

Accreditation Procedure and Policy Handbook

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2010 EDITION

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Accreditation Procedure and Policy Handbook

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POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

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Accrediting Commission for Schools
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Accrediting Commission for Schools
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2010 EDITION

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Eligibility Requirements for Accreditation

The Commission provides accreditation services to institutions located in the states of California and Hawaii, the territories of Guam and American Samoa, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Republic of Palau, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Postsecondary institutions that may apply to the Commission for affiliation are

- Non-degree granting vocational and technical institutions
- Non-profit
- Not using distance education as the primary mode of curriculum delivery

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

The Commission uses the same self study and site visit process for accreditation applications. The results of a self study and on-site visit could be denial, candidacy, or accreditation. Clearly, the history of the applicant institution will have a significant bearing on the Commission's decision.

In order to determine eligibility, the institution must completely meet all Eligibility Requirements. Compliance with the criteria is expected to be continuous and will be validated periodically, as part of every institutional self study and comprehensive evaluation and annual report.

Institutions that have achieved accreditation are expected to include in their self study reports information demonstrating that they continue to meet the Eligibility Requirements.

1. Authority

No postsecondary institution 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. If incorporated, the institution shall submit a copy of its articles of incorporation.

2. Mission

The institution's educational mission is clearly defined, adopted, and published by its governing board consistent with its legal authorization and defines its broad educational purposes, its intended student population, and its commitment to achieving student learning.

3. Governing Board

The institution has a functioning governing board responsible for the quality, integrity, and financial stability of the institution and for ensuring that the institution's mission is being carried out. This board is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the financial resources of the institution are used to provide a sound educational program. Its membership is sufficient in size and composition to fulfill all board responsibilities.

The governing board is an independent policy-making body capable of reflecting constituent and public interest in board activities and decisions. A majority of the board members has no employment, family, ownership, or other personal financial interest in the institution. The board adheres to a conflict of interest policy that assures that those interests are disclosed that they do not interfere with the impartiality of governing body members or outweigh the greater duty to secure and ensure the academic and fiscal integrity of the institution.

4. Chief Executive Officer

The institution has a chief executive officer appointed by the governing board whose responsibility is to the institution and who possesses the requisite authority to administer board policies. The chief executive officer shall not serve as the chair of the governing board.

5. Administrative Capacity

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

6. Operational Status

The institution is operational with students actively pursuing its instructional programs.

7. Educational Programs

The institution offers educational programs in recognized and emerging fields of study that culminate in identified student outcomes leading to certificates, licensure, or other indicators of program completion.

8. Academic Credit

The institution awards academic credits based on generally accepted practices. Public institutions governed by statutory or system regulatory requirements provide appropriate information about awarding of academic credit.

9. Student Learning and Achievement

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

10. Faculty

The institution has a core of qualified faculty which is sufficient in size and experience to support all of the institution's educational programs. A clear statement of faculty responsibilities must include development and review of curriculum as well as assessment of learning.

11. Student Services

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

12. Admissions

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

13. Information and Learning Resources

The institution provides access to sufficient information and learning resources and services to support its mission and instructional programs.

14. Financial Resources

The institution documents a funding base, financial resources, and plans for financial development adequate to support student learning programs and services, to improve institutional effectiveness, and to assure financial stability.

15. Financial Accountability

The institution annually undergoes and makes available an external financial audit by a certified public accountant or an audit by an appropriate public agency. At the time of the institution's Initial Visit, the institution shall submit a copy of the current budget and institutional financial audits and management letters prepared by an outside certified public accountant or by an appropriate public agency, who has no other relationship to the institution for its past two most recent fiscal years, including the fiscal year ending immediately prior to the date of the Initial Visit. The audits must be certified and any exceptions explained.

16. Institutional Planning and Evaluation

The institution systematically evaluates and makes public how well and in what ways it is accomplishing its purposes, including assessment of student learning outcomes.

The institution provides evidence of planning for improvement of institutional structures and processes, student achievement of educational goals, and student learning. The institution assesses progress toward achieving its stated goals and makes decisions regarding improvement through an ongoing and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, resource allocation, implementation, and re-evaluation.

17. Public Information

The institution provides a catalog for its constituencies with precise, accurate, and current information concerning the following:

General Information

- Official Name, Address(es), Telephone Number(s), and Web Site Address of the Institution
- Educational Mission
- Courses and Programs
- Academic Calendar and Program Length
- Available Student Financial Aid (if any)
- Available Learning Resources
- Names of Administrators and Faculty
- Names of Governing Board Members

Requirements

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

Major Policies Affecting Students

1. Academic Regulations, including Academic Honesty
2. Acceptance of Transfer Credits
3. Nondiscrimination
4. Grievance and Complaint Procedures
5. Sexual Harassment
6. Refund of Fees
7. Locations or publications where other policies may be found.

18. Relations with the Accrediting Commission

The institution provides assurance that it adheres to the Eligibility Requirements and accreditation standards and policies of the Commission, describes itself in identical terms to all its accrediting agencies, communicates any changes in its accredited status, and agrees to disclose information required by the Commission to carry out its accrediting responsibilities. The institution will comply with Commission requests, directives, decisions, and policies and will make complete, accurate, and honest disclosure. Failure to do so is sufficient reason, in and of itself, for the Commission to impose a sanction or to deny or revoke candidacy or accreditation.

Accreditation Standards

Introduction to the Accreditation Standards

Introduction

The primary purpose of a WASC-accredited institution is to foster learning in its students. An effective institution ensures that its resources and processes support student learning, continuously assesses that learning, and pursues institutional excellence and improvement. An effective institution maintains an ongoing, self-reflective dialogue about its quality and improvement.

The Standards

The institutional mission provides the impetus for achieving student learning and other goals that the institution endeavors to accomplish. The institution provides the means for students to learn, assesses how well learning is occurring, and strives to improve that learning through ongoing, systematic, and integrated planning. Instructional programs, student support services, and library and learning support services facilitate the achievement of the institution's stated student learning outcomes. Human, physical, technology, and financial resources enable these programs and services to function and improve. Ethical and effective leadership throughout the organization guides the accomplishment of the mission and supports institutional effectiveness and improvement.

Standard I: Institutional Mission, Purpose, and Objectives: The institution that is designed for adult students, to demonstrate strong commitment to a mission that emphasizes achievement of student learning in vocational and avocational endeavors, and to communicating the mission internally and externally. The institution uses analyses of quantitative and qualitative data and analysis in an ongoing and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, implementation, and re-evaluation to verify and improve the effectiveness by which the mission is accomplished.

Standard II: Organizational Structure: The institution recognizes and utilizes the contributions of leadership throughout the organization for continuous improvement of the institution. The organizational structure and roles of governance are designed to facilitate decisions that support student learning programs and services and improve institutional effectiveness, while acknowledging the designated responsibilities of the governing board and the chief administrator.

Standard III: Evaluation and Planning: The institution demonstrates a conscious effort to produce and support student learning, measures that learning, evaluates how well learning is occurring, and plans for changes to improve student learning. The institution also organizes its key processes and allocates its resources to effectively support student learning. The institution demonstrates its effectiveness by providing 1) evidence of the achievement of student learning outcomes and 2) evidence of institution and program performance. The institution uses ongoing and systematic evaluation and planning to refine its key processes and improve student learning.

Standard IV: Educational Programs: The institution offers high-quality educational programs in recognized and emerging fields of study that culminate in identified student outcomes leading to certificates, licensure, or other indicators of program completion. Educational programs are systematically assessed in order to assure currency, improve teaching and learning strategies, and achieve stated student learning outcomes. The provisions of this standard are broadly applicable to all instructional activities offered by the institution.

Standard V: Program, Student, and Institutional Outcomes: The institution uses established procedures to design, identify student learning outcomes for, approve, administer, deliver, and evaluate courses and programs. The institution recognizes the central role of its faculty for establishing quality and improving courses, programs, and student learning outcomes.

Standard VI: Student Support Services: The institution recruits and admits diverse students who are able to benefit from its programs, consistent with its mission. Student support services address the identified needs of students and enhance 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 institution systematically assesses student support services using student learning outcomes, faculty and staff input, and other appropriate measures in order to improve the effectiveness of these services.

Standard VII: Human Resources: The institution employs qualified personnel to support student learning programs and services wherever offered and by whatever means delivered, to ensure institutional effectiveness. Personnel are treated equitably, are evaluated regularly and systematically, and are provided opportunities for professional development. Consistent with its mission, the institution demonstrates its commitment to the significant educational role played by persons of diverse backgrounds by making positive efforts to encourage such diversity. Human resource planning is integrated with institutional planning.

Standard VIII: Learning Resources: Learning resources for students are sufficient to support the institution's educational programs and other activities in whatever format and wherever they are offered. Such services include library services and collections appropriate to the size and scope of the institution, its courses and programs. There are tutoring programs, learning centers, computer laboratories, and learning technology development and training. The institution provides access and training to students so that learning resources may be used effectively and efficiently. The institution systematically assesses these resources using student learning outcomes, faculty input, and other appropriate measures in order to improve the effectiveness of the resources.

Standard IX: Financial Resources: Financial resources are sufficient to support student learning programs and services and to improve institutional effectiveness. The distribution of resources supports the development, maintenance, and enhancement of programs and services. The institution 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. Financial resources planning is integrated with institutional planning.

Standard X: Physical Resources: Physical resources, which include facilities, equipment, land, and other assets, support student learning programs and services and improve institutional effectiveness. Physical resource planning is integrated with institutional planning.

Commission Policies

WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES
ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR SCHOOLS



POLICY MANUAL
PART II

Policies and Procedures for
Postsecondary Institutions

January 2010

WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES
ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR SCHOOLS

POLICY MANUAL
PART II

Policies and Procedures for
Postsecondary Institutions

January 2010

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Preface

The Accrediting Commission for Schools (ACS), a division of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), is charged with the responsibility of establishing operating policies and procedures for the schools and institutions within its geographic territory. This territory includes the states of California and Hawaii, the territories of Guam, American Samoa, Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Republic of Palau, Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, the Pacific Basin, and East Asia, and areas of the Pacific and East Asia where American/International schools may apply.

Part II of the Commission Bylaws applies specifically to the postsecondary non-degree granting institutions that are accredited by the Commission or are seeking accreditation. Part I of the Commission Bylaws applies to all other schools and institutions.

[Revised January 28–29, 2008]

Section I

Accreditation Process

100. 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 WASC accreditation.

[Revised January 28–29, 2008]

105. Process for Seeking Accreditation

Institutions may apply as candidates for accreditation at any time.

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

105.01 Conditions and Expectations for Membership in WASC

- Institutions shall meet all of the WASC standards 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.

105.02 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 WASC standards. Based upon the findings of the one-day visit, the visiting committee may recommend Candidate Status, an Initial Term of Accreditation, or Denial of Accreditation.

[Revised June 25–26, 2007]

105.03 Candidate Status

Institutions that are progressing toward meeting the WASC standards for accreditation and can meet at least 90% of the criteria within the WASC standards and can be expected to meet those standards within three years may be granted candidacy status. (See also Section XII, subsections 1200 and 1210 for maximum years of candidacy).

[Revised June 25–26, 2007]

105.04 Initial Accreditation Status

Institutions that meet the minimum thresholds of compliance for the standards for full accreditation and have a history and support system which indicate that compliance can be sustained into the foreseeable future may be granted initial status for up to three years by the WASC Commission.

[Revised June 25–26, 2007]

110. Third-Party Comment Requirement

The Commission shall provide an opportunity for third-party comment concerning an institution's qualifications for preaccreditation or accreditation. These procedures shall be followed:

1. The institution's director and/or self-study coordinator shall be notified in writing by the Executive Director of the Third-Party Comment requirement during each orientation workshop in preparation for a full accreditation visit.
2. The institution's director and/or self-study coordinator shall be notified in writing by the Executive Director of the Third-Party Comment requirement at the time of the Initial Visit procedure for preaccreditation.
3. The institution's director and/or self-study coordinators shall be required to submit to the Executive Director the following pertaining to notification of constituents for Third-Party Comments:
 - a. The date when notification of constituents was made (a minimum of 8 weeks prior to an on-site visit).
 - b. Copies of the notice(s) shall be available for review by the on-site visiting committee.
 - c. Estimates of numbers and the categories of constituents (e.g., students, faculty, business operators, etc.) notified shall be provided for the on-site visiting committee.
 - d. Directions given in the "Important Notice" section, page v of the *Accreditation Manual: Postsecondary Institutions* shall be followed.
4. The accrediting agency shall collect all written comments from third parties and provide them to the chair of the on-site visiting committee.
5. The chair of the visiting committee shall provide third-party written comments to the visiting committee members to review and comment on as may be appropriate.

[New January 28–29, 2008]

Section II

Visiting Committees

GENERAL

200. 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 an 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.

[Revised January 26–27, 2009]

205. 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.

210. 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 Section II, subsections 225, 230, 235, and 240 for additional details.)

215. Commissioners as Visiting Committee Members

At least one Commissioner is invited to serve as a visiting committee member to postsecondary institutions.

220. Guidance to Institutions Prohibited

Visiting committee chairs and members who are evaluating an institution are excluded from providing guidance to an institution in the review process. Institutions may contact WASC staff for assistance or for recommendations for individuals who may provide guidance.

225. Conflicts of Interest**225.01 Controls Against Conflict of Interest**

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.

225.05 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.

225.10 Commissioners Who Serve on Visiting Teams

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

225.15 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.

230. Ethics and Integrity**230.01 Conflicts of Interest**

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.

230.05 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.

235. Conflict of Interest Procedures

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 shall be advised of the Commission's conflict of interest policies and shall affirm in writing that they are free from all such conflicts.

235.01 Conflict of Interest Forms for Visiting Team Members

Evaluation team members shall be advised of 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.

235.05 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 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 WASC and the related, associated, or affiliated trade association or membership organization.

240. 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.

Section III

On-Site Visits

300. 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.

305. 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 standards, 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.

310. Revisits

Revisits are conducted when, in the judgment of the Commission, a re-evaluation of the institution's compliance with the WASC standards, 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.

310.01 Revisit Teams

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

312. 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.

[New January 26–27, 2009]

315. Substantive Change Visits

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

315.01 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.

315.02 Examples of Substantive Change

An institution shall be considered to undergo a substantive change and be required to initiate a substantive change procedure with 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 510.01 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 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.

315.03 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 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.

320. Appeal Procedures and Visits

Appeal procedures are noted below.

320.01 Grounds for Appeal

An institution may appeal the decision of the Commission to grant a limited term or to deny accreditation. Initial visit decisions on candidacy and/or initial accreditation cannot be appealed. If the institution has been denied accreditation or granted a limited term, the institution may appeal to the Commission. Following the Commission's action on the appeal, the institution may further appeal the Commission's decision to the WASC Board of Directors. The WASC Board of Directors will review the case and may make a recommendation to the Commission. The Commission may then reconsider the case and the action taken by the Commission 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.

[Revised January 28–29, 2008]

320.05 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.

[Revised June 25–26, 2007]

320.10 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.

320.15 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.

320.20 Justification Statement to Institution

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

320.25 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.

320.30 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, the basis for that result, and the institution's right to appeal to the Board of Directors of WASC. The action of the Commission on an appeal of a term of accreditation shall be final.

320.35 Status During Appeal

The accredited status of an institution shall not be changed pending disposition of an appeal.

320.40 Appeals to the WASC Board of Directors

If an institution, after availing itself of the appeal procedures of the Accrediting Commission for Schools, still believes itself aggrieved by the Commission's adverse action, including denial, withdrawal, suspension, or termination of accreditation or candidacy, the institution may appeal the action taken against the institution to the WASC Board of Directors prior to such action becoming final. The form and content of the institution's notice of appeal are contained in the WASC Board of Director's Hearing and Appeal Procedures Manual.

[New June 29–30, 2009]

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

330. 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, WASC will invoice institutions for visit-related costs and reimburse members directly.

[Revised January 28–29, 2008]

Section IV

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.

400. Procedures for Processing Complaints

400.01 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.

400.02 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.

400.03 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.

400.04 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.

400.05 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.

400.06 Notification of Review

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

400.07 Notification of Outcome

If the complaint is investigated further, as in 400.05 above, the complainant and the institution will be notified of the outcome of the investigation.

400.08 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.

400.09 Notification of Other Agencies

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

400.10 Complaints Against WASC

If the complaint should be against 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 WASC Commission for initial evaluation. The Chair shall have the option of dismissing the complaint based on the WASC standards outlined in subsection 410 below, returning it to the Executive Director as an internal staff matter, bringing it before the full Commission, or referring it to the WASC board of directors for review. A complainant shall have the right to appeal the decision of the Commission in relation to any complaint against the WASC consultants, evaluation team members, staff or other agency representatives, Commissioners, or the Commission to the Board of Directors of WASC.

400.11 Complaints Regarding Term Decisions

If a member institution is appealing a term decision, the appeals process outlined in Section III, subsection 320 shall be used.

410. Student and Public Complaints Against Institutions

410.01 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 WASC standards of quality, integrity, and effectiveness. The Commission is concerned with institutional integrity and with performance consistent with 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.

410.02 Allegations Not Under WASC Jurisdiction

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.

410.03 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 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 WASC upon request. The complainant should demonstrate that a serious effort has been made to pursue all review procedures provided by the institution.

410.04 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 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 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.

Note: California Education Code Section 94332 requires that complaints filed against WASC-affiliated private institutions in California with the Council for Private Postsecondary Institutions shall be forwarded to WASC for review.

Section V

Branch Campuses and Additional Locations

500. Establishment of Branch Campuses

An institution must submit a business plan when planning to add a new branch at least 30 days prior to becoming operational. A branch campus is defined as a location that is independent of the main campus; it is permanent in nature; offers courses in programs which may lead to licensure; has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization; and has its own budgetary and hiring authority.

[Revised January 26–27, 2009]

500.01 Notification and Submission of Business Plan

WASC accredited institutions must:

- Notify the Commission if the institution plans to establish a branch campus; and
- Submit a business plan for the branch campus, which contains a description of:
 - The educational program to be offered at the branch campus;
 - The projected revenues and expenditures and cash flow at the branch campus; and
 - The operation, management, and physical resources at the branch campus.

500.02 Extension of Accreditation to Branch Campus

WASC will extend accreditation to the branch campus only after evaluating the business plan and taking other actions as needed to determine that the branch campus has sufficient educational, financial, operational, management, and physical resources to satisfy the WASC standards for accreditation.

500.03 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.

[Revised January 26–27, 2009]

510. Establishment of Additional Locations

An institution must notify 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.

510.01. 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 WASC on the institution's accreditation or preaccreditation status.
- Subsequent approval by the Commission.

Refer to paragraph 315. Substantive Change Visits for additional requirements or information.

[New January 26–27, 2009]

Section VI

Guidelines for Action on Institutions with Cohort Default Rates that Meet Trigger Levels Specified by the U.S. Department of Education

600. Default Rates for Postsecondary Institutions

- An institution offering postsecondary programs shall demonstrate a student loan default rate within that required by federal regulation in order to maintain eligibility in federal student aid programs. In the event an institution's default rate exceeds the allowable federal threshold, the institution shall forward a copy of its default management plan (which is also submitted to the federal Department of Education) to the Commission.
- In the event the institution's default rate exceeds the threshold, the institutional Self Study or next program report, whichever comes first, will include the default management plan and the institution will demonstrate compliance with the plan through documented evidence of compliance, monitoring, and adherence to the plan. The institution will also prepare a report on effectiveness of the plan, and an improvement plan, in the event adherence to the plan has not caused reduction in the institution's default rates.

610. Factors Considered to Establish Priorities

- Number of years triggered (one, two, three or more).
- Number of students in repayment who have defaulted.
- Completion, placement, and licensure exam pass rates.
- Record of actions taken by the Commission regarding the institution, including student complaints and placement on limited terms.

620. Range of Actions Directed by the Commission

- Submission of a written report to the Commission that includes the following:
 - Copy of the institution's cohort default management plan
 - Description of actions taken to reduce cohort default rate
 - Status of any action taken by the U.S. Department of Education
 - Explanation of student population served and any mitigating circumstances
 - Evidence of educational program evaluation
- Attendance at a workshop or seminar on student financial aid management.
- Focused review visit to evaluate compliance with standards, standards, and conditions of the Commission.
- Placement on limited term status, or show-cause.
- Termination of accreditation.

Section VII

Calculating and Reporting Program Length

700. Program Length

As of January 1, 1995, each postsecondary institution shall demonstrate that each program is of sufficient duration to meet the program objectives. Compliance with the requirements of either appropriate state agencies responsible for occupational licensure, recognized accrediting entities, or with appropriate state statute or regulations shall be deemed sufficient for meeting this standard.

The Commission defines a credit hour as equivalent to a minimum of each of the following: one semester credit hour for each 15 clock hours of lecture, 30 clock hours of laboratory, or 45 hours of work-based activities; or one quarter credit for each 10 clock hours of lecture, 20 clock hours of laboratory, or 30 clock hours of work-based activities. The conversion of clock hours to credit hours for individual courses may be calculated to include a fraction or decimal but must not be inflated to rounding up. The sum of the course credit hours for a program must equal a whole number without rounding up.

Section VIII

Distance Education

800. Distance Education Programs

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.

[Revised June 29–30, 2009]

Section IX

Tuition, Fees, and Refunds

900. Tuition and Fees

The institution shall establish tuition rates, fees and refund policies in accordance with federal, state, local, and Commission regulations.

900.01 For each program the cost of tuition and fees shall be equal to or less than the annual median full-time entry-level salary for each occupation to which the institution represents the programs to lead; and

900.02 The entry level salary shall be based on the median hourly wage reported by the State Employment Development Department for the region where the institution is located and expressed as an annual wage for full-time employment based on a 40 hour work week.

900.03 For an occupation not listed by the state Employment Development Department, but which is identified as a legitimate employment classification by another official source, the entry level salary shall be the median hourly wage for that classification as reported by the official source.

900.04 An institution shall be in compliance with this standard if its total tuition and enrollment fees for a full-time student in a vocational program is less than \$750 per academic year.

900.05 Institutions which do not meet either of the tuition and enrollment fee to salary ratios in paragraph 900.01 or the provisions of paragraph 900.04 of this section must demonstrate to the Commission's satisfaction that special circumstances prevent the institution from meeting this standard.

900.06 Among special circumstances which an institution may cite are factors such as the high cost of specialized technical training or equipment costs, the establishment of tuition and enrollment fees by an act of the state legislature, or a majority of graduates/completers electing to accept public-service employment.

910. Refunds

The institution shall have a fair and equitable refund policy for the refund of tuition, fees, and other institutional charges in the event the institution cancels a class, or if a student does not enter or does not complete the period of enrollment for which the student has been charged. All of the following are elements of a fair and equitable plan:

910.01 The institution's refund policy must be published in the catalog and be uniformly administered.

910.02 Refunds, when due, must be made without requiring a request from the student.

910.03 Refunds, when due, must be made within 30 days (1) of the last day of attendance if written notification of withdrawal has been provided to the institution by the student, or (2) from the date the institution terminates the student or determines withdrawal by the student.

910.04 All refunds shall be made within sixty (60) days of the student's last day of attendance.

910.05 Retention of tuition and fees collected in advance for a student who does not commence class shall not exceed \$100.

910.06 The institution must comply with the refund policies adopted by the Commission.

920. Commission Refund Policy

As referenced in item 910.06 above, the refund policy adopted by the Commission is as stated below.

920.01 Refunds for Classes Canceled by the Institution: If tuition and fees are collected in advance of the start date of a program and the institution cancels the class, 100% of the tuition and fees collected must be refunded. The refund shall be made within 30 days of the planned start date.

920.02 Refunds for Students Who Withdraw On or Before the First Day of Class: If tuition and fees are collected in advance of the start date of classes and the student does not begin classes or withdraws on the first day of classes, no more than \$100 of the tuition and fees may be retained by the institution. Appropriate refunds for a student who does not begin classes shall be made within 30 days of the class start date.

920.03 Refunds for Students Enrolled Prior to Visiting the Institution: Students who have not visited the institution prior to enrollment will have the opportunity to withdraw without penalty within three days following either attendance at a regularly scheduled orientation or following a tour of the facilities and inspection of the equipment.

920.04 Refunds for Withdrawal After Class Commences

920.04.01 Public Institutions

The refund policy for students attending public institutions shall be consistent with the policy established by the institution's governing board.

920.04.02 Non-Public Institutions

(1) Refund Policy for Programs Obligating Students for Periods of Twelve Months or Less

The refund policy for students attending non-public institutions who incur a financial obligation for a period of twelve months or less shall be as follows:

- i. After the first day of classes and during the first 10% of the period of financial obligation, the institution shall refund at least 90% of the tuition;

- ii. After the first 10% of the period of financial obligation and until the end of the first 25% of the period of obligation, the institution shall refund at least 50% of the tuition;
- iii. After the first 25% of the period of financial obligation and until the end of the first 50% of the period of obligation, the institution shall refund at least 25% of the tuition; and,
- iv. After the first 50% of the period of financial obligation, the institution may retain all of the tuition.

(2) Refund Policy for Programs Obligating Students for Periods Beyond Twelve Months

Institutions with programs longer than twelve months that financially obligate the student for any period of time beyond twelve months shall release the student of the obligation to pay beyond the twelve months if the student withdraws during the first twelve months. The calculation of the refund for the unused portion of the first twelve months shall be based on subsection 920.04.02(1) Non-Public Institutions above.

If the student withdraws during any subsequent period following the first twelve months, the student's refund for the unused portion of the tuition applicable to the period of withdrawal shall be based on subsection 920.04.02(1) Non-Public Institutions above.

Deviations from the requirements of this policy as stated above are permitted if (1) mandated by a non-public institution's licensing agency or a public institution's governing board and (2) accepted by the Commission.

Section X

Guidelines for Action on Institutions with Completion, Placement, and/or Licensure Exam Pass Rates One or More Standard Deviations Below Average

1000. Employment Licensing

Where license is required for entry-level employment in the field of study, the institution must demonstrate that its graduates have a licensure pass rate at least equal to one standard deviation below the examining board's average pass rate for first-time licensure applicants from all sources.

Completion, Placement, or Licensure Exam Pass Rate	Action Directed at the Discretion of the Commission
One (1) Standard Deviation Below Average	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Narrative report submitted with the institution's annual report offering explanation, including mitigating circumstances, and a plan for improvement. 2. Submission of semi-annual status reports on plan for improvement of completion, placement, and/or licensure exam pass rates.
Two (2) Standard Deviations Below Average	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Narrative report submitted with the institution's annual report offering explanation, including mitigating circumstances, and a plan for improvement. 2. Submission of semi-annual status reports on plan for improvement of completion, placement, and/or licensure exam pass rates. 3. Attendance at a workshop or seminar on the improvement of completion/placement/licensure exam pass rates. 4. Consultation in person or by other means.
Three (3) Standard Deviations Below Average	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Narrative report submitted with the institution's annual report offering explanation, including mitigating circumstances, and a plan for improvement. 2. Submission of semi-annual status reports on plan for improvement of completion, placement, and/or licensure exam pass rates. 3. Attendance at a workshop or seminar on the improvement of completion/placement/licensure exam pass rates. 4. Consultation in person or by other means. 5. Issuance of a limited term to the institution. 6. Conduct a focused review visit to the institution.

1010. Actions to be taken by the Commission on status of triggered institutions

When an institution is initially triggered for completion, placement, and/or licensure exam pass rates that are one or more standard deviations below the average for peer institutions, the Commission will place the institution on a limited term and/or a continuous review status. Triggered institutions that fail to show improvement on completion, placement, and/or licensure exam pass rates in subsequent years will be subject to review by the Commission for being placed on a limited term/probationary status or being issued a show-cause order.

Section XI

Eligibility to Serve as a Public Member of the Commission

1100. Constituent Representation

The Commission shall be comprised of individuals representing the various constituencies of WASC as specified in the WASC Constitution (Article III, Section 3c). Constituent organizations will be invited to nominate representatives; these nominations are subject to confirmation by the WASC Nominating Committee, the Commission and the Board of Directors of WASC. The Commission shall determine which organizations shall be represented by voting Commission members, and which shall be represented by ex officio members. In addition to the individuals representing institutions, at least one-seventh of the Commission members shall be considered representatives of the general public.

1110. Separate and Independent Governance

The WASC Accrediting Commission for Schools is an accrediting agency that:

- Has a voluntary membership including institutions of elementary, secondary, non-degree granting higher education, and supplementary education programs;
- Has as one of its purposes the accrediting of certain adult and vocational institutions of higher education which require such accreditation for purposes of determining eligibility for postsecondary, HEA programs, and
- Satisfies the “separate and independent” requirements defined below.
 - “Separate and independent” means that the members of the Commission who make its accrediting decisions and establish its accreditation policies are not elected or selected by the board or chief executive officer of any related, associated, or affiliated trade association or membership organization; nor do the boards or chief executive officer of such organizations exercise direct influence on the election or selection of Commission members;
 - At least one-seventh of the Commission are representatives of the public who are not employees, board members, owners, shareholders, or consultants in any educational institution receiving WASC accreditation, or members of any related, associated, or affiliated trade association or membership organization, nor are they spouses, parents, children or siblings of any of the above individuals;
 - The Commission has established and implemented guidelines for each member of the Commission to avoid conflicts of interest in making decisions;
 - The Commission dues are paid separately from any dues paid to any related, associated, or affiliated trade association or membership organization; and
 - The Commission’s budget is developed and determined by the Commission without review by or consultation with any other entity or organization.

Section XII

Terms of Accreditation

1200. Maximum Term 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.

1210. 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 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.

1220. Terms of Accreditation

The Commission shall grant terms 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 WASC standards is occurring.

1230. Term Calendar

All regular terms 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 that is granted.

[Revised January 25–26, 2010]

1230.01 Duration of Terms

Terms of accreditation up to six years may be granted.

1230.02 Six-Year Term

A term up to six years may be granted with an annual written Compliance Report to be submitted to WASC by September 15, demonstrating that the institution continues to remain in compliance with WASC standards.

[Revised January 28–29, 2008]

1230.03 Term Limits

If a postsecondary institution's primary program offering or offerings have a duration of one year or less from enrollment to student completion, such institution shall have no more than one year to correct any deficiencies which cause it to be out of compliance with postsecondary regulations and/or with WASC standards. If the program is more than one year but less than two years in length, the term shall be no longer than eighteen months; if the program is more than two years in length, the term shall be no longer than two years. Institutions that fail to show improvement in meeting required standards will be subject to review by the Commission for being placed on a limited term/probationary status or being issued a show-cause order.

1230.04 Adverse Actions

If a postsecondary institution reaches the end of the term specified above without bringing itself into compliance, adverse action shall be taken unless the Commission extends the period for achieving compliance for good cause. Adverse action will be instituted for any accredited program of the institution that is found to be in noncompliance with one or more postsecondary and/or WASC standards. The cause(s) for the adverse action shall be stated in writing by the Executive Director and mailed to the institution within 30 days of the Commission's action. Any institution or program found to be in partial compliance or making progress toward compliance with a particular standard will be considered to be in noncompliance with that standard. Adverse action is defined as a denial, withdrawal, suspension, revocation, or termination of accreditation or preaccreditation.

1230.05 Denial of Accreditation

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

Section XIII

Other Requirements and Information

1300. Maintenance of Records

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

1300.01 The last two full accreditation or pre-accreditation reviews 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 two self-study reports.

1300.02 All pre-accreditation and accreditation decisions, including all adverse actions.

1302. Records to the Department of Education

The Executive Director of the Commission shall be responsible for compliance with federal regulatory requirements for the Education Department and shall forward the following to the Secretary of Education for review of those institutions that participate in postsecondary federal financial aid funds.

- Notice of final accrediting actions within 30 days.
- Copy of Annual Report.
- Annually Updated Copy of Directory of Accredited Institutions and Programs.
- Annual Data Summary of Prior Year Major Accrediting Activities.
- Information on an Institution's Compliance with postsecondary/HEA programs, if so requested by the Secretary.
- Information on An Institution's Compliance with postsecondary/HEA programs, if the Commission believes the institution is violating Postsecondary/HEA regulations or is engaged in fraud or abuse, and the reason for the concern.
- Proposed Changes in Policies, Procedures or Standards Affecting Scope or Compliance With Recognition Regulations.

1304. Notification of Actions Relating to Postsecondary Institutions

The U.S. Secretary of Education shall be notified within 30 days of any Commission decision that withdraws accreditation or candidacy from any adult education institution wherein postsecondary programs are involved.

1306. Notices to Other Agencies

The U.S. Secretary of Education, the appropriate SPRE, other appropriate State education or accrediting agencies, and the public shall be notified within 30 days of any of the following final actions. The public shall be notified within 24 hours of the Commission's notice to the institution:

- The award of Initial Accreditation or Candidate status.
- Final decision to deny, withdraw, suspend, or terminate accreditation or pre-accreditation or to take other adverse action.
- Decision to place institution or program on probation.
- Decision by accredited institution or program to withdraw from accreditation or pre-accreditation.
- Decision by accredited institution or program to let its accreditation or pre-accreditation lapse.
- A statement summarizing the agency's final decision to deny, withdraw, suspend, or terminate accreditation or pre-accreditation and the comments, if any, made by the affected institution or program shall be included if available.

[Revised June 25–26, 2007]

1308. 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:

- Recognized 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.

1310. Additional Requirements for Non-Degree Granting Postsecondary Institutions**1310.01 Students' Ability to Benefit**

Institutions with postsecondary programs which admit students without a high school diploma or GED certificate must pre-assess the student's ability to benefit and evaluate the student's progress to determine that the student is, in fact, capable of benefiting from the training or education offered.

1310.02 Independent Study Programs

Independent Study Programs must provide for reassessing the student's ability to benefit from the specific program offered. The institution must periodically evaluate the student's progress to determine if the student is benefiting from the program offered.

1310.03 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 standards; and
- (4) Comply with WASC standards.

1310.04 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 WASC standards and self-study parameters, which indicate the institution's compliance with WASC standards;
- (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 WASC standards;
- (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 WASC standards; 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.

[Revised January 31, 2005]

1310.05 Ongoing Monitoring of Institutions

Upon granting initial or renewed accreditation, WASC monitors institutions or programs throughout the accreditation or pre-accreditation period to ensure continuing compliance with 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.

1310.06 Submission of Annual Compliance Reports

Postsecondary institutions are required to submit to WASC annual written reports that demonstrate continued compliance with all WASC standards for programs that are accredited. Deadline for submission of written reports to WASC is September 15.

[Revised January 28–29, 2008]

1312. Admissions

1312.01 Postsecondary institutions must be aware of and abide by those regulations imposed by the United States Department of Education as they apply to admissions practices. The requirements for students admitted to programs leading to a certificate or diploma shall conform to the institution's mission and purposes and shall be administered as written. The following minimums shall apply, as stated in 1312.02 below.

1312.02 Requirements for students admitted to programs leading to a certificate or diploma shall include graduation from high school or its equivalent, or demonstration of the ability to benefit from the training offered. The determination of a student's ability to benefit shall include, at a minimum, administration of a validated test from the Department of Education's approved list of such tests, and documented academic and career advising.

1314. Records

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

1316. 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.

1318. Recruiting

1318.01 Postsecondary institutions must be aware of and abide by those regulations imposed by the United States Department of Education as they apply to recruiting practices.

1318.02 Recruiting for postsecondary programs shall be ethical and compatible with educational objectives of the institution. The allocation of an institution's financial resources for purposes of recruitment shall be consistent with the stated mission of the institution. The minimum standards in 1318.03 shall be observed.

1318.03 An institution shall ensure all admissions representatives are communicating current, accurate information regarding programs, courses, services, tuition, terms of payment, and operational procedures of the institution. The institution shall have written policies and documentation regarding implementation of these requirements and the institution's monitoring system for recruiters in this area.

1320. Institutional Publications

Postsecondary institutions must be aware of and abide by those regulations imposed by the United States Department of Education as they apply to certain institutional publications. Institutional publications subject to special requirements include the catalog; informational brochures; program information sheets; and advertisements, in whatever form, distributed to prospective students, including print, radio, television advertisements, direct mail, and any other form of advertising that communicates availability of the postsecondary program to students.

1322. Catalog Contents

The institution must publish a catalog that pertains specifically to the institution it represents. The catalog or bulletin of general information should explain and inform the essential facts of an institution and its parts. The catalog should look like a college catalog, must be printed and permanently bound. The catalog should contain the following, at a minimum:

- A table of contents or index;
- Dates the catalog is effective, either on the front or on the title page;
- Names and titles of administrators of the institution;
- Statement of ownership of the institution, which should include the names of trustees, directors, and officers of the corporation.
- If the institution is now accredited, a statement indicating the level of accreditation. For example, “The institution is accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, Accrediting Commission for Schools.” or “The institution is a candidate for accreditation with the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, Accrediting Commission for Schools.”
- A statement of the institutional mission.
- A listing of the qualifications of faculty members including degrees held and institutions awarding the degree.
- An academic calendar.
- The institution’s admissions requirements to the postsecondary program.
- Curriculum (programs) offered, including:
 - a statement of the objective or purpose of the curriculum,
 - a complete listing of the courses offered in the curriculum, each with an identifying number and title;
 - a description of each course;
 - the clock or credit hours allowed for each subject;
 - total credits required for the curriculum;
 - requirements for graduation;
 - explanation of grading system;
 - definition of the unit of credit;
 - explanation of the standards of satisfactory academic progress;

- statement of tuition, fees, and other charges for the programs;
- statement of institutional refund policy;
- statement indicating what student services are provided;
- a complete and accurate listing of all scholarships offered at the institution.

1323. 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.

[New June 29–30, 2009]

1324. Teach-out Plans and Agreements

1324.01 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. The teach-out agreement of the accredited institution shall be with one or more other institutions participating in federal financial aid programs offering similar educational programs and with the original institution has no business connection.

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

- The U.S. Department of Education has notified the accrediting agency of an action against the institution pursuant to 487f;
- 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 plan shall contain the following provisions:

[Revised June 29–30, 2009]

1324.02 Any accredited institution that enters into a teach-out agreement with another institution must submit that teach-out agreement to the Commission for approval. The Commission will approve the teach-out agreement if the agreement

- (1) Is consistent with applicable standards and regulations; and
- (2) Provides for the equitable treatment of students by ensuring that:
 - (a) Students are provided, without additional charge, all of the instruction promised by the closed institution prior to its closure but not provided to the students because of the closure; and
 - (b) The teach-out institution is geographically proximate to the closed institution and can demonstrate compatibility of its program structure and scheduling to that of the closed institution.

[Revised June 29–30, 2009]

1324.03 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.

[Revised June 29–30, 2009]

1324.04 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.

1324.05 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.

1324.06 If no such teach-out occurs when the institution terminates teaching activities in a particular program of study, each accredited institution agrees to the payment of a refund, at least as large as a pro rata refund as defined in federal regulations, to the lender for each enrolled student on whose behalf a federal loan was made for the period of enrollment during which the institution terminated teaching activities in a particular program of study.

[Revised June 29–30, 2009]

1326. Student Outcome Measures for Postsecondary Institutions

1326.01 The institution must demonstrate that at least 60% of all those originally scheduled to complete have obtained a certificate, diploma, or transfer to another postsecondary institution within 150% of the time normally required to complete a certificate, diploma, or be eligible to transfer to another postsecondary institution or program.

1326.02 An institution that fails to meet the quantified graduation/completion rate in paragraph a may provide documentation to demonstrate the validity of the factors which prevent the institution's graduation/completion rate from meeting the specified rate.

1326.03 Should the Commission determine that the institution's reason for its lower graduation/completion rate is valid, it may find the institution in compliance with the review standard in paragraph 1326.01 of this section.

1326.04 The Commission may consider these factors in determining whether the institution's reason for a lower graduation/completion rate is valid:

- the family circumstances of an institution's students,
- student enrollment patterns;
- transfers to other postsecondary education institutions,
- full-time employment of students in their area of study prior to program completion,
- student withdrawal to pursue military, religious, or other nationally recognized public service activities.

1326.05 The institution must also demonstrate that its student withdrawal rate does not exceed that allowed under federal law.

1328. Student Employment Placement Rate

1328.01 For those educational programs which are designated as vocational in federal regulations, the institution has, for graduate/completers within six months of their leaving the program, a student employment placement rate in the students' field of study of not less than 70%.

1328.02 Data used by the institution to demonstrate compliance with this section must be for the most current 12-month period.

1328.03 An institution that fails to meet the quantified placement rate in this section may provide documentation to demonstrate to the Commission's satisfaction, the validity of the factors which prevent the institution's graduation/completion rate from meeting the specified rate.

1328.04 If the Commission determines that the institution's reasons for its lower placement rate are valid, it may find the institution in compliance with the review standard considering the factors below.

1328.05 The Commission may consider these factors in determining whether the institution's reasons are valid:

- general economic conditions in the state;
- students continuing postsecondary education,
- students pursuing military, religious, or other nationally recognized public service activities, or
- students leaving the United States to return to their country of citizenship.

1330. Employment Licensing

Where license is required for entry-level employment in the field of study, the institution must demonstrate that its graduates have a licensure pass rate at least equal to one standard deviation below the examining board's average pass rate for first-time licensure applicants from all sources.

1332. Review of Standards and Criteria

WASC standards for accreditation shall be reviewed at least every three years 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.

1334. Development of New Self-Study Instruments

1334.01 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.

1334.02 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.

1334.03 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.

1336. 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.

1338. Postsecondary Advisory Committee

The Commission shall 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 Committee shall meet as needed. The chair of the Committee shall be the Executive Director, or his/her designee. The composition of the Advisory Committee shall be:

- ACS Executive Director
- ACS Associate Executive Director(s)
- ACS Coordinator of Postsecondary Accreditation
- Representative(s) of WASC Senior College/University division
- Representative(s) of WASC Junior/Community College division
- Representative(s) of a private postsecondary institution
- Representative(s) of a public postsecondary institution
- Representative(s) of business/industry (up to three, as needed)
- Consultant(s) as needed

[Revised January 28–29, 2008]

1340. 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. The report shall be filed with the Commission within 30 days. The director of the Commission, at his/her discretion, may also revisit the institution within 90 days of the receipt of the statement to make a compliance determination.

[New January 28–29, 2008]

1342. Training of New and Continuing Commissioners

Prior to beginning service, new commissioners shall receive training, specific to postsecondary institutions, 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 preaccrediting decisions. All commissioners shall receive regular training on trends, issues, policies, and procedures pertaining to accrediting and preaccrediting decision-making for postsecondary institutions.

[New January 28–29, 2008]

Section XIV

Accreditation Standards, Objectives, and Criteria

1400. Standards, Objectives, and Criteria for Accreditation

The standards, objectives, and criteria (hereafter referred to as “WASC standards”) for accreditation are derived from mandates of the U. S. Department of Education, and from certain aspects of the mission, goals, and objectives of WASC.

The basic topics to be covered in the WASC standards are listed below, and are fully delineated in the *Guide to Evaluating Postsecondary Institutions, 2010 Edition*.

Standard 1 – Institutional Mission, Objectives, and Purpose (FOL A1)

Standard 2 – Organizational Structure (FOL A2, A3)

Standard 3 – Evaluation and Planning (FOL A7)

Standard 4 – Educational Programs (FOL A6, B)

- A. Admissions/Recruiting
- B. Programs
- C. Instruction

Standard 5 – Program, Student, and Institutional Outcomes (FOL B)

Standard 6 – Student Support Services (FOL C)

Standard 7 – Human Resources (FOL A3, A4)

- A. General
- B. Faculty
- C. Administrative and Supervisory Personnel
- D. Instructional Support Staff
- E. Non-instructional Support Staff/Services

Standard 8 – Learning Resources (FOL A5, D)

- A. Media Services
- B. Instructional Equipment
- C. Instructional Supplies

Standard 9 – Financial Resources (FOL D)

Standard 10 – Physical Resources (FOL D)