

**ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR SCHOOLS
WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES**

**ACS WASC
BYLAWS AND POLICY MANUAL**



**ACS WASC EDITION
June 2019**

ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR SCHOOLS WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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ACS WASC EDITION

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**Accrediting Commission for Schools
Western Association of Schools and Colleges**

BYLAWS

ARTICLE I: PURPOSE

SECTION 1 NAME

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

SECTION 2 PURPOSE

ACS WASC is a nonprofit, public benefit corporation and is not organized for the private gain of any person. It is organized under the Nonprofit Public Benefit Corporations Law of the State of California for public and charitable purposes. Those public purposes include improving and validating the quality of education at public and private, secular and non-secular elementary, secondary, and non-profit postsecondary educational institutions or schools, through the creation and application of standards of accreditation and related policies, and through a process of review by education professionals and public members. The terms “school” and “institution” are used interchangeably for purposes of these Bylaws and Policies.

Through ACS WASC’s evaluation of educational institutions, ACS WASC accreditation assures the educational community, the general public, and other organizations and agencies that an institution has clearly defined objectives appropriate to education; has established conditions under which their achievement can reasonably be expected; appears in fact to be accomplishing them substantially; is so organized, staffed, and supported that it can be expected to continue to do so; and demonstrates that it meets ACS WASC’s criteria and accreditation standards. ACS WASC encourages and supports institutional development and improvement through an institutional self-evaluation using the accreditation criteria and policies, as well as mid-cycle, follow-up, and special reports, and periodic evaluation of institutional quality by qualified peer professionals.

SECTION 3 PRINCIPAL OFFICE

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

SECTION 4 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

SECTION 5 FISCAL YEAR

The fiscal year of the Commission is July 1 through June 30.

ARTICLE II: THE COMMISSION

SECTION 1 RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COMMISSION

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

1.1 Scope of Activities

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

1.2 Bylaws

To establish Bylaws for the governance of the Commission.

1.3 Policy Development

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

1.4 Criteria

To establish criteria for accreditation.

1.5 Status

To grant status of accreditation or candidacy for accreditation.

1.6 Finances

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

1.7 Maintenance of Records

The Commission shall maintain complete and accurate records of the last full accreditation or pre-accreditation reviews of each institution or program, including on-site evaluation team reports, institution responses to on-site reports, periodic review reports, any reports of special reviews conducted by the agency between full accreditation reviews, and the institution's or program's most recent self-study report; and all pre-accreditation and accreditation decisions, including all adverse actions.

1.8 Other Functions

To perform other functions consistent with the Bylaws, Policies, and Operational Guidelines.

SECTION 2 COMPOSITION OF THE COMMISSION

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

The Commission shall be comprised of up to thirty-three (33) persons, representing various constituencies of ACS WASC, selected by the Commission's Nomination Review Committee from candidates nominated by member organizations or the Commission. Representatives shall be nominated as follows:

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

The California Department of Education and the Hawaii Department of Education will each have an ex-officio seat on the Commission. The Commission shall determine which organizations shall be represented by voting Commission members and which shall be represented by non-voting ex-officio members.

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

[Updated June 2019]

SECTION 3 CHANGES IN CONSTITUENCIES

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

SECTION 4 REVIEW OF COMPOSITION

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

- a. A written request shall be delivered to the Commission office prior to the annual policy meeting.
- b. The request will include a description and history of the petitioning organization, the number of schools/memberships represented, a projection of its growth in the next five years, and a rationale for its request.
- c. Upon the recommendation of the President or the Chairperson, and with the approval of the Commission, a representative of the requesting organization may be asked to appear before the Commission.
- d. The Commission shall consider all relevant information and will make the final determination relative to the proposal

SECTION 5 OFFICERS OF THE COMMISSION

5.1 Titles of Officers

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

5.2 Election of Officers

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

5.3 Terms of Office

The Vice Chairperson shall be elected for a two-year term after which he or she shall become the Chairperson for a two-year non-renewable term. These terms may extend beyond their normal commission term, if necessary, with the approval of the officer's constituent organization. The Chairperson and Vice Chairperson shall be from different constituent organizations.

5.4 Vacancies

Any vacancy occurring before the end of a term shall be filled by the Commission at its next meeting.

5.5 Duties of Commission Officers

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

SECTION 6 COMMITTEES OF THE COMMISSION

6.1 Appointment of Members

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

6.2 Standing Committees

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

6.3 Nomination Review Committee

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

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

6.4 Finance Committee

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

6.5 Executive Committee

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

6.6 Audit Committee

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

6.7 Ad hoc Committees

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

SECTION 7 THE COMMISSIONERS

7.1 Nomination of Commissioners

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

7.2 Length of Appointment

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

7.3 Vacancies

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

7.4 Responsibilities of Individual Commissioners

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

7.5 Training of New and Continuing Commissioners

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

SECTION 8 STAFF OF THE COMMISSION

8.1 Composition of Staff

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

8.2 Duties of Staff

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

8.3 Financial Responsibilities

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

8.4 Authorization to Sign

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

8.5 Appointments to Other Organizations

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

8.6 Employee Supervision

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

8.7 Notification of Actions

It shall be the responsibility of the President to notify institutions of any Commission actions pertaining to the institutions' accreditation status in writing within **30 days** of such Commission action.

SECTION 9 MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSION

9.1 Frequency

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

9.2 Location

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

9.3 Open Meetings

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

9.4 Presentations to the Commission

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

9.5 Executive Sessions

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

9.6 Presence of Staff

The President shall be in attendance at all Commission meetings except when his or her salary or evaluation is being discussed.

9.7 Quorum

A quorum shall consist of a majority of Commission members.

9.8 Meeting Rules

Meetings shall be conducted in accordance with the Roberts Rules of Order except where otherwise specified in these Bylaws.

9.9 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.

SECTION 10 ACCREDITATION ACTIVITIES

10.1 Policies and Accreditation Criteria

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

10.2 Basis for Accreditation

The Commission grants accreditation to a school based upon the criteria, procedures, and policies set forth on the ACS WASC website. However, in general, accreditation is based on the following:

- a. The presumption that primary goals of accreditation are:
 - 1) The improvement of the school; and
 - 2) Certification to the public that the school is a trustworthy institution of learning.
- b. The school's self-study and the visiting committee's report provide compelling evidence that:
 - 1) The school is substantially accomplishing its stated purposes and functions identified as appropriate for an institution of its type, and;
 - 2) The school is meeting an acceptable level of quality in accordance with the general criteria adopted by the Commission as set forth on the ACS WASC website.

10.3 Review of Accreditation Criteria

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

10.4 Review of Criteria

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

- a. A valid measure of the aspects of educational quality it is intended to measure; and
- b. A consistent basis for determining the educational quality of different schools and programs.

10.5 Postsecondary Advisory Committee

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

10.6 Votes Required for Policy or Criteria Change

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

10.7 Types of Schools Eligible

Eligibility for accreditation is determined by the standards, policies, procedures, and requirements set forth on the ACS WASC website.

10.8 Regions Served

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

10.9 Commission Rights

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

10.10 Basis for Decisions

The Commission shall base its decisions regarding accreditation or pre-accreditation on the criteria published on the ACS WASC website, and shall evaluate a school's adherence to the criteria through the examination of the school's self-study and the visiting committee report.

10.11 Accredited Organizations

Accreditation will continue for so long as an institution remains in compliance with all ACS WASC policies, procedures, published accreditation criteria, and these Bylaws and Policies, and remains current on payment of any dues or special assessment obligations. In the event an institution falls out of compliance with the aforementioned ACS WASC policies or accreditation criteria for any reason, its accreditation status may be altered in accordance with the ACS WASC Policy Manual. In the event an institution resigns its accreditation, its accreditation status shall cease immediately and none of the review or appeal rights which might otherwise be applicable shall apply. The ACS WASC Policy Manual provides a comprehensive description of the requirements and procedures attendant to receipt and maintenance of accreditation status. These Bylaws do not serve to circumvent, replace, expand, contract or otherwise alter the rights and obligations contained therein.

SECTION 11 ADOPTION OF OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

11.1 Develop Operational Guidelines

The President shall develop operational guidelines as necessary to carry out the Commission's programs and implement the Bylaws.

SECTION 12 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

12.1 Controls Against Conflict of Interest

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

12.2 Conflicts Involving Commissioners

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

12.3 Commissioners Who Serve on Visiting Committees

Commissioners who serve as members of visiting committees to schools accredited by ACS WASC shall abstain from voting on the status of accreditation for those schools.

12.4 Conflict of Interest Statements

The ACS WASC Policy Manual sets forth the policies and procedures regarding conflicts of interest. However, generally, it is expected that Commissioners shall sign a conflict-of-interest statement upon the date of commencement of each new term of office. Commission staff and consultants shall sign a conflict of interest statement on commencement of duties. Visiting committee members and chairs shall sign a conflict-of-interest statement upon acceptance of each invitation to serve on a visiting committee.

SECTION 13 ANTI-DISCRIMINATION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

13.1 Code of Professional Responsibility

ACS WASC affirms that its policies, actions, activities, and relationships are based on principles of honesty, integrity, fairness, and mutual respect. ACS WASC is primarily a volunteer organization that relies on educators from its member schools to conduct accreditation visits; it expects the highest level of conduct and professionalism in all ACS WASC-related activities. A commitment to the ACS WASC Code of Professional Responsibility will enhance the accreditation experience and strengthen the integrity of the process.

ACS WASC employees and volunteers agree to abide by the following guiding principles in all accreditation-related work:

1. Honesty and transparency in all words, attitudes, and actions.
2. Integrity in following the guidelines of accreditation as established by ACS WASC.
3. Professionalism in all conversations and activities during accreditation visits, evidenced by respect and kindness in the treatment of others.
4. Recognition that no individual accreditation visiting committee member holds authority over any school or institution; only the visiting committee as a whole exercises the right to provide recommendations to the school and an accreditation status recommendation to the ACS WASC Commission.
5. Establishment of appropriate personal relationships with school staff and visiting committee personnel that is above reproach.
6. Agreement to wear professional attire (not casual) for all meetings throughout the accreditation visit.

7. Commitment to professional conduct that does not allow for texting during meetings or taking numerous personal calls or calls from one's own school.
8. Agreement not to sell or market any materials bringing personal benefit during accreditation visits. It is also inappropriate to take school forms/materials from schools during site visits for use in one's own school.
9. Acceptance of ACS WASC expectations for visiting committee members:
 - a. The accreditation process is confidential and requires the full attention of Committee members from early morning to late evening; consequently, friends, family members, or colleagues should not accompany any visiting committee members to the site visit.
 - b. Committee members are not to solicit employment during site visits or give resumes to school leaders. Also, committee members may not solicit resumes from school staff members during or after the accreditation visit.
 - c. Committee members may accept token gifts of appreciation from the school (mugs, T-shirts, gift baskets, etc.); gifts of significant value, however, must be graciously declined.

13.2 Non-Discrimination Statement

ACS WASC does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national or ethnic origin, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, or disability in the administration of its policies, accreditation activities, events, publications, and employment practices, including the selection of volunteers for visiting committees, and it complies with all federal and state laws regarding discriminatory practices.

13.3 Sexual Harassment Policies

ACS WASC is committed to providing a workplace in its offices and school accreditation visits that are free from sexual harassment. Sexual harassment in the workplace or on school visits is against the law and will not be tolerated. A victim of sexual harassment can be a man or a woman and can be of the same sex as the harasser. When ACS WASC determines that an allegation of sexual harassment is credible, it will take prompt and appropriate corrective action.

Sexual harassment is defined as:

- Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.
- Unwelcome conduct that unreasonably interferes with an individual's work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or abusive work environment.
- Sexual pranks, sexual teasing, jokes, pictures, music, or innuendo either in person, on the phone, or via email.
- Any touching that represents sexual advances of any nature.

If ACS WASC receives an allegation of sexual harassment or has reason to believe sexual harassment has or is occurring, it will take the necessary steps to ensure that the matter is promptly investigated and will take immediate and effective measures to end the inappropriate behavior. ACS WASC will take appropriate action even if the individual does not wish to file a formal complaint.

ACS WASC is committed to ensuring that all investigations of sexual harassment are conducted in a prompt, thorough, and impartial manner. The Executive Vice President or Directors and other ACS WASC staff members who observe, are informed of, or reasonably suspect incidents of possible sexual harassment must immediately report such incidents to the President of the Commission. If he/she is not available, the Executive Vice President should be notified.

ACS WASC will seek to protect the identities of the alleged victim and harasser, except as reasonably necessary to complete an investigation successfully. ACS WASC will also take the necessary steps to protect from retaliation those employees who in good faith report incidents of potential sexual harassment. It is a violation of both federal law and this policy to retaliate against someone who has reported possible sexual harassment.

In cases involving ACS WASC employees or members of accreditation visiting committees, the appropriate disciplinary steps will be taken, including, but not limited to the following:

- For employees, discipline may include reprimand, suspension, or release from employment.
- For visiting committee members, discipline will include immediate termination of participation in the current accreditation visit and restriction from participating in future accreditation visits.

13.4 Reporting Procedures

ACS WASC employees or visiting committee members are encouraged to tell the offending person to stop the behavior immediately and then report the inappropriate conduct as soon as possible to the President, the Executive Vice President, and/or the Chairperson of the Commission at (650) 696-1060. To report a sexual harassment incident, the person should carefully explain what happened in writing and give as much detail as to place, time, exact words used, physical actions taken, etc. to assist in the investigation. This written narrative should be given to the President or another person listed above. The report will be treated as confidential to the extent permissible by law and the matter will be investigated immediately.

ACS WASC is committed to a working environment, both in its offices and in accreditation visits to schools, that is free from any uncomfortable or unprofessional behavior that is not of the highest possible standards. ACS WASC commits itself to these policies and procedures.

13.5 ADA Compliance Statement

It is the policy of ACS WASC to comply with all federal and state laws concerning utilization of volunteers with disabilities and to act in accordance with regulations and guidance issued by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Furthermore, it is the organization's policy not to discriminate against qualified individuals with disabilities in regard to application procedures, retention of volunteers, visiting committee assignment(s), training or other terms, conditions and privileges of volunteering.

Volunteers with a disability who believe they need a reasonable accommodation to perform the essential functions of their job should contact their member organization. ACS WASC encourages individuals with disabilities to request reasonable accommodations.

To the extent that any volunteer visiting committee member requires any reasonable accommodation, ACS WASC requires the volunteer's member organization to cover the costs.

A volunteer who has questions regarding this policy or believes that he or she has been discriminated against based on a disability should notify their member organization and the President of the Commission. All such inquiries or complaints will be treated as confidential to the extent permissible by law.

SECTION 14 WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION POLICY

As a corporate entity, ACS WASC requires directors, officers, volunteers and employees to observe high standards of business and personal ethics in the conduct of their duties and responsibilities. Employees and representatives of ACS WASC must practice honesty and integrity in fulfilling their responsibilities and comply with all applicable laws and regulations.

This policy applies to ACS WASC as a corporate entity distinct from its affiliated Commissions, which are assumed herein to operate under their own Whistleblower Protection Policies to ensure high standards of business and personal ethics in the conduct of their own several duties and responsibilities.

Reporting Responsibility

This Whistleblower Policy is intended to encourage and enable affiliated individuals and others to raise serious concerns internally so that ACS WASC can address and correct inappropriate conduct and actions. It is the responsibility of all board members, officers, employees and volunteers to report concerns about violations of ACS WASC's code of ethics or suspected violations of law or regulations that govern ACS WASC's operations.

No Retaliation

It is contrary to the values of ACS WASC for anyone to retaliate against any board member, officer, employee or volunteer who in good faith reports an ethics violation, or a suspected violation of law, such as a complaint of discrimination, or suspected fraud, or suspected violation of any regulation governing the operations of ACS WASC. Any affiliate or employee who retaliates against someone who has reported a violation in good faith is subject to any appropriate discipline up to and including termination of employment.

Compliance Officer

The President of the Commission fills the role of ACS WASC's corporate Compliance Officer and is responsible for ensuring that all complaints about unethical or illegal conduct are investigated and resolved. The Compliance Officer will advise the Board of Directors of all complaints and their resolution and will report at least annually to the corporate Board of Directors on compliance activity relating to accounting or alleged financial improprieties.

Reporting Procedure

ACS WASC has an open door policy and suggests that affiliates or employees share their questions, concerns, suggestions or complaints with someone who can address them properly, such as a member of the ACS WASC corporate Board of Directors or President. Individuals receiving such communications are required to report complaints or concerns about suspected ethical and legal violations in writing to ACS WASC's corporate Compliance Officer, who has the responsibility to investigate all reported complaints. Affiliates or employees with concerns or

complaints may also submit their concerns in writing directly to their supervisor or to the President or Compliance Officer.

Accounting and Auditing Matters

ACS WASC's corporate Compliance Officer shall immediately notify the corporate Board of Directors of any concerns or complaint regarding corporate accounting practices, internal controls or auditing and work with the board until the matter is resolved.

Acting in Good Faith

Anyone filing a written complaint concerning a violation or suspected violation must be acting in good faith and have reasonable grounds for believing the information disclosed indicates a violation. Any allegations that prove not to be substantiated and which prove to have been made maliciously or knowingly to be false will be viewed as a serious disciplinary offense.

Confidentiality

Violations or suspected violations may be submitted on a confidential basis by the complainant. Reports of violations or suspected violations will be kept confidential except when required by law or judged necessary to conduct an adequate investigation.

Handling of Reported Violations

ACS WASC's corporate Compliance Officer will notify the person who submitted a complaint and acknowledge receipt of the reported violation or suspected violation. All reports will be promptly investigated and appropriate corrective action will be taken if warranted by the investigation.

SECTION 15 AMENDMENTS TO BYLAWS

15.1 Changes to Bylaws

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

15.2 Votes Required for Bylaws Change

The requirement to change Bylaws shall be a two-thirds' affirmative vote of Commission members present or a majority vote of all Commissioners, whichever is larger.

15.3 Effect of Changes to Bylaws

Changes to Bylaws do not negate previous Commission actions based on prior Bylaws.

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ACS WASC POLICY MANUAL

SECTION A: COMMISSION POLICIES

A1 PROCESS FOR SEEKING ACCREDITATION

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

A1.1 Conditions and Expectations for Membership in ACS WASC

- School or institution to meet all of the criteria for being accredited by the Commission;
- Pay the membership fees and evaluation fees in a timely manner; and
- Schools required to provide at least one member annually per school to participate on visiting committees. Small schools with an enrollment under 250, required to provide one member every two years to participate on visiting committees.

[Updated June 2019]

A1.2 Evaluation of Total Institution

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

- 1) Maintain clearly specified educational objectives consistent with its mission and appropriate in light of the programs it offers;
- 2) Are successful in achieving their stated objectives;
- 3) Maintain program completion requirements that at least conform to commonly accepted criteria; and
- 4) Comply with ACS WASC criteria.

A1.3 Requirements for Accreditation

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

- 1) Requires an in-depth self-study by each institution, in accordance with ACS WASC criteria and self-study parameters, which indicate the institution's compliance with ACS WASC criteria;
- 2) Conducts at least one on-site review of the institution or program at which the visiting committee representing the Commission obtains sufficient information to enable it to recommend whether the institution or program complies with the ACS WASC criteria;

- 3) Reads and conducts its own analyses and evaluations of the self-study, visiting committee report, institutional response and supporting documentation furnished by the institution, and any other appropriate information from other sources, to determine whether the institution complies with the ACS WASC criteria; and
- 4) Provides to the institution a detailed written report on its review assessing —
 - a. The institution's compliance with the agency's standards, including areas needing improvement; and
 - b. The institution's performance with respect to student achievement.

A1.4 Initial Visit

Schools must host a one or two-day visit by a two-person team to assess the efficacy of the school's educational program and administrative and support services. Based upon the findings of the one or two-day visit, the visiting committee may recommend for Commission approval Candidate Status, Initial Accreditation Status, or denial. All Initial Visit decisions on candidacy and initial accreditation are final and cannot be appealed.

In order to be eligible for an ACS WASC Initial Visit (for the purposes of establishing accreditation for a school) student enrollment at said school must reach 6 full-time students. The school's program must also include at least two grade levels prior to an Initial Visit. (One exception would involve a new high school that opts to begin only with grade 9.) No Initial Visit to newly established schools should occur prior to the second semester of operation, i.e., spring visit if the school opens in the fall.

A1.5 Candidate Status

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

A1.6 Initial Accreditation Status

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

A2 CANDIDACY AND INITIAL ACCREDITATION STATUS

A2.1 Candidates for Accreditation

Candidacy for accreditation is a status of affiliation which indicates that an institution has achieved initial recognition and is progressing toward, but does not assume, accreditation. The candidate for accreditation classification is designed for institutions which are not yet ready for the full evaluation based on the ACS WASC criteria for accreditation. The institution must provide evidence of sound planning, provide evidence of resources to implement these plans, and appear to have the potential for attaining its goals within a reasonable time. A candidate school is required to submit an annual report and is expected to apply for full accreditation by the third year of candidacy. Candidacy status shall expire at the end of three years. By the end of three years, the school in candidacy status should conduct a full self-study or host a second one-day

visit to determine if the school should remain in candidacy for accreditation. An extension of candidacy status may be given once for one additional year pending a positive one-day visit or when deemed necessary by the President of the Commission. In some limited circumstances, the President is authorized to change a school's "Candidacy" status to "Initial Accreditation" when conditions at the school have been sufficiently enhanced (based on the Initial Visit Rubric) to justify such a change. While an Initial Visit decision on candidacy may not be appealed, the Commission's decision to later withhold candidacy status following the grant of such status may be appealed in accordance with Policy A4.

A2.2 Commission of Jurisdiction of Multi-Level Institution

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

A2.3 Availability of Joint Accreditation

Schools which are accredited by organizations which have joint accreditation processes with ACS WASC may elect to become jointly accredited. Any such school may be granted Initial Accreditation by ACS WASC (first time only) after a successful Initial Visit team visit by ACS WASC. This accreditation would be under the category "Immediate Affiliation and Listing" upon payment of the annual membership and listing fee appropriate for the grade levels of the school.

A2.4 Initial Joint Accreditation Status

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

A3 ACCREDITATION STATUS

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

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

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

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

A3.1 Accreditation Status Calendar

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

A3.2 Duration of Accreditation Status^{*}

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

A3.3 Six-Year Accreditation Status with a Mid-cycle Progress Report[‡]

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

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

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

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

A3.4 Six-Year Accreditation Status with a Mid-cycle Progress Report and One-Day Visit

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

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

^{*}Schools that are ACS WASC/CIS, ACS WASC/IBO, ACS WASC/CIS/NCCT, or ACS WASC/ONESQA accredited will be granted a five-year accreditation status rather than a six-year accreditation status (CIS: Council of International Schools; IBO: International Baccalaureate Organization, NCCT: National Center for Curriculum and Textbook, ONESQA: Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment).

[†] Huntington Learning Centers may be granted seven years of accreditation. Schools that are ACS WASC/CAIS or ACS WASC/HAIS accredited may also be granted seven years of accreditation. AWSNA may also be granted seven years of accreditation

[‡]International schools that receive six-year accreditation status are required to have a two-day mid-cycle visit in the third year of the six-year cycle.

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

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

A3.5 Six-Year Accreditation Status with a Mid-cycle Progress Report and Two-Day Visit

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

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

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

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

A3.6 One- or Two-Year Probationary Accreditation Status with an In-depth Progress Report and Two-Day Visit

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

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

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

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

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

A3.7 Accreditation Status Withheld and Requests for Reinstatement

Schools that have had their accreditation status withheld (which has become final on appeal or where the school chooses not to appeal) have the option to seek reinstatement and request a Reinstatement Visit. In order to be reinstated, the school must submit a reinstatement report that addresses the identified critical areas for follow-up and provide sufficient evidence of the progress made. ACS WASC will then decide upon an appropriate time for a two-day Reinstatement Visit. The visit must occur within **18 months** from the date of the Commission's decision to withhold accreditation or the school will need to reapply for accreditation through the Initial Visit process.

The President shall appoint a reinstatement team to visit the school, review recommendations, and submit a report to the Commission with a recommendation for action. The reinstatement team shall consist of three members. One shall be the chairperson or a member of the original committee, and the second shall be a member of the Commission. An experienced chairperson not previously involved with the school shall serve as chairperson of the reinstatement team. If the three members of the reinstatement 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.

After the Reinstatement Visit, the Commission may grant one of the following options:

- If a school satisfactorily addresses the critical areas for follow-up and updates the self-study, if applicable, or otherwise provides sufficient evidence of the progress made, accreditation status may be granted with annual in-depth progress reports and a full self-study within three years of reinstatement. The accreditation status will be effective as of the July 1 that precedes the Commission's decision on reinstatement.
- If a school marginally addresses the critical areas for follow-up and updates the self-study, if applicable, or otherwise provides sufficient evidence of the progress made, accreditation status may be granted with an in-depth progress report and a two-day visit in one year and a full self-study within three years of reinstatement. The accreditation status will be effective as of the July 1 that precedes the Commission's decision on reinstatement.
- If a school has not satisfactorily addressed the critical areas for follow-up or updated the self-study, if applicable, or otherwise fails to provide sufficient evidence of the progress made, accreditation status may continue to be withheld. Schools with accreditation status withheld must reapply if they desire accreditation.

The Commission's decision concerning reinstatement is final and may not be appealed.

[Updated June 2017]

A3.8 Interim Evaluations

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

A3.9 Status During Evaluation

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

A4 APPEAL PROCEDURES

A4.1 Grounds for Appeal

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

1. Probationary Accreditation Status
2. Accreditation Status Withheld
3. Candidacy Status Withheld.

A six-year status with a mid-cycle progress report and/or visit may not be appealed. In addition, all Initial Visit decisions on candidacy and initial accreditation are final and cannot be appealed. The action of the Commission on an appeal shall be final.

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

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

A4.2 Timeline to File Appeal

A letter is to be directed to the Commission by the chief administrator(s) of the district and school within **60 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.

A4.3 Appeal Team

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

A4.4 Appeal Team Report

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

A4.5 Justification Statement to School

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

A4.6 Changed Conditions

In the hearing of an appeal, the appeal team is to base its recommendations on conditions which existed at the time the visiting committee was at the school and the evidence before the Commission prior to and on the date when the Commission made the decision which is being appealed.

A4.7 Commission Action

The Commission shall act on the appeal and shall inform the school in writing regarding the result of the appeal and the basis for that result. The action of the Commission on an appeal of a status of accreditation shall be final and shall generally be effective as of the July 1 that follows the Commission's original decision, barring exceptional circumstances necessitating an earlier date.

A4.8 Status During Appeal

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

A5 SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES IN ACCREDITED SCHOOLS

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

- Application to the Commission regarding the proposed change
- Review of the application by the President
- A one- or two-day visit by a one- or two-member team at the discretion of the President
- Subsequent approval by the Commission.

[Updated June 2018; January 2019]

A5.1 Examples of Substantive Change

A school initiating or experiencing a substantive change since its last ACS WASC visit must so report and seek approval of the substantive change pursuant to Policy A5.2 in order to maintain its accreditation or candidacy status. Examples of a substantive change include, but are not limited to:

- Change in location of school
- Addition of or transfer of programs to new or different buildings
- Change in grade level configuration
- Change in type of school
- Change in ownership and/or control
- Change in legal status or form of control of the institution
- Change in authorizer (may require school to reapply)
- Opening a branch campus or classroom extension
- Change in established mission or purposes
- Addition of degree or diploma-granting program
- Material change in financial position that threatens the school's ability to remain a going concern or otherwise threatens the school's ability to effectively support its operations
- Addition of courses or programs that represent a significant departure, in terms of either the content or method of delivery, from those that were offered when ACS WASC most recently evaluated the institution
- Notification of adverse action taken or threatened by a state or other accrediting agency (please see Policy A11.2 for examples of adverse actions)
- Any other change representing a significant departure in circumstances from those that were present when ACS WASC most recently evaluated the school.

[Updated January 2019]

A5.2 Review of Substantive Changes

All substantive changes must be reported within **30 days** to the Commission. Failure to notify ACS WASC as required of a substantive change is grounds for the Commission to issue an order to show cause as to why the school's status should not be withheld, with a time stated, to a candidate or accredited school. See Policy A11.3 for Review of Adverse Actions by Other Accrediting Agencies.

The Commission shall then undertake a prompt initial review of the substantive change to determine ACS WASC compliance. The President of the Commission, at his or her discretion, may schedule a visit of the school within **90 days** of the receipt of notice to make a compliance determination. An independent audit of the school's financial condition may also be required at the discretion of the President.

If after such initial review and opportunity for the school to respond, the Commission finds that the substantive change constitutes non-compliance with the standards of the Commission, the Commission shall issue an order to show cause as to why the school's status should not be withheld, with a time stated, to a candidate or accredited school. The school must be notified of the specific grounds for the Commission's adverse action, the specific standard(s) for which there has not been compliance, the nature of the action, and the right of the school to appeal if permitted by, and in accordance with, the Appeal Procedures in Policy A4.

A6 ETHICS AND INTEGRITY

A6.1 Conflicts of Interest

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

A6.2 Staff or Consultants with Professional Relationships

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

A6.3 Visiting Committee Members

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

A6.4 Commissioners

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

A6.5 Integrity of Member Schools

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

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

- b. The school must make a public correction of incorrect or misleading information released by an accredited or pre-accredited school or program about
 - 1) The accreditation status of the school or program;
 - 2) The contents of visiting committee reports; and
 - 3) ACS WASC’s accrediting actions with respect to the school or program.
- c. If the Commission has reason to believe that any school with which it is concerned is acting in an unethical manner or is deliberately misrepresenting itself to students or the public, it shall review the basis of the concerns. The President of the Commission, at his or her discretion, may schedule a visit of the school. If after such review and opportunity for the school to respond, the Commission finds that the school has engaged in unethical conduct or that its integrity has been seriously undermined, the Commission shall do one of the following:
 - 1) Break off relations with an applicant school.
 - 2) Issue an order to show cause as to why the school’s status should not be withheld, with a time stated, to a candidate or accredited school. The school must be notified of the specific grounds for adverse action, the specific standard(s) for which there has not been compliance, the nature of the action, and the right of the school to appeal if permitted by, and in accordance with, the Appeal Procedures in Policy A4.
 - 3) Cause to be disseminated through appropriate media a notice publicly correcting incorrect or misleading information.
 - 4) In extreme cases, immediately sever its relationship with the school by denying or terminating candidacy or accreditation.
 - 5) The school may appeal the decision of the Commission if permitted by, and in accordance with, the Appeal Procedures in Policy A4.

A6.6 Statements About Accreditation

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

A6.7 Announcing Accreditation Status

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

A6.8 Information Accompanying Accreditation Status

Any school which makes public disclosure of its accreditation status must disclose that status accurately, including the programs and grade levels covered by the status.

A6.9 Transcripts

Transcripts of students who are graduating or transferring from grades covered by the accreditation can be printed, stamped, or embossed with the ACS WASC logo which can be obtained from the ACS WASC Office, or the appropriate accreditation phrase can be typed on the transcript. See Policy A6.7.

A6.10 Announcing Candidacy Status

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

A7 DISCLOSURE AND CONFIDENTIALITY OF INFORMATION

A7.1 Disclosure of Information

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

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

A7.2 Confidentiality

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

A8 EXTENSION OF ACCREDITATION

A8.1 Extension of Status

The President may grant a one-year extension of accreditation.

A8.2 Postponement of Evaluations

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

A8.3 Long-Term Extensions

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

A8.4 Assessment Fee

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

A9 LAPSE OF ACCREDITATION

A9.1 Re-admission of Lapsed Members

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

A9.2 Lapsed Members with Expired Status

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

A10 PUBLIC NOTICES

A10.1 Annual Member Directory

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

A10.2 Public Information

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

- a. Each type of accreditation and pre-accreditation granted by the Commission;
- b. Commission procedures for applying for accreditation or pre-accreditation;
- c. The criteria and procedures used by the Commission for determining whether to grant, reaffirm, reinstate, deny, restrict, withhold, or take any other action related to each type of accreditation and pre-accreditation that the Commission grants;
- d. The names, academic and professional qualifications, and relevant employment and organizational affiliations of the members of the Commission as well as the agency's principal administrative staff;
- e. The institutions or programs that the Commission currently accredits or pre-accredits and the date when the agency will review or reconsider the accreditation or pre-accreditation of each institution or program; and
- f. The procedures for third-party comments for postsecondary institutions being considered for accreditation or pre-accreditation.

A11 REGARD FOR DECISIONS OF STATE, LOCAL AND OTHER ACCREDITING AGENCIES

A11.1 Requirement of Legal Authority

Accreditation or candidate status shall only be provided to schools that are legally authorized under applicable state law to provide education at the grade levels for which accreditation is being sought.

A11.2 Consideration of Adverse Actions by Other Agencies

The Commission shall take into account adverse actions taken or threatened to be taken by state, local and other accrediting agencies when considering any school which seeks candidacy, accreditation, extension of candidacy, or reaffirmation of accreditation from the Commission. Examples of adverse actions include, but are not limited to:

- a. An accrediting agency denying accreditation or pre-accreditation to the school, placing the school on public probationary status, or revoking the accreditation or pre-accreditation of the school;
- b. A state or local agency suspending, revoking, or terminating the school's legal authority to provide education;
- c. An accrediting agency subjecting the school to an interim action potentially leading to the suspension, revocation, or termination of accreditation or pre-accreditation;
- d. A state or local agency subjecting a school to an interim action potentially leading to the suspension, revocation, or termination of the school's legal authority to provide education;
- e. An accrediting agency notifying the school of a threatened suspension, revocation, or loss of accreditation;
- f. A state or local agency notifying the school of a threatened suspension, revocation, or termination by the state of the school's legal authority to provide education; and
- g. The ordering of an extraordinary or irregular audit of the school by a state, local or other accrediting agency.

Failure to notify ACS WASC of an adverse action as required pursuant to Policy A5.2 is grounds for the Commission to issue an order to show cause as to why the school's status should not be withheld.

A11.3 Review of Adverse Actions by Other Accrediting Agencies

When a school accredited or granted candidacy status by the Commission that is also accredited by another accrediting agency has an adverse action taken or threatened to be taken against it by the other agency, the school must report the action to the Commission within **30 days** pursuant to Policy A5.2.

The Commission shall then undertake a prompt initial review of that institution to investigate the basis for the adverse action. In order to conduct the initial review, the school shall provide a written statement discussing the circumstances of the adverse action and whether it believes the circumstances on which that action is based constitutes non-compliance with the standards of the Commission. The written statement shall be filed with the Commission within **30 days** of the adverse action.

The President of the Commission, at his or her discretion, may schedule a visit of the institution within **90 days** of the receipt of the written statement to make a compliance determination.

If after such initial review and opportunity for the school to respond, the Commission finds that the basis for the other agency's adverse action constitutes non-compliance with the standards of the Commission, the Commission shall issue an order to show cause as to why the school's status should not be withheld, with a time stated, to a candidate or accredited school. The school must be notified of the specific grounds for the Commission's adverse action, the specific standard(s) for which there has not been compliance, the nature of the action, and the right of the school to appeal if permitted by, and in accordance with, the Appeal Procedures in Policy A4.

A11.4 Sharing Information with Other Agencies

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

A12 SCHOOL SELF-STUDY AND VISITING COMMITTEE REPORTS

A12.1 Maintenance of Records by Schools

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

A12.2 Permanent Storage of Accreditation Records

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

A12.3 Maintenance of Records by ACS WASC

The Commission shall retain in its library the most recent copy of each school's self-study and visiting committee report.

A12.4 Adequacy of School Self-Study Report

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

A12.5 Records Relating to Status Recommendation

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

A13 STUDENT AND PUBLIC COMPLAINTS AGAINST INSTITUTIONS

A13.1 Complaints Regarding Quality, Integrity, and Effectiveness

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

A13.2 Allegations Not Under ACS WASC Jurisdiction

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

A13.3 Initial Complaint Requirements

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

A13.4 Review of Complaint Information

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

A13.5 Procedures

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

- a. Protect the rights of both parties to be heard and to present evidence.
- b. Take all reasonable measures to assure prompt resolution of the complaint.
- c. Communicate in a timely manner to all parties regarding findings, conclusions, or rulings which are a result of investigation of the complaint.

See also Policy D3, Procedures for Processing Complaints.

A13.6 Possible Actions

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

- a. An administrative letter of censure.
- b. A written order to show cause as to why the school's status should not be withheld, with a time stated, to a candidate or accredited school. The school must be notified of the specific grounds for the Commission's adverse action, the specific standard(s) for which there has not been compliance, the nature of the action, and the right of the school to appeal if permitted by, and in accordance with, the Appeal Procedures in Policy A4.
- c. A requirement that the school make official rectification to the complainant.
- d. Other actions as deemed appropriate by the President in consultation with the Commission Chairperson.

See also Policy D3, Procedures for Processing Complaints.

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SECTION B: ACCREDITATION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

B1 CRITERIA FOR ACCREDITATION: GENERAL CRITERIA AND STANDARDS

ACS WASC accredits educational institutions including schools which have multiple campuses. The terms “school” and “institution” are used interchangeably for purposes of these Bylaws and Policies.

The term “school” refers to all educational institutions with a state or international designation and has an organizational structure, curriculum, instructional methodologies, assessment processes, available support services, and resources to accommodate student needs.

A “school” also has the following characteristics:

- One or more locations
- An assigned administrator
- One or more qualified instructional staff (based on background, training, and preparation)
- Enrolled students
- Issues transcripts/diplomas

The term “campus” refers to locations associated with a school and has the following characteristics:

- Does not have a separate state or international designation
- Does not have a separate governance structure
- Has assigned one or more qualified instructional staff (based on education background, training and preparation) serving students enrolled in the "school"
- Does not issue transcripts/diplomas

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

Fundamental to accreditation is the quality of the educational program experienced by the students. The relative weight of each criterion or standard depends upon its effect on the educational program experienced by students. In addition, evidence of an ongoing process for improving its educational program must be provided.

The criteria or standards and procedures can be found in the ACS WASC accreditation protocols that have been approved by the ACS WASC Commission. These protocols and procedures can be found on the ACS WASC website.

B1.1 Public and Private Schools

ACS WASC provides accreditation services to schools offering elementary and secondary education nationally and internationally.

B1.2 Postsecondary Schools

ACS WASC accredits public adult schools and/or non-degree granting, non-profit postsecondary schools of higher education.

No postsecondary school 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 a school must meet all legal requirements to provide a program of education beyond the secondary level. For-profit schools are not eligible for ACS WASC accreditation.

[Updated January 2019]

B1.2.1 Distance Education

[Removed January 2019]

B1.2.2 Age of Students

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

B1.2.3 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.

B1.2.4 Teach-out Plans and Agreements

Accredited institutions shall develop a written teach-out plan 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, ceases to operate before all enrolled students have completed their program of study. The teach-out plan shall include a teach-out agreement with other institution(s) where necessary to provide the opportunity for students to complete their program of study.

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

- ACS WASC acts to withhold, terminate, or deny the accreditation of the institution;
- The institution notifies ACS WASC that the institution intends to cease operations.

The original accredited institution shall agree that, in the event a separate teach-out institution becomes necessary, the original institution 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.

B1.3 Supplementary Education Programs

ACS WASC provides accreditation services to national, international, and corporate Supplementary Education Programs (SEPs).

A Supplementary Education Program (SEP) is a non-degree, non-diploma granting organization that offers programs of instruction in specific areas of learning designed for elementary and/or secondary age students who are in need of, or desire, educational development in one or more areas. Student attendance in an SEP is limited to the time required for success in the specific area(s) of learning for which the student is enrolled. Typically, students attend the supplementary education program as a means of strengthening or supplementing specific capabilities within their comprehensive education.

An SEP shall not grant credit for specific courses. An SEP shall not create course transcripts for its program, however an SEP may grant a certificate of completion to signify course completion.

An International Supplementary Education Program (ISEP) is defined as an organization that offers programs or courses in specific areas of learning designed for elementary or secondary age students that reflect an international philosophy. It is a non-degree, non-diploma granting program. Student attendance is limited to the time required for success in a specific area of learning; students attending an ISEP also are enrolled in a private international school at the same time. An ISEP may be unaffiliated or under the auspices of a national or international organization; it must meet the legal requirements of the jurisdiction in which it operates and have the appropriate documentation and licensing.

An SEP may be unaffiliated, part of an identifiable network, or exist through the auspices of a corporation dedicated to the provision of supplementary education either as owned by the corporation, a franchise of the corporation, or managed under a contract with the corporation.

B1.4 Homeschool and Independent Study Programs

The Accrediting Commission for Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACS WASC) allows for the accreditation of independent study programs and/or homeschool programs that meet the following ACS WASC requirements:

- Continuation schools, alternative schools, and independent study schools that are connected to public school districts, including those that offer a home-study program, are eligible for accreditation provided the program has been included in the school's self-study evaluation within the ACS WASC accreditation process. The school must provide oversight of curriculum and delivery of instruction by a credentialed teacher who is qualified for the high school subject matter covered. For K-8 courses/curriculum and delivery of instruction the school must provide oversight by a credentialed multi-subject teacher. Grades, transcripts and analysis of assessment results must be provided by a credentialed teacher and not the parent.

- Private schools offering independent study as their primary instructional delivery system are eligible for accreditation if they meet all ACS WASC private school criteria and meet the local, state, or national requirements for schools. The school must provide oversight of curriculum and delivery of instruction by a qualified teacher for K-8 students. For high school courses the school must provide oversight by a qualified teacher with either a bachelor's or master's degree according to subject matter. Grades, transcripts, and analysis of assessment results must be provided by teachers and not the parent.
- Charter schools that offer independent study as their primary instructional delivery system are eligible for accreditation if they meet all ACS WASC criteria and meet the local state or national requirements for schools. The school must provide oversight of curriculum and delivery of instruction by a teacher who is credentialed and qualified for the high school subject matter covered. For K-8 courses/curriculum and delivery of instruction the school must provide oversight by a credentialed multi-subject teacher. Grades, transcripts, and analysis of assessment results must be provided by a credentialed teacher and not the parent.
- Private School Satellite programs (PSPs) that are directly connected to an ACS WASC-accredited school are eligible for accreditation, provided that the program has been included in the school's self-study evaluation within the ACS WASC accreditation process. The school must provide oversight of curriculum and delivery of instruction by a qualified teacher for K-8 students and for high school courses the school must provide oversight by a qualified teacher with either a Bachelor's or Master's degree according to subject matter. Grades, transcripts, and analysis of assessment results must be provided by teachers and not the parent.
- Individual homeschools where students are taught by parents at home are not eligible for ACS WASC accreditation.

Additional Information

- Public and private schools are responsible to develop their own policies regarding the acceptance or transfer of credits from independent study programs, PSPs, or private homeschools where parents are the primary teacher(s).
- ACS WASC-accredited schools that add a PSP to their existing programs must notify ACS WASC immediately and undergo an ACS WASC substantive change visit.
- If ACS WASC partner organizations do not review or approve PSPs as part of their accreditation protocol, ACS WASC representatives on joint visiting committees will be responsible to provide an addendum to visiting committee reports that assesses whether or not the PSP meets ACS WASC criteria.
- If a PSP is connected to an ACS WASC-accredited school and the school does not actively supervise and oversee all academic activities, that PSP is not eligible for ACS WASC accreditation. In this case, the PSP must have a separate website and have no visual or written connection to the ACS WASC-accredited school that would give the impression that it is accredited.

[Updated June 2019]

B2 EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

The Commission reserves the right to register the copyrights for its evaluation instruments. These instruments shall be used by schools for self-evaluation studies, except where specific permission is granted by the President to use other instruments.

B2.1 Revision of Self-Study Instruments

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

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

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

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

The President shall be responsible for tentatively approving revised instruments, authorizing their duplication, and distributing them to schools. The President is also authorized to permit the reproduction and use of portions of the self-study documents by other agencies.

B3 DEVELOPMENT OF NEW SELF-STUDY INSTRUMENTS

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

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

Following Commission approval of any new self-study instrument, it shall be incorporated into the schedule for review and revision.

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SECTION C: ACCREDITATION PROCESSES

C1 VISITING COMMITTEES

C1.1 Visiting Committee Members

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

The institution also has the opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of the visiting committee chair and overall performance of the visiting committee. The President reviews evaluations of visiting committee members and chairs after each visit.

C1.2 Visiting Committee Chairs

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

C1.3 Conflict of Interest, Members and Chairs

Visiting committee members and chairs are required to sign a document certifying that they have no vested interest or conflict of interest in the institution to be visited. This document may be found and submitted electronically through the ACS WASC Accreditation Manager at <https://webportal.acswasc.org/>.

C1.4 Guidelines for Size of Visiting Committees

Full Self-Study Visits*

Schools with an enrollment of 6 to 249	Up to 3 members, 3-½ days
Schools with an enrollment of 250–899	4 members, 3-½ days
Schools with an enrollment of 900–1499	5 members, 3-½ days
Schools with an enrollment of 1500–2499	6 members, 3-½ days
Schools with an enrollment of 2500 or more	7 members, 3-½ days

One- and Two-day Mid-cycle Visits[†]

Schools with an enrollment of 6–1499	2 members, 1 or 2-½ days
Schools with an enrollment of 1500–2499	3 members, 1 or 2-½ days
Schools with an enrollment of 2500 or more	4 members, 1 or 2-½ days

Special Progress or Probationary Visits[†]

Schools with an enrollment of 6–1499	2 members, 2-½ days
Schools with an enrollment of 1500–2499	3 members, 2-½ days
Schools with an enrollment of 2500 or more	4 members, 2-½ days

Appeal Visits

3 members, 1 day

Initial Visits

2 members, 1 or 2 days

Reinstatement Visits

3 members, 2 days

Substantive Change Visits

1 or 2 members, 1 or 2 days

All Other Visits

2 members, 1 day

*Size of committee may be adjusted as needed based on the number of campuses and the grade span. Adjustments may be made if the school is online.

†Size of committee may be adjusted with schools with multiple sites, including flexibility in the use of virtual review and a progressive visit, i.e., visiting some sites earlier than others.

Note: International visits take place over 4-½ days. At the request of the school, additional members may be assigned and/or additional days allocated with the fee adjusted accordingly.

[Updated June 2018]

C2 GUIDELINES FOR COMPOSITION OF VISITING COMMITTEES

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

C2.1 Visits — Public Schools, California

- One school level administrator
- One representative from a district office
- One representative from a college or university (an attempt should be made to have an additional higher education representative to public high schools of 1500 or more)
- One classroom teacher
- Other programmatic coordinators at school or administrators (e.g., counselor).

Other participants may include:

- Representative of a county office or state department
- School Board or lay representative
- High School student representative
- Church-related and/or independent school representative, or from any of the categories listed above.

C2.2 Visits — Independent Schools, California

- Chair, Independent School Head
- Two to four members from independent and public schools or university, a majority being from independent schools. The number of visitors varies according to the size of the school.

C2.3 Visits — ACSI (Association of Christian Schools International) - 50% ACSI, 50% ACS WASC

- Administrators
- Teachers
- One ACS WASC appointed member.

C2.4 Visits — WCEA (Western Catholic Educational Association) Catholic Elementary Schools

- Representatives of Catholic Schools, including chair
- One ACS WASC appointed member.

C2.5 Visits — WCEA (Western Catholic Educational Association) Catholic High Schools

- Representatives of Catholic schools, including chair
- One representative of a college or university
- One ACS WASC appointed member.

C2.6 Visits — Seventh-day Adventist Schools, California and Hawaii

- One or two representatives of Seventh-day Adventist schools
- One representative of the accrediting association of the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists
- One or two public or private school representatives
- Optional: one representative of a Seventh-day Adventist college or university.

C2.7 Visits — Lutheran Schools, California

- Two representatives of Lutheran schools, including chair
- Remainder of team ACS WASC appointed members (public or private non-Lutheran).

C2.8 Visits — Bureau of Jewish Education, California

- One representative of the Bureau of Jewish Education
- One representative of a college or university
- Remainder of team ACS WASC appointed members (public or private non-Jewish).

C2.9 Visits — Hawaii

- An experienced ACS WASC member
- A majority of public school personnel, if a public school
- A majority of private school personnel, if a private school
- One ACS WASC appointed member to be of the same religious denomination, if a religious school.

Representatives should be selected from:

- Classroom teachers
- School level administrators
- Coordinators, e.g., curriculum coordinator
- Complex Area and Complex and State personnel
- College, university, or community college personnel.

C2.10 Visits — International

Visiting committees to international schools shall be chaired by an educator from California or Hawaii or another international school. Other members shall be chosen by the President.

C2.11 Initial Visits

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

C2.12 Appeal Visits

Appeal teams shall consist of three members. One member shall be a member of the original visiting committee. The second member shall be a member of ACS WASC. The third member shall be an experienced chairperson not previously involved with the school. The third member shall serve as the chairperson of the appeal team.

C2.13 Reinstatement Visits

Reinstatement teams shall consist of three members. One member shall be a member of the original committee. The second member shall be a member of ACS WASC. The third member shall be an experienced chairperson not previously involved with the school. The third member shall serve as the chairperson of the reinstatement team.

C2.14 All Other Visits

Teams for all other visits shall generally consist of two members of the previous visiting committee, if available, and additional members based on school enrollment.

C3 OVERRIDING VISITING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

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

C4 CONFLICT OF INTEREST ON READING GROUPS

In the Reading Group's consideration of status of accreditation, declarations of conflicts of interest should come from affected persons at the express invitation of the Reading Group Chairperson at the onset of the meeting. Members shall let the Group Chairperson know in which school reports there are conflicts of interest.

See also Bylaw 12, Conflicts of Interest.

See also Policy A6, Ethics and Integrity.

See also Policy D4, Conflict of Interest Procedures.

SECTION D: OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

D1 FINANCIAL PRACTICES

D1.1 Fee Schedule

- a. The fee schedule shall be reviewed annually and adjusted by Commission approval to meet budgetary needs and to provide for the maintenance of a reserve of approximately 20% of the average annual expenditures of the three preceding years.
- b. Regular accreditation listing fees shall be billed on a fiscal year basis and paid by December 31 of the current school year. Schools with unpaid fees shall be considered delinquent and subject to removal from the list of accredited schools.

D1.2 Reimbursement of Expenses

- a. Members of visiting committees, Commission members, and staff members on Commission business shall be reimbursed for actual expenses in accordance with Commission guidelines.
- b. Mileage reimbursement for actual travel shall be provided by the Commission at the annual Internal Revenue Service allowance as effective July 1 following IRS adoption.

D2 OFFICE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

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

D2.1 Maintenance of Records

The Commission shall maintain complete and accurate records of:

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

D2.2 Public Information

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

1. Each type of accreditation and pre-accreditation granted by ACS WASC;
2. ACS WASC procedures for applying and pre-accreditation granted by ACS WASC;
3. The criteria and procedures used by ACS WASC for determining whether to grant, reaffirm, reinstate, deny, restrict, withhold, or take any other action related to each type of accreditation and pre-accreditation that the agency grants;

4. The names, academic and professional qualifications, and relevant employment and organizational affiliations of the members of the Commission as well as the agency's principal administrative staff; and
5. The institutions or programs that ACS WASC currently accredits or pre-accredits and the date when the agency will review or reconsider the accreditation or pre-accreditation of each institution or program.

D3 PROCEDURES FOR PROCESSING COMPLAINTS

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.

D3.1 Initial Review

Within **15 business days** of the receipt of a complaint, it will be acknowledged in writing and initially reviewed by the staff of the Commission.

D3.2 Complainant's Responsibilities

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

- a. State the complaint in the clearest possible terms.
- b. Provide, in writing, a clear description of the evidence upon which the allegation is based.
- c. Demonstrate that all remedies available at the institution (grievance procedures, appeal hearings, etc.) have been exhausted. The complainant shall describe what has been done in this regard.
- d. Attest that the matter in question is not under litigation nor the threat of litigation.
- e. Acknowledge awareness that Commission staff may send a copy of the complaint to the chief administrator of the institution.
- f. Sign the complaint.

D3.3 Complaints Outside Commission Jurisdiction

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

D3.4 Response from School

If the complaint appears to be within the scope of Commission policies and jurisdiction and is substantially documented, a copy of the complaint will be forwarded to the institution's chief

administrator, who will be asked to respond to the President within **30 days**. The chief administrator is responsible for but not limited to:

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

The President will send a copy of the complaint and correspondence to the Chairperson of the Commission.

D3.5 Decision to Investigate Further

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

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

D3.6 Notification of Review

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

D3.7 Notification of Outcome

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

D3.8 Opportunity to Respond to Findings

Prior to the Commission's disposition of the complaint, the individual and the institution will have an opportunity to respond in writing within **30 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 President is final.

D3.9 Notification of Other Agencies

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

D3.10 Complaints Against ACS WASC

If the complaint should be against ACS WASC Commissioners, evaluation team members, consultants, staff, or other agency representatives or the Commission as a whole, the complaint shall be referred to the Chairperson of the Commission for initial evaluation. The Chairperson shall have the option of dismissing the complaint based on the criteria outlined in Policy A13, returning it to the President as an internal staff matter, or bringing it before the full Commission. A complainant shall have the right to appeal the decision of the Commission in relation to any complaint against the ACS WASC consultants, evaluation team members, staff or other agency representatives, or Commissioners.

D3.11 Complaints Regarding Status Decisions

If a member school is appealing a status decision, the appeals process outlined in Policy A4 shall apply.

See also Policy A13, Student and Public Complaints Against Institutions.

See also Policy A6, Ethics and Integrity.

D4 CONFLICT OF INTEREST PROCEDURES

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

D4.1 Conflict of Interest Forms for Staff

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

D4.2 Conflict of Interest Forms for Commissioners

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

D4.3 Conflict of Interest Forms for Visiting Committee Members

Evaluation team members shall be advised of ACS WASC conflict of interest policies during the course of evaluation team training, and shall affirm in writing that they are free of conflict in regards to the school they are helping to evaluate. The conflict of interest form shall be kept on file with the report. This document may be found and submitted electronically through the ACS WASC Accreditation Manager at <https://webportal.acswasc.org/>.

D4.4 Staff Members and Related Organizations

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

See also Bylaw 12, Conflicts of Interest.

See also Policy A6, Ethics and Integrity.

See also Policy C4, Conflicts of Interest on Reading Groups.