopted schoolwide learner outcomes that form the basis of the educational program for every student.

Governance

2. The governing authority (a) adopts policies which are consistent with the school’s vision and mission (purpose) and support the achievement of the schoolwide learner outcomes, (b) delegates implementation of these policies to the professional staff and (c) monitors results.

School Leadership

3. The school leadership (1) makes decisions to facilitate actions that focus the energies of the school on student achievement of the schoolwide learner outcomes, (2) empowers the staff and (3) encourages commitment, participation and shared accountability for student learning.

Staff

4. The school leadership and staff are qualified for their assigned responsibilities, are committed to the school’s purpose and engage in ongoing professional development that promotes student learning.

School Environment

5. The school has a safe, healthy, nurturing environment that reflects the school’s purpose and is characterized by respect for differences, trust, caring, professionalism, support, and high expectations for each student.
Reporting Student Progress
6. The school leadership and staff regularly assess student progress toward accomplishing the schoolwide learner outcomes and report student progress to the rest of the school community.

School Improvement Process
7. The school leadership facilitates school improvement which (a) is driven by plans of action that will enhance quality learning for all students, (b) has school community support and involvement, (c) effectively guides the work of the school, and (d) provides for accountability through monitoring of the schoolwide action plan.

B. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

What Students Learn
1. The school provides a challenging, coherent and relevant curriculum for each student that fulfills the school’s purpose and results in student achievement of the schoolwide learner outcomes through successful completion of any course of study offered.

How Students Learn
2. The professional staff (a) uses research-based knowledge about teaching and learning, and (b) designs and implements a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students at a high level of learning consistent with the school’s purpose and schoolwide learner outcomes.

How Assessment is Used
3. Teacher and student uses of assessment are frequent and integrated into the teaching/learning process. The assessment results are the basis for (a) measurement of each student’s progress toward schoolwide learner outcomes, (b) regular evaluation, modification, and improvement of curriculum and instructional approaches, and (c) allocation of resources.

C. Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth

Student Connectedness
1. Students are connected to a system of support services, activities and opportunities at the school and within the community that meet the challenges of the curricular and co-curricular program in order to achieve the schoolwide learner outcomes.

Parent/Community Involvement
2. The school leadership employs a wide range of strategies to ensure that parental and community involvement is integral to the school’s established support system for students.
D. Resource Management and Development

Resources
1. The resources available to the school are sufficient to sustain the school program and are effectively used to carry out the school’s purpose and student achievement of the schoolwide learner outcomes.

Resource Planning
2. The governing authority and the school leadership execute responsible resource planning for the future.

B2 CRITERIA FOR CALIFORNIA PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS

This criteria was revised August 2005 and is used in conjunction with the WASC/CDE Focus on Learning Joint Process for all California Public Schools, including California Charter Schools, 2014 Edition.

WASC/CDE Focus on Learning Schoolwide Criteria

A. Organization

Vision and Purpose
1. The school has a clearly stated vision and mission (purpose) based on its student needs, current educational research, and the belief that all students can achieve at high academic levels. Supported by the governing board and the central administration, the school’s purpose is defined further by schoolwide learner outcomes and the academic standards.

Governance
2. The governing board (a) has policies and bylaws that are aligned with the school’s purpose and support the achievement of the schoolwide learner outcomes, the academic standards, and the college- and career-readiness standards based on data-driven instructional decisions for the school; (b) delegates implementation of these policies to the professional staff; and (c) monitors results regularly and approves the single schoolwide action plan and its relationship to the Local Educational Agency (LEA) plan.

Leadership and Staff
3. Based on student achievement data, the school leadership and staff make decisions and initiate activities that focus on all students achieving the schoolwide learner outcomes, the academic standards, and the college- and career-readiness standards. The school leadership and staff annually monitor and refine the single schoolwide action plan based on analysis of data to ensure alignment with student needs.

4. A qualified staff facilitates achievement of the academic standards and the college- and career-readiness standards, and the schoolwide learner outcomes through a system of preparation, induction, and ongoing professional development.
5. Leadership and staff are involved in ongoing research or data-based correlated professional development that focuses on identified student learning needs.

**Resources**

6. The human, material, physical, and financial resources are sufficient and utilized effectively and appropriately in accordance with the legal intent of the program(s) to support students in accomplishing the academic standards, the college- and career-readiness standards, and the schoolwide learner outcomes.

7. The governing authority and the school leadership execute responsible resource planning for the future. The school is fiscally solvent and uses sound and ethical accounting practices (budgeting/monitoring, internal controls, audits, fiscal health, and reporting). [FOR CHARTER SCHOOLS ONLY]

8. The school has developed policies, procedures, and internal controls for managing the financial operations that meet state laws, generally accepted practices, and ethical standards. [FOR CHARTER SCHOOLS ONLY]

**B. Standards-based Student Learning: Curriculum**

1. All students participate in a rigorous, relevant, and coherent standards-based curriculum that supports the achievement of the academic standards, the college- and career-readiness standards, and the schoolwide learner outcomes. Through standards-based learning (what is taught and how it is taught), these are accomplished.

2. All students have equal access to the school’s entire program and assistance with a personal learning plan to prepare them for the pursuit of their academic, personal, and career goals.

3. Upon completion of the high school program, students have met all the requirements of graduation and are prepared for success in college, career, and life.

**C. Standards-based Student Learning: Instruction**

1. To achieve the academic standards, the college- and career-readiness standards, and the schoolwide learner outcomes, all students are involved in challenging and relevant learning experiences.

2. All teachers use a variety of strategies and resources, including technology and experiences beyond the textbook and the classroom, that actively engage students, emphasize higher order thinking skills, and prepares them to succeed at high levels for college, career, and life.

**D. Standards-based Student Learning: Assessment and Accountability**

1. The school uses a professionally acceptable assessment process to collect, disaggregate, analyze and report student performance data to the parents and other stakeholders.

2. Teachers employ a variety of appropriate formative and summative assessment strategies to evaluate student learning. Students and teachers use these findings to modify the learning/teaching practices to improve student learning.
3. The school, with the support of the district and community, has an assessment and monitoring system to determine student progress toward achievement of the academics standards, the college- and career-readiness standards, and the schoolwide learner outcomes.

4. The assessment of student achievement in relation to the academic standards, the college- and career-readiness standards, and the schoolwide learner outcomes drives the school’s program, its evaluation and continuous improvement, and the allocation and usage of resources.

E. School Culture and Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth

1. The school leadership employs a wide range of strategies to encourage family, business, industry, and community involvement, especially with the learning/teaching process.

2. The school is a) a safe, clean, and orderly place that nurtures learning and b) has a culture that is characterized by trust, professionalism, high expectations for all students, and a focus on continuous school improvement.

3. All students receive appropriate support along with a personal learning plan to help ensure academic, college, and career success.

4. Students have access to a system of personal support services, activities, and opportunities at the school and with business, industry, and the community.

B3 CRITERIA FOR INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

WASC Schoolwide Criteria for International Schools

A. Organization for Student Learning

School Purpose

1. The school has established a clear vision and mission (purpose) that reflects the beliefs and philosophy of the institution. The purpose is defined further by adopted schoolwide learner outcomes that reflect defined global competencies for all students and form the basis of the educational program for every student.

Governance

2. The governing authority (a) adopts policies which are consistent with the school vision and mission (purpose) and support the achievement of the schoolwide learner outcomes, i.e., global competencies, (b) delegates implementation of these policies to the professional staff, and (c) monitors results.

School Leadership

3. The school leadership (1) makes decisions to facilitate actions that focus the energies of the school on student achievement of the schoolwide learner outcomes, i.e., global competencies, (2) empowers the staff, and (3) encourages commitment, participation and shared accountability for student learning in a global environment.
Staff
4. The school leadership and staff are qualified for their assigned responsibilities, are committed to the school’s purpose and engage in ongoing professional development that promotes student learning in a global society.

School Environment
5. The school has a safe, healthy, nurturing environment that reflects the school’s purpose and is characterized by respect for differences, trust, caring, professionalism, support, and high expectations for each student.

Reporting Student Progress
6. The school leadership and staff regularly assess student progress toward accomplishing the schoolwide learner outcomes and report student progress to the rest of the school community.

School Improvement Process
7. The school leadership facilitates school improvement which (a) is driven by plans of action that will enhance quality learning for all students, (b) has school community support and involvement, (c) effectively guides the work of the school, and (d) provides for accountability through monitoring of the schoolwide action plan.

B. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
What Students Learn
1. The school provides a challenging, coherent and relevant international curriculum for each student that fulfills the school’s purpose and results in student achievement of the schoolwide learner outcomes through successful completion of any course of study offered.

How Students Learn
2. The professional staff (a) uses research-based knowledge about teaching and learning, and (b) designs and implements a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students at a high level of learning consistent with the school’s purpose and schoolwide learner outcomes.

How Assessment is Used
3. Teacher and student uses of assessment are frequent and integrated into the teaching/learning process. The assessment results are the basis for (a) measurement of each student’s progress toward schoolwide learner outcomes, (b) regular evaluation, modification, and improvement of curriculum and instructional approaches, and (c) allocation of resources.
C. Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth

Student Connectedness

1. Students are connected to a system of support services, activities and opportunities at the school and within the community that meet the challenges of the curricular and co-curricular program in order to achieve the schoolwide learner outcomes.

Parent/Community Involvement

2. The school leadership employs a wide range of strategies to ensure that parental and community involvement is integral to the school’s established support system for students.

D. Resource Management and Development

Resources

1. The resources available to the school are sufficient to sustain the school program and are effectively used to carry out the school’s purpose and student achievement of the schoolwide learner outcomes.

Resource Planning

2. The governing authority and the school leadership execute responsible resource planning for the future.

E. The China Context (for NCCT/WASC Schools only)

1. Local cultures are incorporated into the curriculum in appropriate ways.

2. The governing body and the school management comply with all applicable statutes, government laws, and regulations.

3. The management of the school’s finances and property shall be, at all times, in accordance with the standards which operate in China and shall be consistent with best practices in international schools.

4. The governing body and the school management are familiar with Chinese laws and regulations related to the rights and obligations of the employees and comply with those laws and regulations.

5. The school shall actively promote intercultural and international awareness.

The ONESQA Standards (for WASC/ONESQA Schools only)

1. Learners’ Desirable Values.

2. Learners’ Achievement in Thai Language and Culture Courses.

3. Use of Effective Instruction with Learner-centred Approach in Delivering Thai Language and Culture Courses.

4. Effective Management and Development of Thai Language and Culture Instructional Program.
B4 CRITERIA FOR POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

The criteria for postsecondary institutions were implemented in 2013 and are delineated in the WASC Postsecondary Accreditation Manual, 2013 Edition.

WASC Postsecondary Criteria

Criterion 1: Institutional Mission and Schoolwide Learner Outcomes

The school demonstrates a strong commitment to its mission, emphasizing student achievement. The school communicates its mission internally and externally. Schoolwide Learner Outcomes (SLOs) are developed and reviewed annually to ensure that they are current and relevant.

Criterion 2: Organizational Infrastructure and School Leadership

The school utilizes the contributions of leadership throughout the organization to provide for ongoing improvement. The organizational structure and roles of governance are clearly defined and designed to facilitate decisions that support student learning and improve institutional effectiveness. The governing body enables the administrator/director to implement policy and lead the school effectively.

Criterion 3: Faculty and Staff

The school employs qualified personnel to support student learning programs and services to ensure institutional effectiveness. Personnel are treated equitably, evaluated regularly, and provided opportunities for professional development that impact student learning.

Criterion 4: Curriculum

The school demonstrates its support of student learning through the development of a challenging, coherent, and relevant curriculum that allows all students the opportunity to reach Schoolwide Learner Outcomes (SLOs). The school’s curriculum reflects its mission and SLOs and connects directly to current student learning needs. The school pursues current, research-based curriculum development information to keep its programs relevant and effective.

Criterion 5: Instructional Program

The instructional staff uses research-based instructional strategies and teaching methodologies that engage students at high levels of learning and allow them to achieve both Schoolwide Learner Outcomes and course objectives. Faculty members are given ongoing training in various instructional strategies that allows them to address the varied learning styles of students in their classrooms.

Criterion 6: Use of Assessment

The instructional staff uses established assessment procedures to design, administer, deliver, and evaluate courses, programs, and student learning levels. The school recognizes the central role of its faculty for improving courses and programs through the assessment instruments and practices used in the school. Assessment is used to measure
student progress, to modify learning approaches, and to carry out institutional planning and ongoing school improvement.

**Criterion 7: Student Support Services**
The school recruits and admits students who are able to benefit from its programs. Student support services address the identified needs of students and create a supportive learning environment. The entire student pathway through the institutional experience is characterized by a concern for student access, progress, learning, and success. The school systematically assesses student support services using faculty, staff, and student input and other appropriate measures in order to improve the effectiveness of these services.

**Criterion 8: Resource Management**
Financial resources are sufficient to support student learning programs and services. The distribution of resources supports the development, maintenance, and enhancement of programs and services. The school plans and manages its financial affairs with integrity and in a manner that ensures financial stability. The level of financial resources provides a reasonable expectation of both short-term and long-term financial solvency.

**Criterion 9: Community Connection**
The school seeks to enhance its educational effectiveness by developing close partnerships and relationships with community members. Connections within the community provide students with expanded learning experiences, including additional educational or vocational opportunities.

**Criterion 10: Action Plan for Continuing Improvement**
The school uses the self-study process to identify key issues that are inserted into a schoolwide Action Plan that governs school improvement activities and events. The schoolwide Action Plan is used regularly, reviewed annually, and monitored consistently by the governing body to ensure ongoing school improvement.

**B4.1 Additional Criteria**
See *Policy Manual, Section E* for criteria and all other requirements relating to postsecondary institutions.

**B4.2 Age of Students**
Institutions are not precluded from admitting to postsecondary programs, under different requirements, students who are beyond the age of compulsory high school attendance, such as having identified needs requiring remedial instruction as a supplement to the regular curriculums or being enrolled in individual courses not leading to an academic credential.

**B5 EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS**
Copyrights shall be maintained on evaluation instruments developed by the Commission. These instruments shall be used by schools for self-evaluation studies, except where specific permission is granted by the Executive Director to use other instruments.
B6.1 Revision of Self-Study Instruments

a. Self-study instruments shall be regularly revised in accordance with a schedule approved by the Commission.

b. The Executive Director shall be responsible for designating staff to coordinate the review and revision of instruments. The Commission shall be kept informed concerning revision activities and major changes being contemplated in instruments.

c. Before any instruments or criteria are approved, the Commission members should discuss and make suggestions about such instruments and criteria.

d. The Executive Director shall be responsible for inviting users of the self-study instruments to submit evaluations and suggestions for future revisions.

e. The Executive Director shall be responsible for tentatively approving revised instruments, authorizing their duplication, and distributing them to schools. Following final approval by the Commission, the copyrights shall be renewed. The Executive Director is also authorized to permit the reproduction and use of portions of the self-study documents by other agencies.

See also Subsection E11.10 for postsecondary institutions.

B7 DEVELOPMENT OF NEW SELF-STUDY INSTRUMENTS

a. The Executive Director, with the approval of the Commission, may designate staff to develop new self-study instruments in cooperation with appropriate organizations represented on the Commission; may arrange to pilot-test the instruments in a limited number of schools; and may arrange to revise such drafts for further pilot-testing.

b. The Executive Director shall be responsible for recommendations to the Commission when a new self-study instrument is to be made available for general use. Prior to such recommendation the latest draft of the proposed new instrument shall be made available to members of the Commission.

c. Following Commission approval of any new self-study instrument, it shall be copyrighted and shall be incorporated into the schedule for review and revision, along with the other instruments to which the Commission holds copyrights.
SECTION C: ACCREDITATION PROCESSES

C1 VISITING COMMITTEES

C1.1 Guidelines for Size of Committees

Full Self-Study Visits

- Schools with an enrollment of 149 or less: 3 members, 3-½ days
- Schools with an enrollment of 150–449: 4 members, 3-½ days
- Schools with an enrollment of 450–749: 5 members, 3-½ days
- Schools with an enrollment of 750–1499: 6 members, 3-½ days
- Schools with an enrollment of 1500–2499: 7 members, 3-½ days
- Schools with an enrollment of 2500 or more: 8 members, 3-½ days

Three-Year Term or Mid-cycle Visits

- Schools with an enrollment of 449 or less: 2 members, 2 days
- Schools with an enrollment of 450–1499: 3 members, 2 days
- Schools with an enrollment of 1500–2499: 4 members, 2 days
- Schools with an enrollment of 2500 or more: 5 members, 2 days

Probationary Visits

- 2 members, 1 or 2 days

All other Visits

- 2 members, 1 day

Preliminary Visits

- 2 members, 1 day

Candidate Visits

- 2 members, 1 day

Appeals

- 3 members, 1 day

Note: At the request of the school, additional members may be assigned and/or additional days allocated with the fee adjusted accordingly.

C2 GUIDELINES FOR COMPOSITION OF COMMITTEES

Variations in the following patterns may be made according to the size of the committee, availability of personnel, or other circumstances.

C2.1 Visits — Public Schools, California

- One school level administrator
- One representative from a district office
- One representative from a college or university
- One classroom teacher.

Three chosen from any categories listed below:

- Representative of a county office or state department
- School Board or lay representative
- High School student representative
- Church-related and/or independent school representative, or from any of the categories listed above. An attempt should be made to have an additional higher education representative to public high schools of 1500 or more.
C2.2 Visits — Independent Schools, California
- Chair, Independent School Head
- Two to four members from independent and public schools or university, a majority being from independent schools. The number of visitors varies according to the size of the school.

C2.3 ACSI (Association of Christian Schools International)
- Four administrators
- Two teachers
- One ACS WASC appointed member (preferably public school district administrator).

C2.4 Visits — Catholic Elementary Schools, California
- Two-thirds representatives of Catholic Schools, including chair
- Remainder of team ACS WASC appointed members (public or private non-Catholic).

C2.5 Visits — Catholic High Schools, California
- Two-thirds representatives of Catholic schools, including chair
- One representative of a college or university
- Remainder of team ACS WASC appointed members (public or private non-Catholic).

C2.6 Visits — Seventh-day Adventist Schools, California and Hawaii
- One or two representatives of Seventh-day Adventist schools
- One representative of the accrediting association of the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists
- One or two public or private school representatives
- Optional: one representative of a Seventh-day Adventist college or university.

C2.7 Visits — Lutheran Schools, California
- Two representatives of Lutheran schools, including chair
- Remainder of team ACS WASC appointed members (public or private non-Lutheran).

C2.8 Visits — Bureau of Jewish Education, California
- One representative of the Bureau of Jewish Education
- One representative of a college or university
- Remainder of team ACS WASC appointed members – public or private non-Jewish.

C2.9 Visits — Hawaii
- A majority of experienced members
- A majority of public school personnel, if a public school
- A majority of private school personnel, if a private school
• One member to be of the same religious denomination.
  Representatives should be selected from:
  o Classroom teachers
  o School level administrators
  o District or state level personnel
  o College, university, or community college personnel.

C2.10 Visits — International
Visiting committees to international schools shall generally be chaired by an educator from California or Hawaii. Other members shall be chosen by the Executive Director.

C2.11 Revisits
Teams for revisits shall generally consist of two members of the previous visiting committee.

C2.12 Initial Visits
Initial visits shall be done by a two-person team selected by the Executive Director. Initial visits to comprehensive/college preparatory high schools shall include, when possible, a University of California system representative.

C2.13 Appeal Teams
Teams for appeals shall consist of a member of the Commission, the chairperson or a member of the original visiting committee and an experienced chairperson not previously involved with the school who shall serve as the chairperson of the appeals team.

C3 OVERRIDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS
The Commission shall not act contrary to a visiting committee’s recommendation without first making contact with the chairperson of the committee. In extreme cases visiting committee chairpersons may be invited to meet with the Commission and/or the Executive Director and a Commissioner may make a visit to the school for the purpose of clarification or validation of information.

C4 CONFLICT OF INTEREST ON READING TEAMS
In the Reading Committee’s consideration of terms or status of accreditation, declarations of conflicts of interest should come from affected persons at the express invitation of the Reading Committee Chairperson at the onset of the meeting. Members shall let the committee chairperson know in which school reports there are conflicts of interest.

See also Subsection 13, Conflicts of Interest.
See also Subsection A8, Ethics and Integrity.
See also Subsection D4, Conflict of Interest.
SECTION D: OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

D1 FINANCIAL PRACTICES

D1.1 Fee Schedule

a. The fee schedule shall be reviewed annually and adjusted by Commission approval to meet budgetary needs and to provide for the maintenance of a reserve of approximately 20% of the average annual expenditures of the three preceding years.

b. Regular accreditation listing fees shall be billed on a fiscal year basis and paid by December 31 of the current school year. Schools with unpaid fees shall be considered delinquent and subject to removal from the list of accredited schools.

D1.2 Reimbursement of Expenses

a. Members of visiting committees, Commission members, and staff members on Commission business shall be reimbursed for actual expenses in accordance with Commission guidelines.

b. Mileage reimbursement for actual travel shall be provided by the Commission at the annual Internal Revenue Service allowance as effective July 1 following IRS adoption.

D2 OFFICE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Office policies and procedures not covered in these Commission-established Operational Guidelines are the responsibility of the Executive Director.

D2.1 Maintenance of Records

The Commission shall maintain complete and accurate records of:

a. The last full accreditation or pre-accreditation reviews of each institution or program, including on-site evaluation team reports, institution responses to on-site reports, periodic review reports, any reports of special reviews conducted by the agency between full accreditation reviews, and the institution’s or program’s most recent self-study report; and

b. All pre-accreditation and accreditation decisions, including all adverse actions.

D2.3 Public Information

ACS WASC staff will regularly maintain and make publicly available written materials describing:

1. Each type of accreditation and pre-accreditation granted by ACS WASC;

2. ACS WASC procedures for applying and pre-accreditation granted by ACS WASC;

3. The criteria and procedures used by ACS WASC for determining whether to grant, reaffirm, reinstate, deny, restrict, revoke, or take any other action related to each type of accreditation and pre-accreditation that the agency grants;
4. The names, academic and professional qualifications, and relevant employment and organizational affiliations of the members of the Commission as well as the agency’s principal administrative staff, and;

5. The institutions or programs that ACS WASC currently accredits or pre-accredits and the date when the agency will review or reconsider the accreditation or pre-accreditation of each institution or program.

D3 PROCEDURES FOR PROCESSING COMPLAINTS

D3.1 Initial Review

Within fifteen business days of the receipt of a complaint, it will be acknowledged in writing and initially reviewed by the staff of the Commission.

D3.2 Complainant’s Responsibilities

It is the complainant’s responsibility to do the following:

a. State the complaint in the clearest possible terms.

b. Provide, in writing, a clear description of the evidence upon which the allegation is based.

c. Demonstrate that all remedies available at the institution (grievance procedures, appeal hearings, etc.) have been exhausted. The complainant shall describe what has been done in this regard.

d. Attest that the matter in question is not under litigation nor the threat of litigation.

e. Acknowledge awareness that Commission staff may send a copy of the complaint to the chief executive of the institution.

f. Sign the complaint.

D3.3 Complaints Outside Commission Jurisdiction

If the Executive Director finds the complaint to be not within the scope of Commission policies and jurisdiction, the complainant will be so notified. Individual complaints, whether acted upon or not by the Commission, will be retained in Commission files.

D3.4 Response from School

If the complaint appears to be within the scope of Commission policies and jurisdiction and is substantially documented, a copy of the complaint will be forwarded to the institution’s chief executive, who will be asked to respond to the Executive Director within thirty days. The chief executive is responsible for but not limited to:

a. Responding in writing to the Commission’s Executive Director in the clearest possible terms by discussing the validity of the evidence upon which the allegation is based.

b. Discussing whether the complainant has exhausted all the remedies available at the institution (grievance procedures, appeal hearings, etc.). The respondent shall describe what has been done in this regard.

c. Attesting to whether the matter in question is under litigation or the threat of litigation.

d. Signing the response.
The Executive Director will send a copy of the complaint and correspondence to the chairperson of the Accrediting Commission.

**D3.5 Decision to Investigate Further**

The Commission staff will review the complaint, the response, and evidence submitted by the institution’s president, and will determine one of the following:

a. That the complaint will not be processed further.

b. That the complaint has sufficient substance to warrant further investigation (which may include referral to the Commission).

c. Every effort will be made to expedite this final decision and reach closure within 90 days of receipt of the written complaint. However, it is not possible to guarantee a specific time frame in which the process will be completed. If further investigation is warranted, the time required to conduct the investigation may vary considerably depending on the circumstances and the nature of the complaint.

**D3.6 Notification of Review**

The complainant and the institution will be notified of the outcome of the review of the complaint.

**D3.7 Notification of Outcome**

If the complaint is investigated further, as in Subsection D3.5 above, the complainant and the institution will be notified of the outcome of the investigation.

**D3.8 Opportunity to Respond to Findings**

Prior to the Commission’s disposition of the complaint, the individual and the institution will have an opportunity to respond in writing within thirty days to the findings of the investigation. The complainant and the institution involved will be notified of the decision. The decision as communicated by the Executive Director is final.

**D3.9 Notification of Other Agencies**

If the complaint was referred to ACS WASC by another agency, that agency will receive copies of correspondence that state the outcome of the complaint.

**D3.10 Complaints Against ACS WASC**

If the complaint should be against ACS WASC Commissioners, evaluation team members, consultants, staff, or other agency representatives or the Commission as a whole, the complaint shall be referred to the Chair of the ACS WASC Commission for initial evaluation. The Chair shall have the option of dismissing the complaint based on the criteria outlined in Subsection A15, returning it to the Executive Director as an internal staff matter, bringing it before the full Commission. A complainant shall have the right to appeal the decision of the Commission in relation to any complaint against the ACS WASC consultants, evaluation team members, staff or other agency representatives, or Commissioners.
D3.11 Complaints Regarding Term or Status Decisions

If a member school is appealing a term or status decision, the appeals process outlined in Subsection A6 shall be used.

See also Subsection A15, Student and Public Complaints Against Institutions
See also Subsection A8, Ethics and Integrity.

D4 CONFLICT OF INTEREST PROCEDURES

ACS WASC board members, Commissioners, evaluation team members, consultants, administrative staff, and other agency representatives must avoid conflicts of interest and the appearance of conflicts of interest in performing the work of the Commission. Any individual employed by or working on behalf of ACS WASC shall be advised of the Commission’s conflict of interest policies and shall affirm in writing that they are free from all such conflicts.

D4.1 Conflict of Interest Forms for Staff

Staff, consultants to the Commission, and other agency representatives shall be advised of conflict of interest policies and shall sign conflict of interest forms upon employment or commencement of duties. Policies shall be reviewed and updated conflict of interest forms shall be signed at least every three years.

D4.2 Conflict of Interest Forms for Commissioners

Board members or Commissioners of ACS WASC shall be advised of conflict of interest policies and shall sign conflict of interest forms at the beginning of their terms of office, and again at the beginning of each new term for returning board members or Commissioners.

D4.3 Conflict of Interest Forms for Visiting Team Members

Evaluation team members shall be advised of ACS WASC conflict of interest policies during the course of evaluation team training, and shall affirm in writing that they are free of conflict in regards to the school they are helping to evaluate. The conflict of interest form shall be kept on file with the report.

D4.4 Staff Members and Related Organizations

In the event that a staff member, consultant, or other agency representative has a relationship with any related, associated, or affiliated trade association or membership organization, the staff member, consultant, or agency representative shall consult with the Executive Director regarding duties and responsibilities in relation to each organization. Conflict of interest policies shall be reviewed with the staff member, consultant, or agency representative and both the Executive Director of ACS WASC and the staff member, consultant, or agency representative shall confirm in writing that no conflict exists. This agreement shall be reviewed yearly, and written records maintained which document the review process and renew the confirmation that no conflicts of interest arise from the relationship with both ACS WASC and the related, associated, or affiliated trade association or membership organization.

See also ACS WASC Bylaws, Subsection 13, Conflicts of Interest.
See also Subsection A8, Ethics and Integrity.
See also Subsection C4, Conflicts of Interest on Reading Teams.
See also Subsection E2.6 for Postsecondary Institutions.
SECTION E: POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

ACS WASC accredits primarily public and private schools located in California, Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, the Republic of Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and to American and international schools in Asia and the Pacific. When invited and when circumstances suggest the feasibility and appropriateness of the relationship, the Commission will authorize staff to work with schools in the Middle East, Africa, and Europe.

This section applies specifically to the postsecondary non-degree granting institutions that are accredited by the Commission or are seeking accreditation. See Subsection A8.5 for information pertaining to the integrity of member schools which also applies to postsecondary non-degree granting institutions.

E1 ACCREDITATION PROCESS

E1.1 Postsecondary Institutions Eligible

No postsecondary institution seeking accreditation will be considered eligible for candidacy or accreditation unless it has a charter and/or formal authority from an appropriate governmental agency (where such agency exists) to award a certificate or diploma. To be eligible an institution must meet all legal requirements to provide a program of education beyond the secondary level. For-profit institutions and institutions whose primary mode of curriculum delivery is distance learning are not eligible for ACS WASC accreditation.

E1.2 Process for Seeking Accreditation

Institutions may apply as candidates for accreditation at any time.

An institution may become accredited by ACS WASC by successfully completing the following steps.

E1.3 Conditions and Expectations for Membership in ACS WASC

- Institutions shall meet all of the ACS WASC criteria for being accredited by the Commission.
- Institutions shall pay the membership fees and evaluation fees in a timely manner.
- Institutions are to make every effort to annually contribute members from the institution staff to participate on visiting committees.

E1.4 Initial Visit

Institutions shall host a one-day visit by a two-person team to assess the efficacy of the institution’s educational program, administrative and support services, and compliance with ACS WASC criteria. Based upon the findings of the one-day visit, the visiting committee may recommend Initial Accreditation Status, Candidate Status, or Denial of Accreditation.

E1.5 Candidate Status

Institutions which are progressing toward meeting the criteria for accreditation and can be expected to meet those criteria within three years may be granted candidacy status.
E1.6 **Initial Accreditation Status**

Institutions which meet the organizational and support criteria for full accreditation and have a history and support system which indicate that a high-quality program can be sustained into the foreseeable future may be granted Initial Accreditation status for up to three years.

E2 **VISITING COMMITTEES**

E2.1 **Visiting Committee Members**

The Commission invites visiting committee members that are qualified and trained by Commission staff in order to ensure the most effective evaluation of institutions. The visiting committee is composed of professional educators and may include public members and a Commission member. Institutions will be provided with a committee roster prior to the visit. Concerns of an institution about a committee member should be communicated to the Commission Executive Director or Associate Executive Director.

Initial screening of visiting committee members begins with the completion of a “Data Sheet” that requests information on professional background, degrees, experience indicators, and areas of expertise. If selected to serve on a visiting committee, the visiting committee chair and the institution evaluate the effectiveness of the visiting committee member. The institution also has the opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of the visiting committee chair and overall performance of the visiting committee. The Executive Director reviews evaluations of visiting committee members and chairs after each visit.

E2.2 **Visiting Committee Chairs**

Visiting committee chairs must have had successful experience as a visiting committee member prior to being invited to serve as a chair.

E2.3 **Conflict of Interest, Members and Chairs**

Visiting committee members and chairs are required to sign a document certifying that they have no vested interest or conflict of interest in the institution to be visited. (See also Subsection E2.5 for additional details.)

E2.4 **Conflicts of Interest**

E2.4.1 **Controls Against Conflict of Interest**

ACS WASC shall maintain clear and effective controls against conflicts of interest or the appearance of conflicts of interest by the Commission’s board members, Commissioners, evaluation team members, consultants, administrative staff, and other agency representatives.

E2.4.2 **Conflicts Involving Commissioners**

Commissioners shall abstain from voting on terms of accreditation for any school or institution with which they have an administrative, supervisory, governing, or other relationship that might prejudice the vote. Commissioners with such conflicts of interest shall exclude themselves from the deliberations as well as the voting whenever there is a debate regarding the term of accreditation.
E2.4.3 Commissioners Who Serve on Visiting Teams

Commissioners who serve as members of Visiting Committees to schools or institutions accredited by ACS WASC shall abstain from voting on the terms of accreditation for those institutions.

E2.4.4 Conflict of Interest Statements

Commissioners shall sign a conflict-of-interest statement upon the date of commencement of each new term of office. Commission staff and consultants shall sign a conflict of interest statement on commencement of duties. Visiting team members and chairs shall sign a conflict-of-interest statement upon acceptance of each invitation to serve on a visiting team.

E2.5 Ethics and Integrity

E2.5.1 Conflicts of Interest

ACS WASC shall maintain clear and effective controls against conflicts of interest or the appearance of conflicts of interest by the Commission’s board members, Commissioners, evaluation team members, consultants, administrative staff, and other agency representatives.

E2.5.2 Visiting Committee Members

No member of a visiting committee shall have any interest in the school or institution being visited that could be seen as a conflict of interest. The executive director shall endeavor to avoid such committee assignments and immediately investigate any allegations of same brought to his/her attention.

E2.6 Conflict of Interest Procedures

ACS WASC board members, Commissioners, evaluation team members, consultants, administrative staff, and other agency representatives must avoid conflicts of interest and the appearance of conflicts of interest in performing the work of the Commission. Any individual employed by or working on behalf of ACS WASC shall be advised of the Commission’s conflict of interest policies and shall affirm in writing that they are free from all such conflicts.

E2.6.1 Conflict of Interest Forms for Visiting Team Members

Evaluation team members shall be advised of ACS WASC conflict of interest policies during the course of evaluation team training, and shall affirm in writing that they are free of conflict in regards to the school or institution they are helping to evaluate. The conflict of interest form shall be incorporated into the visiting team report to the Commission, and shall be attached to the Visiting Committee report.

E2.6.2 Staff Members and Related Organizations

In the event that a staff member, consultant, or other agency representative has a relationship with any related, associated, or affiliated trade association or membership organization, the staff member, consultant, or agency representative shall consult with the Executive Director regarding duties and responsibilities in relation to each organization. Conflict of interest policies shall be reviewed with the staff member, consultant, or agency representative and both the Executive Director of ACS WASC and the staff member, consultant, or agency representative shall confirm in writing that no conflict exists. This agreement shall be reviewed yearly, and written records maintained which document the review process and renew the confirmation that no conflicts of
interest arise from the relationship with both ACS WASC and the related, associated, or affiliated trade association or membership organization.

E2.7 Conflict of Interest on Reading Teams

In the Reading Committee’s consideration of terms of accreditation, declarations of conflicts of interest should come from affected persons at the express invitation of the Reading Committee Chairperson at the onset of the meeting. Members shall let the committee chairperson know in which school or institution reports there are conflicts of interest.

E3 ON-SITE VISITS

E3.1 Initial Visits

Upon receipt of a complete application for affiliation with the Commission, the Commission staff will assign a two-member visiting team to evaluate the institution. The length of the visit is usually one day, but institutions with a large number of programs and/or multiple campuses may require a longer Initial Visit.

The team evaluates the institution to verify that the eligibility requirements are met and to provide information for the Commission to determine that there is reasonable expectation for the institution to become fully accredited within three years. The Initial Visit team will submit a written report to the Executive Director within 30 days after completing the site visit. A copy of the visiting team report will be mailed to the institution. The institution must provide the Commission with a response for any recommendations in the team report within 30 days of the date that the report is mailed to the institution.

E3.2 Full Accreditation Visits

A current institutional self-study must be completed by the institution before the full accreditation visit is made. The visiting committee will determine compliance with the criteria, conditions, policies, and procedures of the Commission. The Commission staff will determine the number of visiting committee members based on such factors as the number of programs, staff members, students enrolled, campuses, and distance between campuses. The visiting committee may visit the institution for up to 3½ days, but additional days may be required depending on the size of the institution, the number and location of the campus(es), and the number of programs offered. The composition of the team is determined at the discretion of the Commission staff and will be in compliance with Commission policies and procedures.

The visiting committee chair will submit a written report to the Executive Director within 30 days after completing the site visit. A copy of the visiting team report will be mailed to the institution. The institution must provide the Commission with a response for any recommendations in the team report within 30 days of the date that the report is mailed to the institution. Identification of deficiencies documented during the visit may result in the institution being placed on a limited term or losing its accreditation.

E3.3 Revisits

Revisits are conducted when, in the judgment of the Commission, a re-evaluation of the institution’s compliance with the ACS WASC criteria, conditions, policies, and/or procedures is necessary. Revisits may be conducted as announced or unannounced visits.
The revisit committee chair will submit a written report to the Executive Director within 30 days after completing the site visit. A copy of the revisit committee report will be mailed to the institution. The institution must provide the Commission with a response for any recommendations in the revisit report within 30 days of the date that the report is mailed to the institution. Identification of deficiencies documented during the revisit may result in the institution being placed on a limited term status, show cause status, or loss of accreditation.

Teams for revisits shall generally consist of two members of the previous visiting committee.

E3.4 Institutional Written Responses to Reports

Postsecondary institutions are to be provided the opportunity to respond in writing to the report of any on-site review. The written response is to be sent to the Executive Director within 30 days of institution’s receipt of the on-site review report.

E3.5 Substantive Change Visits

When a substantive change occurs at an institution, written notification of the Commission and an on-site visit are required.

E3.5.1 Substantive Changes in Accredited Institutions

If a substantive change occurs in an accredited institution, continuation of accredited status or inclusion of the substantive change in the institution’s previous grant of accreditation or pre-accreditation shall require:

- Prior application to the Commission regarding the proposed change
- Approval of the application by the Executive Director
- A one-day revisit by a two-member team appointed by the Executive Director
- Subsequent approval by the Commission.

E3.5.2 Examples of Substantive Change

An institution shall be considered to undergo a substantive change and be required to initiate a substantive change procedure with ACS WASC if the institution experiences a change in:

- Location.
- Addition of or transfer of programs to new or different buildings.
- Type of institution.
- Change in ownership and/or control.
- Change in legal status or form of control of the institution.
- Opening a branch campus.
- Opening an additional location. (Refer to Subsection E5 for on-site visit requirements.)
- Change in established mission or purposes.
- Addition of courses or programs that represent a significant departure, in terms of either the content or method of delivery, from those that were offered when ACS WASC most recently evaluated the institution.
- Addition of courses in programs at a level above that included in the institution’s current accreditation or pre-accreditation.
- Change from clock hours to credit hours or vice versa.
- Substantial increase in the number of clock or credit hours awarded for successful completion of a program or substantial increase in the length of a program.

**E3.5.3 Substantive Change Timelines**

All changes should be reported within ten days to the Commission, and the visit must occur within 90 days. An independent audit of the school or institution’s financial condition may be required at the discretion of the Executive Director. Failure to notify ACS WASC as required of substantive changes as described above is grounds for the Commission to issue a show cause as to why the institution’s accreditation should not be revoked.

**E3.6 Appeal Procedures and Visits**

Appeal procedures are noted below.

**E3.6.1 Grounds for Appeal**

A school may only appeal the decision of the Commission to grant:

1. Probationary Accreditation Status
2. Accreditation Status Withheld.

A six-year status with a review may not be appealed. In addition, initial visit decisions on candidacy and/or initial accreditation cannot be appealed. The action of the Accrediting Commission on an appeal shall be final.

The appeal must be based on one or more of the following grounds:

- There were errors or omissions in carrying out prescribed procedures on the part of the evaluation team and/or the Commission.
- There was demonstrable bias or prejudice on the part of one or more members of the evaluation team or Commission that materially affected the Commission’s decision.
- The evidence before the Commission prior to and on the date when it made the decision that is being appealed was materially in error.
- The decision of the Commission was not supported by substantial evidence.

**E3.6.2 Timeline to File Appeal**

A letter is to be directed to the Commission by the chief administrator(s) of the institution within sixty (60) calendar days of receipt of the letter of notification of the action by the Commission, stating the basis for the appeal. A check in the amount of the appeal fee shall accompany the letter of appeal.
E3.6.3 Appeal Team
Upon the receipt of a letter of appeal, the executive director shall appoint an appeal team to visit the institution, review recommendations, and submit a report to the Commission with a recommendation for action. The appeal team shall consist of three members. One shall be the chair or a member of the original committee, and the second shall be a member of the Commission. An experienced chair not previously involved with the institution shall serve as chair of the appeal team. If the three members of the appeal team are unable to reach agreement on a recommendation, a minority and a majority report setting forth the recommendations and the reasons therefore may be submitted.

E3.6.4 Appeal Team Report
The appeal team acts as a confidential agent of the Commission. The appeal team’s report shall be provided directly to the Commission for their action. Copies of the appeal team’s report shall not be made available to the institution prior to the Commission action.

E3.6.5 Justification Statement to Institution
Prior to the visit of the appeal team, a copy of the Recommendation for a Term or Status of Accreditation form containing the Justification Statement shall be provided to the chief administrator of the institution submitting the appeal.

E3.6.6 Changed Conditions
In the hearing of an appeal, the appeal team is to base its recommendations on conditions that existed at the time the visiting committee was at the institution.

E3.6.7 Commission Action
The Commission shall act on the appeal and shall inform the institution in writing within 30 days regarding the result of the appeal and the basis for that result. The action of the Commission on an appeal of a term of accreditation shall be final.

E3.6.8 Status During Appeal
The accredited status of an institution shall not be changed pending disposition of an appeal.

E3.7 Unannounced Visits
The Commission reserves the right to initiate an unannounced visit to any institution participating in federal financial aid programs during the term of their accreditation, for the purpose of determining whether the institution has the personnel, facilities, and resources it claimed to have either during its previous on-site review or in subsequent reports to ACS WASC. The Commission also reserves the right to request specific reports from an institution at any time. Unannounced visits and report requests are to be completed under conditions and within a time frame determined by the Commission. Refusal of an institution to respond or to cooperate with such a request shall be grounds for suspension, revocation, or conditioning of its grant of accreditation.

Institutions that receive a term or status of accreditation for less than six years may receive an unannounced visit at any time. Institutions that receive a term or status of accreditation for one or
two years may receive an unannounced visit during the first year, approximately nine months after the on-site review.

E3.8 Costs of Visits

Costs for the various visits conducted by the Commission are determined annually by the Commission. A current fee schedule may be obtained from the business manager at the Burlingame, California, Commission office. Institutions will be billed by the business manager for annual fees. Institutions are to reimburse visiting committee members, staff members, or Commission representatives directly for visit costs, e.g., hotel, meals, travel expenses [effective July 1, 2008]. Prior to this date, ACS WASC will invoice institutions for visit-related costs and reimburse members directly.

E4 COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

The procedures to be followed by the Commission on complaints concerning alleged injustices or unethical practices by applicants, candidates, and accredited institutions will depend on the nature of the charges and the documentation submitted.

When a complainant is associated with an institution in some capacity and contacts the Commission, the complainant is asked whether institutional grievance procedures have been utilized. If not, it is recommended to the complainant that he or she do so prior to making a formal complaint to the Commission. The complainant is also told to submit the complaint in writing and accompanied by supporting documentation. The complaint must be signed and must provide the name and mailing address of the complainant.

E4.1 Procedures for Processing Complaints

E4.1.1 Initial Review

Within fifteen business days of the receipt of a complaint, it will be acknowledged in writing and initially reviewed by the staff of the Commission.

E4.1.2 Complainant’s Responsibilities

It is the complainant’s responsibility to do the following:

- State the complaint in the clearest possible terms.
- Provide, in writing, a clear description of the evidence upon which the allegation is based.
- Demonstrate that all remedies available at the institution (grievance procedures, appeal hearings, etc.) have been exhausted. The complainant shall describe what has been done in this regard.
- Attest that the matter in question is not under litigation or the threat of litigation.
- Acknowledge awareness that Commission staff may send a copy of the complaint to the chief executive of the institution.
- Sign the complaint.
E4.1.3  Complaints Outside Commission Jurisdiction

If the Executive Director finds the complaint to be not within the scope of Commission policies and jurisdiction, the complainant will be so notified. Individual complaints, whether acted upon or not by the Commission, will be retained in Commission files.

E4.1.4  Response from Institution

If the complaint appears to be within the scope of Commission policies and jurisdiction and is substantially documented, a copy of the complaint will be forwarded to the institution’s chief executive, who will be asked to respond to the Executive Director within thirty days. The chief executive is responsible for but not limited to:

- Responding in writing to the Commission’s Executive Director in the clearest possible terms by discussing the validity of the evidence upon which the allegation is based.
- Discussing whether the complainant has exhausted all the remedies available at the institution (grievance procedures, appeal hearings, etc.). The respondent shall describe what has been done in this regard.
- Attesting to whether the matter in question is under litigation or the threat of litigation.
- Signing the response.

E4.1.5  Decision to Investigate Further

The Commission staff will review the complaint, the response, and evidence submitted by the institution’s chief executive, and will determine one of the following:

- That the complaint will not be processed further.
- That the complaint has sufficient substance to warrant further investigation (which may include referral to the Commission).
- Every effort will be made to expedite this final decision and reach closure within 90 days of receipt of the written complaint. However, it is not possible to guarantee a specific time frame in which the process will be completed. If further investigation is warranted, the time required to conduct the investigation may vary considerably depending on the circumstances and the nature of the complaint.

E4.1.6  Notification of Review

The complainant and the institution will be notified of the outcome of the review of the complaint.

E4.1.7  Notification of Outcome

If the complaint is investigated further, as in Subsection E4.1.5 above, the complainant and the institution will be notified of the outcome of the investigation.

E4.1.8  Opportunity to Respond to Findings

Prior to the Commission’s disposition of the complaint, the individual and the institution will have an opportunity to respond in writing within thirty days to the findings of the investigation.
The complainant and the institution involved will be notified of the decision. The decision as communicated by the Executive Director is final.

**E4.1.9 Notification of Other Agencies**

If the complaint was referred to ACS WASC by another agency, that agency will receive copies of correspondence that state the outcome of the complaint.

**E4.1.10 Complaints Against ACS WASC**

If the complaint should be against ACS WASC Commissioners, evaluation team members, consultants, staff, or other agency representatives or the Commission as a whole, the complaint shall be referred to the Chair of the ACS WASC Commission for initial evaluation. The Chair shall have the option of dismissing the complaint based on the ACS WASC criteria outlined in Subsection E4.2 below, returning it to the Executive Director as an internal staff matter, bringing it before the full Commission.

**E4.1.11 Complaints Regarding Term Decisions**

If a member institution is appealing a term or status decision, the appeals process outlined in Subsection E3.6 shall be used.

**E4.2 Student and Public Complaints Against Institutions**

**E4.2.1 Complaints Regarding Quality, Integrity, and Effectiveness**

Accreditation by the Accrediting Commission for Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges is an expression of confidence that an institution is satisfactorily achieving its objectives and that it meets or exceeds the ACS WASC criteria of quality, integrity, and effectiveness. The Commission is concerned with institutional integrity and with performance consistent with ACS WASC standards and policies. While it cannot intervene in the internal procedures of institutions or act as a regulatory body, the Commission can and does respond to complaints regarding allegations of conditions at affiliated institutions that raise significant questions about the institution’s compliance with the standards of conduct expected of an accredited institution.

**E4.2.2 Allegations Not Under ACS WASC Jurisdiction**

ACS WASC does not consider allegations concerning the personal lives of individuals connected with its affiliated institutions. It assumes no responsibility for adjudicating isolated individual grievances between students, faculty, or members of the public and individual institutions.

The Commission will not act as a court of appeal in matters of admission, granting or transfer of academic credit, grades, fees, student financial aid, student discipline, collective bargaining, faculty appointments, promotion, tenure, and dismissals or similar matters. With regard to an affiliated institution operated or governed by a religious organization, the Commission will not respond to any complaint regarding the religious nature or programs of the institution (e.g., a complaint about the orthodoxy of a religious service, textbook, or class will not be adjudicated by the Commission). If the complainant has instituted or has threatened to institute litigation against the institution, no action under this procedure will be taken by the Commission while the matter is under judicial consideration.
E4.2.3 Initial Complaint Requirements

Complaints are considered only when made in writing and when the complainant is clearly identified. Substantial evidence should be included in support of the allegation that the institution is in significant violation of the rules of good practice as stated in the ACS WASC standards and policies. Such evidence should state relevant and provable facts. The Commission requires that each affiliated institution have in place student grievance and public complaint policies and procedures that are reasonable, fairly administered, and well publicized. A record of all written complaints received by the institution must be maintained and made available for review by ACS WASC upon request. The complainant should demonstrate that a serious effort has been made to pursue all review procedures provided by the institution.

E4.2.4 Review of Complaint Information

When the Commission receives a complaint about a candidate or accredited institution, it reviews that information to determine if it is relevant to the compliance of that institution with ACS WASC standards. If appropriate, such information may be referred to the institution or to the visiting team next scheduled to evaluate the institution. The Commission at all times reserves the right to request information of an affiliated institution and to visit that institution for purposes of fact-finding consistent with Commission policy. A pattern of concern that may evidence a significant lack of compliance with ACS WASC standards could cause the Commission to renew its consideration of the matter for whatever action may be appropriate. If information is received raising issues of institutional integrity, the Commission may invoke the sanctions provided for in policy.

E5 BRANCH CAMPUSSES AND ADDITIONAL LOCATIONS

E5.1 Visit to New Branch Campus

The Commission will undertake a site visit of the branch campus as soon as practicable, but no later than 90 days after the establishment of that branch campus. A visiting committee (which may include a Commission representative) will consider the adequacy of the branch or extension and its potential impact on the institution as a whole. The visiting committee will submit a written report to the Executive Director within 30 days after completing the site visit. A copy of the visiting committee report will be mailed to the institution. The institution must provide the Commission with a response for any recommendations in the committee report within 30 days of the date that the report is mailed to the institution. Identification of deficiencies documented during the visit may result in the institution’s being placed on a limited term status, or losing its accreditation.

The institution’s response report, if required, must provide documentation that deficiencies or violations of the standards, and/or conditions of accreditation have been corrected. The Commission will review the application, the visiting committee report, and institutional response, if required, at its next meeting and will make a final decision on extending accreditation to include the new branch.

E5.2 Establishment of Additional Locations

An institution must notify ACS WASC when planning to open an additional location at least 30 days prior to becoming operational. An additional location is defined as a location
geographically apart from the main campus at which the institution offers at least 50 percent of an educational program.

**E5.3 Procedure for Opening Additional Locations**

Opening of additional locations shall require:

- Prior application to the Commission regarding the proposed opening of an additional location is required.
- Approval of the application by the Executive Director.
- A one-day on-site visit by a team appointed by the Executive Director. The one-day on-site visit is required for all institutions having three or fewer additional locations. The visit is not required for institutions with more than three additional locations when the institution has a proven record of effective oversight of additional locations; has not been placed on warning, probation, or show cause; or is not subject to some limitation by ACS WASC on the institution’s accreditation or pre-accreditation status.
- Subsequent approval by the Commission.

Refer to Subsection E3.5, Substantive Change Visits, for additional requirements or information.

**E5.4 Rapid Growth at Additional Locations**

The Commission may undertake a site visit to an additional location that experiences rapid growth to ensure that educational quality is maintained.

**E6 Calculating and Reporting Program Length**

**E7 Distance Education**

The Accrediting Commission for Schools does not accredit postsecondary institutions whose mode of curriculum delivery is through distance education. The term “distance education” means education that uses one or more of the technologies described below to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor; and to support regular and substantive instruction between the students and the instructor, synchronously or asynchronously.

The technologies included in the definition of distance education may include:

- The Internet
- One-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices
- Audioconferencing
- Video cassettes, DVDs, and CD-ROMs, if the cassettes, DVDs, or CD-ROMs are used in a course in conjunction with any of the technologies listed in the clauses above
- Correspondence.
E8     TUITION, FEES, AND REFUNDS

E8.1 Tuition and Fees

The institution shall establish tuition rates, fees and refund policies that are clearly published.

E9     ELIGIBILITY TO SERVE AS A PUBLIC MEMBER OF THE COMMISSION

E9.1 Constituent Representation

The Commission shall be comprised of individuals representing the various constituencies of ACS WASC as specified in the ACS WASC Bylaws, Section 2. Constituent organizations will be invited to nominate representatives; these nominations are subject to confirmation by the ACS WASC Nominating Committee, and the Commission. The Commission shall determine which organizations shall be represented by voting Commission members, and which shall be represented by ex-officio members.

E10     TERMS OR STATUS OF ACCREDITATION

E10.1 Maximum Term or Status for Candidacy

The general expectation is for candidacy for accreditation to extend for a period of three years. Under certain circumstances, the Commission may extend candidacy for up to two additional years. In no case, may candidacy extend beyond five years.

E10.2 Candidates for Accreditation

Candidate for accreditation is a status of affiliation that indicates that an institution has achieved initial recognition and is progressing toward, but does not assume, accreditation. The candidate for accreditation classification is designed for institutions that are not yet ready for the full evaluation based on the ACS WASC standards of compliance for accreditation. The institution must provide evidence of sound planning, provide evidence of resources to implement these plans, and appear to have the potential for attaining its goals within a reasonable time. A candidate institution is required to submit an annual report and is normally expected to apply for full accreditation by the third year of candidacy. Candidacy status shall expire at the end of three years. However, an extension of candidacy status up to two years may be granted.

E10.3 Terms or Status of Accreditation

The Commission shall grant terms or status of accreditation based on the recommendation of the visiting committee, and the content of the visiting committee report. The recommendation of the visiting committee shall be based on evidence contained in the self-study and encountered during the on-site visit which indicates the degree to which compliance of the ACS WASC criteria is occurring.

E10.4 Term or Status Calendar

All regular terms or status of accreditation for postsecondary institutions that are granted by action of the Commission are effective on the date of the Commission action and expire on June 30 of the year that coincides with the length of the term or status that is granted.

E10.4.1 Duration of Terms or Status

Terms or status of accreditation up to six years may be granted.
E10.4.2 Denial of Accreditation

Denial, withdrawal, suspension, revocation, or termination of accreditation shall be based on conditions detailed in the Visiting Committee Report.

E11 OTHER REQUIREMENTS AND INFORMATION

E11.1 Maintenance of Records

The Commission shall maintain complete and accurate records of the following:

- The last full accreditation or pre-accreditation review of each institution, including on-site evaluation team reports, institution responses to on-site reports, periodic review reports, any reports of special reviews conducted by the agency between full accreditation reviews, and the institution’s last self-study report.

- All pre-accreditation and accreditation decisions, including all adverse actions.

E11.2 Actions by Other Accrediting Agencies

The Commission shall take into account the following actions by states and other accrediting agencies in considering whether to grant initial accreditation or candidate status. Those actions by:

- Institutional accrediting agencies that have denied accreditation or pre-accreditation to the institution, placed the institution on public probationary status or revoked the accreditation or pre-accreditation of the institution.

- A state agency that has suspended, revoked, or terminated the institution’s legal authority to provide education.

E11.3 Other Requirements for Non-Degree Granting Postsecondary Institutions

E11.3.1 Evaluation of Total Institution

The Commission shall ensure through periodic review of its processes that the provisions for evaluating compliance with its standards cover the full range of an institution’s offerings, including those offerings conducted at branch campuses and additional locations. Each institution and each branch campus or additional location must demonstrate that its programs and services:

1) Maintain clearly specified educational objectives consistent with its mission and appropriate in light of the programs it offers;

2) Are successful in achieving their stated objectives;

3) Maintain program completion requirements that at least conform to commonly accepted criteria; and

4) Comply with ACS WASC criteria.
E11.3.2 Requirements for Accreditation

In reaching its determination to grant initial or renewed accreditation, the Commission:

1) Requires an in-depth self-study by each institution, in accordance with ACS WASC criteria and self-study parameters, which indicate the institution’s compliance with ACS WASC criteria;

2) Conducts at least one on-site review of the institution or program at which the Visiting Team representing the Commission obtains sufficient information to enable it to recommend whether the institution or program complies with the ACS WASC criteria;

3) Reads and conducts its own analyses and evaluations of the self-study, visiting committee report, institutional response and supporting documentation furnished by the institution, and any other appropriate information from other sources, to determine whether the institution complies with the ACS WASC criteria; and

4) Provides to the institution a detailed written report on its review assessing —
   a. The institution’s compliance with the agency’s standards, including areas needing improvement; and
   b. The institution’s performance with respect to student achievement.

E11.3.3 Ongoing Monitoring of Institutions

Upon granting initial or renewed accreditation, ACS WASC monitors institutions or programs throughout the accreditation or pre-accreditation period to ensure continuing compliance with ACS WASC standards, conducts special evaluations, site visits, or both, as necessary, and regularly reevaluates institutions or programs that have been granted accreditation or pre-accreditation.

E11.4 Records

The institution must maintain students’ records documenting the requirements for admission for all students.

E11.5 Age of Students

Institutions are not precluded from admitting to postsecondary programs, under different requirements, students who are beyond the age of compulsory high school attendance, such as having identified needs requiring remedial instruction as a supplement to the regular curricula or being enrolled in individual courses not leading to an academic credential.

E11.6 Transfer of Credit Policy

Accredited institutions have a responsibility to provide for effective transfer of credit that minimizes student difficulties in moving between institutions while assuring the high quality of their education. Each institution is responsible for determining its own policies and practices with regard to the transfer and award of credit. Institutions shall establish policies on the transfer of credit that are clearly stated and that function in a manner that is fair and equitable to students. Institutions shall be responsible for careful evaluation of credits that students wish to transfer. Institutions must balance responsiveness to student’s preferences about transfer of credit and
institutional commitment to the value and quality of programs and courses the institutions offers. Transfer of credit policies are to be publicly disclosed. Disclosure statements must include the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution.

**E11.7 Teach-out Plans and Agreements**

Accredited institutions shall develop a written teach-out plan that provides for the equitable treatment of students if an institution, or an institutional location that provides one hundred percent of at least one program, ceases to operate before all students have completed their program of study. The teach-out plan shall include a teach-out agreement.

Accredited institutions shall develop a written teach-out agreement that provides for the equitable treatment of students and provides a reasonable opportunity for students to complete their program of study if an institution, or an institutional location that provides one hundred percent of at least one program offered, ceases to operate before all enrolled students have completed their program of study.

Each teach-out plan shall be summarized in the institutional catalog or other similar publication. Teach-out plans shall cover the contingency when:

- The ACS WASC acts to withdraw, terminate, or suspend the accreditation of the institution;
- The institution notified ACS WASC that the institution intends to cease operations.

Each teach-out institution shall agree that, if the original institution terminates its teaching activities in a particular program of study in which it enrolls a student to whom or on whose behalf a federal loan is made for attendance at the original institution, the teach-out institution will offer each such student enrolled in that course of study at the original institution when the teaching activities are terminated a reasonable opportunity to promptly resume and complete his or her course of study, or a substantially similar course of study, in the same geographic area as that in which the original institution provided the course of study.

The teach-out institution shall agree to provide this opportunity without additional charge to the student, except that the teach-out institution may charge the student for periods of enrollment that the student is required to undertake to complete the course of study undertaken at the original institution, as the student incurs those charges, up to the amount not yet paid by the student, that the original institution would have been entitled to collect for those periods of enrollment from the student had the original institution not terminated teaching activities in the program of study prior to the student’s completion of the program of study.

The original institution shall agree that, in the event a teach-out becomes necessary, it will arrange, in a timely manner, for individual notice to each student of the availability of the teach-out and diligently advertise the availability of the teach-out. Such arrangement may provide that the teach-out notices be sent by the teach-out institution.

**E11.8 Review of Standards and Criteria**

ACS WASC standards for accreditation shall be reviewed on a regular basis by Commissioners, staff, constituencies served, and other interested parties, to ascertain whether the standards are adequate evaluators of the quality of its education institutions and are relevant to the needs of students.
E11.9 Development of New Self-Study Instruments

The Executive Director, with the approval of the Commission, may designate staff to develop new self-study instruments in cooperation with appropriate organizations represented on the Commission; may arrange to pilot-test the instruments in a limited number of institutions; and may arrange to revise such drafts for further pilot-testing.

The Executive Director shall be responsible for recommendations to the Commission when a new self-study instrument is to be made available for general use. Prior to such recommendation the latest draft of the proposed new instrument shall be made available to members of the Commission.

Following Commission approval of any new self-study instrument, it shall be copyrighted and shall be incorporated into the schedule for review and revision, along with the other instruments to which the Commission holds copyrights.

E11.10 Self-Study Instruments — Availability to Commissioners

Commissioners shall have access during Commission meetings to self-study documents provided by institutions under consideration for a term of accreditation. Commissioners that are assigned to reading groups shall have access to self-study documents prior to and during the Commission meeting when an institution is being considered for a term of accreditation.

E11.11 Postsecondary Advisory Committee

The Commission may establish an Advisory Committee to review policies, accreditation manuals, training materials, and other such information as may be necessary for the accreditation of postsecondary institutions. The chair of the Committee shall be the Executive Director, or his/her designee.

E11.12 Review of Adverse Actions by Other Agencies

When an institution accredited by the Commission that is also accredited by another accrediting agency has an adverse action taken against it by the other agency, the Commission shall undertake a prompt review of that institution. The initial review shall consist of a request for a written statement by the institution about the circumstances of the adverse action and whether they believe the circumstances on which that action is based constitutes non-compliance with the standards of the Commission.

E11.13 Training of New and Continuing Commissioners

Prior to beginning service, new Commissioners shall receive training on the Commission’s standards, policies, and procedures regarding the conduct of on-site evaluations, the establishment of Commission policies and standards, and the processes used for making accrediting and pre-accrediting decisions. All Commissioners shall receive regular training on trends, issues, policies, and procedures pertaining to accrediting and pre-accrediting decision-making for all institutions.
E12  ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

E12.1 Criteria for Accreditation

The criteria for accreditation are to be determined by the ACS WASC Commission based on the mission, purpose, and objectives of the accreditation process. Criteria are to be clearly identified in accreditation documents made available to member institutions and interested parties. The criteria are to be regularly reviewed and revised as needed to maintain relevance and validity.