

ACCSC STANDARDS OF ACCREDITATION

INTRODUCTION

Preamble

The Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (“ACCSC” or “the Commission”)¹ reviews and accredits institutions of higher education. The primary purpose of the Commission is to establish and maintain high educational standards and ethical business practices among its accredited institutions, to evaluate each institution’s compliance with the *Standards of Accreditation*, and to ensure appropriate accountability for such compliance.

Participation in the process of accreditation is voluntary on the part of the school. Accreditation serves as an indication of institutional quality by setting standards against which all career schools and colleges can be measured. The burden rests with the school to establish that it is meeting the standards. A school must supply the Commission with complete, truthful, and accurate information and documentation showing the school’s compliance with all accrediting standards if the school is to be granted and maintain accreditation. A high level of reliance is placed upon information, data, and statements provided to the Commission by a school. The integrity and honesty of a school are fundamental and critical to the process. A compromise of integrity is considered to be an extreme offense. If the Commission determines that a school has knowingly provided false or misleading information, the Commission will take any action that it believes is reasonable and appropriate including, but not limited to, denying any pending application or taking any accreditation action described in *Section VII, Rules of Process and Procedure, Standards of Accreditation*. Accredited schools and schools seeking accreditation agree to support the accreditation process, adhere to the *AACSC Bylaws*, and must meet or exceed the *Standards of Accreditation* throughout the application and accreditation period.

By applying for and receiving accreditation, a school accepts the obligation to demonstrate compliance with the *Standards of Accreditation*. A fundamental component required for this demonstration is self-evaluation. Self-evaluation is an assessment of the complete school, conducted by faculty and students, as well as by the school administration. The process should involve the entire school. The self-evaluation process provides an opportunity for the staff and faculty of the school, whether it is a small, highly specialized school or a large, departmentalized school, to examine itself and to draft findings and recommendations for its own action. Compliance with accrediting standards and improvements within a school should be due primarily to its internal efforts rather than due to an on-site evaluation by an outside team or Commission action. The Commission expects the process of self-evaluation to be a significant and ongoing experience. Schools should incorporate the self-evaluation process as a permanent part of the institution’s operation.

While the Commission employs its own fact-finding methods to determine a school’s compliance with accrediting standards, such as on-site evaluation teams’ observations, interim monitoring, and review of information provided by third parties, the burden rests with the school to establish it is meeting all requirements of the *Standards of Accreditation*. Moreover, the Commission’s deliberations and decisions are made on the basis of the written record of an accreditation review. Schools do not have the right to appear before the Commission. Accordingly, a school must supply the Commission with complete documentation of the school’s compliance with all accrediting standards and requirements if the school is to be granted and maintain accreditation.

¹ The Accreditation Alliance of Career Schools and Colleges (“AACSC”) does business as the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (“ACCSC”).

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Standards of Accreditation

This document describes the accreditation process and sets forth the base of essentials (i.e., standards of best practice) against which a school studies and evaluates itself. Each school determines its own educational objectives, keeping in mind, however, that such objectives must be appropriate for a postsecondary-educational institution and serve to support the success of students. In addition, ACCSC endorses the concept of academic freedom that supports faculty members' privilege to function as scholars in the interpretation and application of theories and ideas within the context of an institution's mission, policies, and procedures. Ultimately, ACCSC evaluates a school based on the school's ability to accomplish its announced objectives, in accordance with the Commission's standards.

The standards and accreditation process emphasize educational quality by focusing on outcomes. What actually happens as a consequence of the teaching-learning processes in a school, and what is the evidence of these results? Given the stated purposes of the school and its documented outcomes, can the school be judged as meeting standards of quality compared with similar institutions? Does the accreditation process help the school to evaluate and improve its outcomes and hence its quality? Such questions are the primary focus of the Commission as it conducts its work.

Necessarily, the Commission concerns itself with inputs (the kinds of students in the school and the recruiting, admission, and testing procedures that produce them); resources (instructors, equipment, library, etc.), and processes (how the school actually operates). All of these conditions are evaluated within the context of the school's stated mission and its demonstrated achievements. Two important outcomes that the Commission uses in its assessment process are student graduation rates and graduate employment rates. The Commission is concerned about employer satisfaction, student satisfaction, and student success over time. Accordingly, the Commission is concerned about outcomes related to specific skills, knowledge, competencies, and behaviors achieved by students as a direct result of participation in a training program. The Commission believes that both the inputs and the outcomes are essential factors in institutional and student success and as such expects that schools comply with both the input and outcome standards.

All provisions of the *Standards of Accreditation* are effective as of July 1, 2016 with the exception of those areas that may be subsequently revised or added. Please consult the previous version of the *Standards of Accreditation* dated July 1, 2014 as well as any Accreditation Alert dated after July 1, 2014 but before July 1, 2016 for earlier requirements. See the July 1, 2016 Accreditation Alert for all revisions effective July 1, 2016.