COUNCIL ON OCCUPATIONAL EDUCATION

HANDBOOK OF ACCREDITATION

FOR FEDERAL INSTITUTIONS

Handbook of Accreditation for Federal Institutions: Revised July 2026

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All previous editions are obsolete.

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Note to the Reader:

Sections II. through V. of this Handbook contain Conditions that must be met by member institutions and, in most cases, are stated in terms of “shall”, “will”, and “must”. These requirements are indicated in **bold**. Section VI. contains accreditation Standards, Objectives, and Criteria. Within this section, each Criterion listed under the ten Standards is a requirement for acquiring and maintaining accreditation.

Changes made to this Handbook by the membership from the previous version are highlighted in blue.

Changes made to this Handbook as a result of mandates of the U.S. Department of Education from the previous version are highlighted in yellow.

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SECTION I
The Role and Value of Accreditation

Accreditation is a status granted to an educational institution or program that has been found to meet or exceed stated criteria of educational quality and student achievement. Accreditation emerged in the United States in the late 1800s as a voluntary peer review process that was initiated by educational institutions to ensure quality in particular types of institutions (e.g., colleges, high schools, and subsequently other types of institutions). In contrast, accreditation is generally unknown in other countries of the world because they rely on government supervision and control of educational institutions. The record of accomplishment and outstanding success in the education of Americans can be traced in large part to the reluctance of the United States to impose governmental restrictions on institutions of postsecondary education, and to the success of the voluntary system of accreditation in promoting quality without inhibiting innovation. In the United States, accreditation is voluntarily sought by institutions and programs and is generally conferred by non-governmental agencies*.

Accreditation has two fundamental purposes: (1) to ensure the quality of the institution or program, and (2) to assist in the improvement of the institution or program. Accreditation applies to institutions or programs, and is distinguished from certification and licensure which apply to individuals.

Bodies which conduct programmatic or specialized accreditation are national in scope and focus attention on a program within a postsecondary institution preparing students for a profession or occupation.

Bodies which conduct institutional accreditation are national or regional in scope and consider the characteristics of whole institutions. For this reason, an institutional accrediting body gives attention not only to the educational offerings of the institutions it accredits, but to such other institutional characteristics as student services, financial status, administrative structure, facilities, and equipment. The Council on Occupational Education is recognized as a national institutional accrediting agency.

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* The sole exception to accreditation for degree-granting higher education institutions being conferred by “non-governmental agencies” is the New York State Board of Regents, which is the oldest accrediting body in the United States. In addition, there are several state agencies that are recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education as “state approval agencies” which confer “accreditation-like” status upon certain public, non-degree, postsecondary, career and technical education institutions.

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SECTION II
Development of COE Accreditation

A fundamental tenet of a democratic society is that all individuals should have an opportunity to receive an education commensurate with their personal abilities and ambitions. For the vast majority of Americans, this means that the educational system must provide for (1) the acquisition of competencies that will lead to gainful employment in various occupational fields and (2) the continuing education necessary as technological advances place new demands on workers.

A. History

The Council on Occupational Education (hereinafter referred to as the Council or COE) came into existence initially in 1971 as the Commission on Occupational Education Institutions (COEI) of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), a regional accrediting association that serves institutions in an eleven-state region. Operating as a unit of SACS, COEI provided accreditation services to postsecondary occupational education institutions located, with a few special exceptions, in the SACS region.

In preparation for assuming a national scope, the Council was incorporated as a non-profit education organization under laws of the State of Georgia in June 1994. At the end of June 1995, the Council became a fully operational agency when all assets (staff, physical resources, and financial resources) and the membership of COEI were transferred from SACS to the Council. The Commission, composed of 19 members, functions as the governing board and the decision-making body for all accreditation actions of the Council.

Throughout its history, the Council and its predecessor agency have been recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education as a reliable authority on the quality of education offered by the institutions it has accredited. Its current scope of recognition is as a national institutional accrediting agency for the accreditation of non-degree-granting and applied associate degree-granting postsecondary occupational education institutions.

The Commission Ad Hoc Committee on Strategic Planning at its June 2008 meeting recognized the need for flexibility and customization of standards for non-Title IV institutions. This need had been documented through the Council's experience of accrediting federal institutions since its inception. Hence, one of the recommendations of the committee was to develop accreditation standards for federal institutions. Through the work of the Federal Institutions' Community of Practice, and on the recommendation of the Council Committee on Standards and the Accrediting Commission of the Council, the Handbook of Accreditation for Federal Institutions was adopted at the business meeting of the Council by the delegates on November 7, 2009.

B. Core Values

On November 8, 2008, the delegates at the Council's annual meeting adopted the core values listed below. The core values provide the foundation for the Council's mission, goals, and objectives.

1. Trustworthiness - denotes honesty, integrity, and reliability.

2. Transparency - implies openness, communication, and clear visibility. Describes an accreditation process or status that is not secretive or mystical.

3. Accountability - implies being answerable and liable. Describes accredited institutions' responsibility to students, regulatory agencies, and business and industry.

4. Commitment - requires dedication of institutions, volunteers, Commissioners, and staff. Denotes allegiance, loyalty, and obligation.

5. Flexibility - describes the ability to adapt to both internal and external market changes while maintaining core values. Implies resilience and being open to modification and change.

6. Innovation - proposes a blueprint for expectations for the future that encourages perceptive and imaginative experimentation aimed at meeting the needs of constituents. Addresses the expanded learning economy, student preparedness, and cultural understanding.

7. Collaboration - involves stakeholders working together toward a common goal of quality and integrity and making cooperative use of resources and best practices. Accomplished by institutions through networking and communities of practice.

8. Responsiveness - demonstrates an understanding of constituent's needs and a willingness to respond easily or readily.

C. Mission, Goals, and Objectives of the Council

As articulated to its membership, the mission of the Council is "assuring quality and integrity in career and technical education." The following goals represent the significant values and purposes to which the Council is dedicated:

1. To offer public assurance that accredited educational institutions provide quality instruction in career and technical education that facilitates learning by students and meeting the needs of the labor market

2. To provide guidance to institutions for the continuous improvement of their educational offerings and related activities

3. To promote high ethical and educational standards for career and technical education

4. To enhance public understanding of career and technical education providers and of the value of the education and the credentials offered by these providers

5. To ensure that the accreditation process validates the achievement of learning and program objectives

These goals embrace a commitment to integrity and credibility that are intended to result in accreditation by the Council being viewed as a nationally honored seal of excellence for occupational education institutions. Through its accreditation process, the Council seeks to stimulate the following activities:

1. Validation of job skills
2. Certification of skills for local, state, regional, and national application
3. Portability of skill credentials
4. Placement of graduates in jobs related to preparation received
5. Facilitation of partnerships and consortia through which the United States can continue to compete successfully in the global economy
6. Linkages among employers, policy makers, business and industry, labor, and other parties with vital interests in technical education

The mission and goals of the Council provide the framework from which the objectives of COE as an accrediting agency are derived. The following are these objectives:

1. To foster excellence in the field of career and technical education by establishing standards and guidelines for evaluating institutional effectiveness

2. To encourage institutions to view self-assessment and evaluation as a continuous quality improvement process

3. To provide counsel and assistance to established and developing institutions, disseminating information between and among institutions that will stimulate improvement of educational programs and related activities

4. To ensure that the standards, policies, and procedures developed are enforced and demonstrate recognition of and respect for the stated mission of the institution, the diversity of institutional missions, including religious missions, and ensure that the courses or programs of instruction, training, or study offered by the institution, including distance education courses or programs, are of sufficient quality to achieve their stated objective

5. To ensure that the standards, policies, and procedures developed advance quality, creativity, cooperation, and performance

6. To require, as an integral part of the accrediting process, an institutional self-assessment that is analytical and evaluative and an on-site review by a visiting team of peers

7. To ensure that the processes of evaluation, policy making, decision-making, and public participation accommodate the interests of the constituencies affected by the accrediting agency

8. To publish and otherwise make publicly available the (a) names of candidate and accredited institutions, (b) names and affiliations of members of its policy and decision-making bodies, and (c) names of its principal administrative personnel

D. Council Membership

Membership in the Council is achieved through a process whereby an institution elects on a voluntary basis to seek affiliation with the Council. The institution seeks initial affiliation with the Council as a candidate for accreditation, which is followed by an extensive self-assessment and, where necessary, self-improvement effort to demonstrate compliance with the Council's Standards and Criteria on educational quality for occupational education institutions. Membership in the Council is achieved and maintained by institutions through the granting of accreditation or reaffirmation of accreditation by the Commission of the Council.

Accreditation is a status of recognition that is granted to an institution which complies with the eligibility requirements, standards, procedures, and obligations adopted by the member institutions of the Council. Accreditation does not certify that every facet of an institution is of equal quality, but it does indicate that no part of the institution is so weak that the educational effectiveness of the institution as a whole and its services to students will be undermined.

E. Innovation

The Commission welcomes and encourages perceptive and imaginative experimentation which aims at increasing the effectiveness of the institution. The Commission is cognizant that special requirements may pertain to some institutions; but these requirements should not be permitted to inhibit new approaches and emphases in educational programs. The Commission insists, however, that such innovative approaches be consistent with the institution's mission and goals, as well as with the mission, goals, and objectives of the Council. Where an innovative or experimental program may be at variance with one or more accreditation Criteria of the Council, the institution must request Commission concurrence prior to implementation of the innovation. Such concurrence shall be based upon the institution's ability

1. to identify the specific Criteria that cannot be applied to the innovation, as well as its (their) related Objectives; and

2. to propose alternate ways to assess the effectiveness of the innovation in achieving the Objectives which are related to the Criteria that cannot be applied to the innovation.

SECTION III
Affiliation with COE

Federal institutions may affiliate with the Council by becoming a candidate for accreditation and subsequently achieving and maintaining accreditation. These two types of affiliation are described below.

A. Candidate for Accreditation

1. Meaning of Candidate Status

Candidate for Accreditation is a pre-accreditation status of an institution actively seeking accreditation by the Commission. During the period of candidacy, the institution is involved in the process of self-study and planning for a team visit. Candidate status does not imply accreditation of an institution. The institution must not use its candidate status in any way to imply, publicly or privately, that candidate status with the Council denotes approval of its programs or accreditation of the institution by the Commission. Institutions in candidate status are not permitted to apply for approval of substantive changes of any kind.

2. Eligibility Requirements

Each Federal occupational education/training institution (university, college, school, center, unit, or other entity) applying for affiliation with the Council must initially demonstrate that it satisfies each of the requirements enumerated below. Taken together, these requirements define the kind of educational organization that the Council considers a part of its institutional universe and within the scope of the accrediting activities for which the Commission assumes responsibility.

To be eligible for consideration by the Commission for candidacy for accreditation (pre-accreditation status), an institution must comply with each of the following eligibility requirements:

a. Meet the Council's definition of 'institution' as described in the Handbook of Accreditation
b. Offer postsecondary instruction exclusively in career and technical education at all campuses on a continuous basis
c. Offer credentials no higher than an applied associate degree
d. Demonstrate the institutional capacity to ensure the following: staffing for administrative and faculty needs, responsible financial and facilities management, and support for the institution's programs and services
e. Utilize a campus-based instructional delivery system with at least 25% of the institution's total Full-Time Equivalency (FTE) being derived from enrollments in traditional (bricks and mortar) instruction
f. Be legally authorized to operate within the jurisdiction in which it is located for a minimum of one year
g. Have been in continuous operation and providing instruction at the main campus and under the same governance for a minimum of one year
h. Have the on-site administrator or other full-time employee at the main campus attend the Candidate Academy within 12 months prior to submitting an application for candidate status

i. Demonstrate that it meets the financial stability requirements for the most recent completed fiscal year (covering 12 months of student class attendance) as stated in Standard 7 - Financial Resources
j. Be in compliance with Federal requirements applicable to accreditation
k. Agree to comply with all requirements of the Council

Institutions with non-main campus sites (affiliates or extensions) **must** meet additional eligibility requirements applicable to those locations. Institutions seeking candidate status with the Commission that have non-main campus sites **must** comply with the following additional eligibility requirements:

a. Demonstrate that the governance of all affiliates and extensions is identical to that of the main campus.
b. Demonstrate that local commanders or chief administrators of non-main campus sites report to the commander or Chief Administrative Official of the main campus.
c. Demonstrate that duplicate records on personnel, financial matters, student attendance, and educational progress for non-main campus sites are kept at the main campus. (NOTE: Duplicate records can be maintained electronically on servers housed at the main campus or via an electronic cloud-based system.)
d. Demonstrate that names of non-main campus sites are identical to that of the main campus. (Names of non-main campus sites may be expanded, with Commission approval, to identify different locations or specific programs.)

The Council does not accredit institutions that demonstrate the following activities:

a. Offer instruction via correspondence education. [See Section VII. Definitions - Correspondence Education.]
b. Operate virtual campuses. That is, campuses accredited by the Council must offer at least one program that includes at least 50% traditional instruction - which demonstrates continuous enrollment - along with any others offered via distance education.
c. Offer degree credentials of any type other than the applied associate degree.

3. Award of Candidate Status

An institution meeting the above requirements **shall** host a candidate visiting team by the Commission (cost to be paid by the institution). The visiting team will submit a written report to the President/CEO within 30 days of the date that the candidate team visit was concluded. The official report will be transmitted to the institution. The institution **must** submit a response to all findings of non-compliance of eligibility and federal regulatory requirements for receipt in the Council office within 30 days of the date that the team report was transmitted from the Council office. (The Commission reserves the right to limit the length of institutional responses to official team reports or other requests for documentation and to require workshop attendance.)

If the team report and the institutional response report show that there is a reasonable expectation of accreditation being achieved within three years, the Commission may grant candidate status to the institution. To become a candidate for accreditation, an institution **must** be approved by the Commission.

An opinion regarding the reasonable expectation of accreditation being achieved within three years is recorded by the visiting team in the official candidate site visit report. The final determination, however, is made by the Commission. This determination is based upon information gathered

through the candidate application and supporting documents, the candidate site visit report, the institution's response to the team report, correspondence between the institution and Council staff or between the Council staff and team members, and/or other sources.

Once candidate status is granted by the Commission, institutions demonstrating progress toward becoming accredited may remain in candidate status for a period not to exceed three years. During the candidacy period, institutions are not permitted to apply for approval of substantive changes of any kind.

Candidate institutions must send an on-site administrator or other full-time employee at the main campus to the Commission-sponsored workshops for the preparation of the Self-Study Report and workshops for submitting the Annual Report prior to hosting an accreditation visiting team.

Institutions accepted as candidates for accreditation must host a team visit for initial accreditation no earlier than six months, and no later than 24 months, after candidate status is granted. An official confirmation of attendance for required workshop attendance must be on file at the time of the accreditation visit.
[See Section III. C. Guidelines and Requirements for Workshop Attendance.]

Institutions that fail to host initial accreditation team visits within 24 months after candidate status is granted will be dropped from candidate status at the next meeting of the Commission.

Candidate institutions **must** maintain continuous compliance with all requirements for candidate status with the Commission. Any violation of these requirements will be cause for the Commission to drop the institution from candidate status.

Institutions that have been dropped from candidate status may not reapply for membership with the Council. Institutions that have voluntarily withdrawn from candidacy may file a new application for candidate for accreditation one year after the effective date of withdrawal.

4. Annual Renewal of Candidate Status

Continuation of candidate status is determined annually by Commission approval of institutional annual reports indicating that candidate institutions are making progress toward meeting the Council's Standards and Criteria.

B. Accreditation

1. Eligibility Requirements

After an institution has been accepted as a candidate for accreditation and becomes an active participant with the Council, the earliest that the institution can host a visiting team for the purpose of initial accreditation is six months after a full-time employee has attended the Commission-sponsored workshops for the preparation of the Self-Study Report and workshops for submitting the Annual Report. To be eligible for accreditation, a Federal institution must comply with the following eligibility requirements:

a. Continue to meet the eligibility requirements to be a candidate for accreditation
b. Occupy its own physical facilities
c. Have students continuously in attendance for a minimum of two years except for regularly scheduled breaks, holidays, and vacation periods

d. Host an initial accreditation team visit no earlier than six months after attending the above-mentioned Self-Study workshops and Annual Report workshops. (The institution must have an official confirmation of attendance for having attended the Candidate Academy and the above-mentioned Self-Study workshops and Annual Report workshops on file at the time of the team visit. See next requirement.)
e. The on-site administrator or other full-time employee at the main campus attended the Commission-sponsored workshops, including those preparing the Self-Study Report, submitting the Annual report, and for initial accreditation, the Candidate Academy within six to eighteen months before hosting the accreditation visiting team.
f. Have undergone a self-study based on the mission of the institution and the Standards and Criteria approved by the Council and have filed the required documents with the Commission
g. Have undergone a visiting team review
h. Have written a letter requesting accreditation and submitted an institutional response to the team report by the commander or Chief Administrative Official of the institution. (The response must be received in the Council office within 30 days of the date that the letter requesting a response was transmitted from the Council office. The Commission reserves the right to limit the length of institutional responses to official team reports or other requests for documentation and to require workshop attendance.)
i. Be accepted by a majority vote of the Commission as meeting the Standards and Criteria of the Council
j. Meet the Council's definition of "institution". [See Section VII. Definitions - Institution.]

Visiting teams for initial accreditation or reaffirmation, once scheduled, will not be rescheduled without good cause (such as major interruption in leadership or operations). Reaffirmation visiting teams must be conducted in the year specified by the Commission. If an accreditation team visit is rescheduled for any reason, the next accreditation cycle will be reduced accordingly, a restrictive status (such as Probation) may be assigned, and a financial penalty may be assessed.

Institutions being considered for initial accreditation must obtain accredited status within 12 months after the first review by the Commission. If initial accreditation has not been granted within the twelve-month period immediately following the first deferral of action, the institution shall be denied initial accreditation.

2. Annual Renewal of Accreditation

Accreditation is for a period of one year from July 1 through the following June 30. Continued accreditation is determined annually by Commission approval of institutional annual reports that verify that accredited institutions are complying with the Council's Standards, Criteria, and Conditions.

3. Reaffirmation of Accreditation

Reaffirmation of accreditation must occur from two to six years after initial accreditation or any subsequent reaffirmation decision. The time interval for reaffirmation is determined by the Commission as a part of its accreditation or reaffirmation decision. Institutions must meet the same requirements for reaffirmation as required for initial accreditation. [See Section III. B. 1. Eligibility Requirements]. At the discretion of the Commission, the institution may be required to undergo reaffirmation earlier than the previously determined year.

Institutions undergoing reaffirmation of accreditation **must** send an eligible representative to the Commission-sponsored workshops for the preparation of the Self-Study Report and workshops for submitting the Annual Report within six to 18 months prior to hosting the reaffirmation visiting team. [See Section III. C. Guidelines and Requirements for Workshop Attendance.] Beginning six months prior to the original scheduled dates established for hosting an accreditation visiting team, a moratorium on substantive change approvals (both initial and final) will be in effect and will remain in place until the institution has been granted reaffirmation of accreditation.

Institutions being considered for reaffirmation of accreditation **must** obtain reaffirmation within 12 months after the first deferral of action by the Commission. If reaffirmation has not been granted within the twelve-month period immediately following the first deferral of action, the institution shall be dropped from accreditation.

An institution that has been dropped from accreditation may file an appeal of the Commission's decision in accordance with the Commission's policies on appealing Commission decisions. [See Section IV. E. 3. Appealable Actions, and the Policies and Rules of the Commission, Appeal Process.]

C. Guidelines and Requirements for Workshop Attendance

As stated at the beginning of this Handbook:

> Accreditation has two fundamental purposes: (1) to ensure the quality of the institution or program and (2) to assist in the improvement of the institution or program.

Self-study activities conducted by institutions, to include annual reporting, and team visits to evaluate compliance with Standards fulfill the first part of that statement. The second part – improvement – is completely dependent upon the Council providing opportunities for improvement **and** the active participation and depth of involvement of commands and individuals seeking improvement.

Membership of institutions with the Council is voluntary. So, too, is attendance at Council conferences and training activities beyond the minimum requirements described in this section. However, the Council strongly encourages **frequent** participation of command representatives in annual conferences and training activities, as well as a deeper level of involvement in specific accreditation activities in order to more fully benefit from the opportunities the Council provides - benefits that cannot be attained by compliance with minimum requirements.

Council conferences and meetings provide members with up-to-date information on changes to Council bylaws, policies, rules, and academic standards. Staying abreast of these changes will help member institutions obtain the academic quality and rigor expected of federal training organizations, as well as meet the academic criteria and exhibits required to reaffirm accreditation annually.

Serving as team members and leaders on accreditation site visits, involvement on committees for standards and policies development, engagement in critical topic discussions at the Summer and Annual Conferences and being present at the Annual Business Session to vote on accreditation Standards changes are but a few of the opportunities offered by Council to its membership to fulfill the second purpose as stated above, 'to assist in the improvement of the institution or program'. The rest depends on the commitment of the command and its representatives who seek to improve and maintain the highest educational standards possible.

Attendance at Commission-sponsored workshops is a requirement before Commission review and approval of certain accreditation statuses.

1. Eligible Representatives

Full-time institutional employees who serve as administrators, liaisons, faculty, and staff of institutions seeking candidate status or accreditation with the Council are eligible to attend required workshops and earn official confirmations of attendance that enable the submission of candidate applications and the scheduling of accreditation team visits. (See specific timelines described in the subsections below.)

The following persons are not eligible to meet these attendance requirements:

1. Institutional employees whose offices are not located at a main campus of an institution
2. Consultants who are contracted to assist institutions with the accreditation process
3. Contractors hired to provide products or services to candidate and accredited institutions

Official confirmations of attendance that were earned by former administrators, liaisons, faculty, or staff, are null and void upon their departure from or termination by the institution. Because of this possibility, it may be in the institution's best interest to have more than one eligible representative attend workshops required by the Council.

When workshop attendance is required for a topic that is offered in multiple parts (i.e., Self-Study Part 1 and Self-Study Part 2), all parts of the workshop must be attended by the same individual in order for that individual to earn an official confirmation of attendance.

2. Candidate for Accreditation

Institutions interested in membership with the Council must attend a series of workshops (the Candidate Academy) before an application for approval of candidate status can be submitted. Once an official confirmation of attendance for the Candidate Academy is earned, an institution interested in membership with the Council must submit the application for candidacy within 12 months after the date of attendance.

Institutions accepted as candidates for accreditation must host a team visit for initial accreditation no earlier than six months, and no later than 24 months, after candidate status is granted. An official confirmation of attendance for required attendance at Commission-sponsored workshops for the preparation of the Self-Study Report and workshops for submitting the Annual Report must be on file at the time of the accreditation visit.

Institutions that fail to submit their applications for candidacy within 12 months of attending the Candidate Academy must repeat their attendance at this workshop before submitting an application for candidacy. Institutions that fail to host their initial accreditation visit within 18 months of attending the Commission-sponsored workshops for the preparation of the Self-Study Report and workshops for submitting the Annual Report must attend the above-mentioned Self-Study workshops and Annual Report workshops at either the COE Summer Conference or COE Annual Meeting within six to 18 months of hosting their initial accreditation visit.

3. Reaffirmation of Accreditation

Institutions currently accredited by the Council that are preparing to host a visiting team for reaffirmation of accreditation must attend the Self-Study Workshop and workshops for submitting the Annual Report required by the Council. These official confirmations of attendance must be earned no less than six months before – and no more than 18 months before – the institution hosts its team visit. Failure to attend these workshops within this time period may be grounds for an institution to be placed on Probation, and will result in the postponement of the accreditation team visit, the levy of a financial penalty, and a reduction in the number of years between accreditation visits. [See Section V. 9. e. Fees and f. Penalties.]

4. Annual Reporting

Attendance at workshops for submitting the institutional Annual Report (and for reporting student achievement data) is required of candidates for accreditation and accredited institutions. Earning these official confirmations of attendance is required as part of the application process for candidate status and the accreditation visit cycle for accredited institutions, as established by the Commission. Institutions must provide documentation (workshop official confirmations of attendance) that this requirement is met no less than six months, and no more than 18 months, before an institution hosts a team visit for initial accreditation or reaffirmation of accreditation.

5. Team Member/Team Leader Certification

Those who volunteer to serve as the leaders and members of team visits conducted by the Council for candidate status, accreditation, substantive changes, and other circumstances, are required to be certified in the team reporting processes of the Council every three (3) years. Attendance at workshops for team member/team leader certification will fulfill this requirement.

Those who wish to serve as team leaders must maintain team member certification as well as team leader certification.

Subject to disclosure on the Conflict-of-Interest Form, due to the limited number of sector institutions and the sensitive nature of some of the programs, Federal institutions may utilize Team Members from the same state.

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SECTION IV
The Accreditation Process

The components of the accreditation process described below represent the primary means through which the objectives of COE as an accrediting agency are addressed. The process incorporates a comprehensive institutional self-study, peer evaluation, and decision of the Commission based on the Council-approved Standards and Criteria for accreditation.

A. The Self-Study

The purpose of the self-study report is to require the institution to engage in a self-evaluation process that assesses the institution's education quality and success in meeting its mission and objectives, highlights opportunities for improvement, and includes a plan for making those improvements. The Council provides a manual for creating the Self-Study Report that each institution, via institutional personnel, is expected to use in planning, conducting, and assembling its self-study.

Use of Consultants

The use of consultants is optional to assist in the self-study process, however, the vast majority of institutions, large and small, achieve accreditation solely through the efforts of their faculty and staff. Clear indication **must** exist that the faculty and staff were responsible for preparing, revising, and editing any documents required in the accreditation process. Within seven days after employing a consultant for the purpose of assisting in the accreditation process, an institution **must** submit a copy of the consultant's resume to the Council. A consultant may provide assistance to the institution by conducting an on-site workshop for one or more of the following purposes:

1. Acquainting the administration and staff with the self-study process
2. Providing an explanation of the content of the accreditation Standards and Criteria
3. Lending assistance in organizing the self-study effort to maximize staff participation
4. Identifying the types of exhibits or other documentation needed to support or complement the Self-Study Report

Attendance of a consultant at a Commission-sponsored Candidate Academy or workshops for the preparation of the Self-Study Report and for submitting the Annual Report does not satisfy the requirements for workshop attendance by the staff and/or faculty of the institution seeking accreditation.

Consultants may not serve as leaders or members of visiting teams scheduled for institutions for which they have contracted their services. Additionally, consultants must not be present during Council site visits required for candidacy, accreditation, focused review, or approval of substantive changes. Anyone who violates this policy will be permanently barred from participation in visiting teams or any other accreditation activity conducted by the Council.

Consultants may not serve in the role of Accreditation Liaison Official (ALO) for an institution and should not contact the Council office for information on behalf of the institution.

Redacting Personally Identifiable Information (PII)

While it will be necessary for visiting COE Volunteer Teams or COE Staff to review documents that contain PII during a visit, every effort must be made to redact any personally identifiable information submitted to COE via email or through the EDvera system, including in your institution's Self-Study Report (SSR). Any PII submitted to COE will be sent back to the institution as COE does not collect and store any PII about your students. This means that any direct student identifiers, such as a student's name, social security number, and other information that directly identifies a specific individual. FERPA compliance requires educational institutions to protect student privacy by limiting access to and controlling the disclosure of education records. (See Policies and Rules of the Commission, pgs. 91-92).

B. The Site Visit

The primary responsibility of the visiting team is to determine whether or not the institution is in compliance with the Standards and Criteria required for accreditation by the Council. The visiting team assesses the quality of an institution in light of its stated mission using the Standards and Criteria of the Council as the basis for the assessment. Information sources utilized by team members in conducting the on-site evaluation include the institutional Self-Study Report, documentation available at the institution, interviews with individuals associated with the institution, and observation of conditions and practices.

The Commission is responsible for establishing requirements related to visiting teams. Those requirements are presented in a separate document containing the guidelines for accreditation visiting teams.

Consultants, if retained, must not be present during Council site visits required for candidacy, accreditation, focused review, or approval of substantive changes.

C. COE Fellow

The Fellows will function as liaisons for COE during accreditation and pre-accreditation visits. The primary responsibility of the Fellow is strictly preparatory and advisory, whereby supporting team leaders and institutional readiness.

In support of COE's commitment to continuous improvement, the Fellows will play a key role in enhancing both the efficiency and the consistency of the accreditation and reaffirmation processes.

D. Preliminary Visit

As part of the accreditation process for institutions seeking initial or reaffirmation of accreditation, the Council utilizes a designated COE Fellow to conduct a Preliminary Visit prior to the full site visit. The purpose of this visit is to provide an early observation of the institution's readiness and to ensure alignment with the Council's Standards, Criteria, and Conditions.

E. Accreditation Onboarding Policy for Transiting Institutions

I. Purpose and Scope

In accordance with federal guidance provided in Dear Colleague Letter GEN-25-03, the Council on Occupational Education (COE) has established this policy to guide institutions

seeking to transfer their accreditation from another U.S. Department of Education–recognized accrediting agency to COE. This process ensures that institutions are aligned with COE's Mission, Standards, and Conditions of Accreditation prior to being granted initial accreditation.

This policy applies only to institutions that:
- Hold accreditation in good standing from another U.S. Department of Education–recognized institutional accrediting agency, and
- Seek to designate COE as their primary institutional accreditor.

II. Policy Statement
Institutions requesting a transfer of accreditation to COE must undergo a five-phase process designed to assess institutional eligibility, readiness, compliance, and alignment with COE's standards. Accreditation is not automatically granted as a result of prior accreditation with another agency.

COE reserves the right to determine whether the institution may proceed through each phase based on eligibility and compliance with federal and COE-specific requirements.

III. Procedural Overview

Phase 1: Initial Inquiry and Eligibility Screening
Objective: Determine institutional eligibility to pursue accreditation with COE.

Required Submissions:
- Letter of Good Standing from current accrediting agency
- Preliminary Application for Institutions Seeking to Change Accrediting Agencies including:
Institutional Information
Accreditation Details
Programs Offered
Rationale for seeking transfer to COE
Number of years accredited with current agency
Dual accrediting agencies, if applicable
Name of Liaison, if applicable
Required Attachments

Outcome: Institutions that meet COE's basic eligibility criteria will be invited to participate in the mandatory Transition to COE Accreditation Workshop.

Phase 2: Transition to COE Accreditation Workshop
Objective: Provide institutional leadership with orientation to COE's accreditation philosophy, standards, and transfer process.

Details:
- Attendance is mandatory
- Topics include:
• Overview of COE's Standards and Conditions of Accreditation
• The Provisional Transfer process
• Site visit expectations and timelines
• Compliance requirements in alignment with GEN-25-03
Outcome: Satisfactory participation is required to proceed to Phase 3.

Phase 3: Provisional Transfer I (PTI) – Months 0–6

Objective: Assess institutional readiness, structure, and compliance preparation.
Requirements:
- Execution of a Provisional Transfer Agreement
- Submission of:
• Organizational structure and staffing data
• Sample program curricula and objectives
• Enrollment information
• Compliance documentation including student services and outcomes
- Participation in technical assistance sessions and submission reviews
- Completion of mandatory workshops at Spring Accreditation Institute or COE Annual Meeting

Outcome: Institutions demonstrating satisfactory readiness will advance to Phase 4.

Phase 4: Provisional Transfer II (PTII) – Months 6–12
Objective: Conduct a formal evaluation to determine accreditation readiness.
Requirements:
- Host an official Accreditation Visit conducted by COE Fellows or evaluators
- Receive a written evaluation report from COE
- Respond to Findings of Non-Compliance (if applicable)

Outcomes:
- Accreditation Awarded
- Deferral
- Termination

Phase 5: Accreditation and Ongoing Memberships
Objective: Finalize institutional transition and integrate into COE's full accreditation cycle.

Requirements:
- Commission vote to approve initial accreditation
- Completion of any pending workshop requirements
- Initiation of two to six-year reaffirmation cycle
- Submission of Annual Report and full compliance with COE policies

IV. Conditions and Limitations
- COE does not guarantee acceptance or accreditation to institutions currently accredited by another agency.
- Institutions may not claim candidate or accredited status until formally notified by COE.
- All institutions must remain in good standing with their current accreditor until transition is complete, unless otherwise approved.
- Institutions undergoing federal or state investigation or adverse action may be deemed ineligible.

V. Point of Contact
For questions related to the transfer of accreditation process, institutions may contact:

Monique Campbell
Director of Membership Services & Training
Council on Occupational Education

F. Site Visit Review Policy

I. Preliminary Visit The purpose of the visit is to provide an early observation of the institution's readiness and ensure alignment with the Council's Conditions and Standards. A current institutional self-study must be completed and submitted to COE by the institution's faculty and staff sixty (60) days before the site visit is made. The purpose of the preliminary visit is to assure the Commission that the institution is prepared for the team visit and to finalize arrangements for the team visit.

Assignment of the COE Fellow

• COE Fellow are trained by the COE Staff Member

• COE Fellow is assigned by the COE Staff to perform the preliminary site visit prior to the full site visit.

• COE Fellow's purpose is strictly preparatory and advisory, whereby supporting the team leaders and institutional readiness

• Functions as liaisons for COE during accreditation and pre-accreditation visits.

Timelines

• COE Fellow will conduct a Preliminary Visit Conference call six (6) months before the reaffirmation visit

• Institutions may begin the upload process in EDVera five (5) months prior to the scheduled visit

• Current "Draft" of the institutional self-study uploaded into EDVera four (4) months prior to the scheduled visit

• Preliminary Visit Entrance Meeting ninety (90) days prior to the scheduled team visit

• Preliminary Visit Exit Meeting at the conclusion of the Preliminary Visit

• COE Fellow completes the Preliminary Visit Exit Meeting with the following individuals:

▪COE assigned team leader

▪Chief Administrative Officer and or COE Liaison

• Preliminary report summary

▪Submitted by Fellow to Team Leader and COE Staff

▪Fifteen (15) days following the Preliminary Visit Exit meeting

▪Final Draft of the Institutional Self Study Uploaded in EDVera

▪Sixty (60) days prior to the scheduled team visit

▪COE Staff assigns team leader to the Self-Study in EDvera

II. Accreditation Kick Off Meeting

• The Team Leader will conduct the Accreditation Kick Off Meeting with the team and the COE Fellow.

• The Team Leader will inform the site visit team of the Fellow's observations during the Preliminary Visit Entrance Meeting as well as to inform the team of the Fellow's supportive role during the team visit.

• At least 2 months (60) days prior to the scheduled team visit

III. Site Visit The purpose of the site visit is for the team to evaluate the institution's evidence and documentation to verify the extent to which it appears that the institution is demonstrating that it meets eligibility requirements, and to provide information for the Commission to determine that there is reasonable expectation for the institution to become accredited within two to six years.

The site visit will consist of the following:

• **Team Member Assignments**

▪Expertise in the educational program assignment

▪Expertise in administrative assignments

▪Assignment of no more than 7 total standards comprised of

▪No more than 4 programs

▪No more than 5 standards

• **Visiting team of at least 2 members to include**

▪Team Leader with expertise in administration and has served as a Team Member for at least two team site visits and completed the required Team Leader Training

▪Team Member with expertise in administration and completed the Team Member Training.

• **Sufficient duration to conduct the site visit based on the following:**

▪Number of programs offered

▪Number of locations

▪Student enrollment

IV. Self-Study The purpose of the self-study report is to require the institution to engage in a self-evaluation process that assesses the institution's education quality and success in meeting its mission and objectives, highlights opportunities for improvement, and includes a plan for making those improvements. The Council provides a manual for creating the Self-Study Report that each institution, via institutional personnel, is expected to use in planning, conducting, and assembling its self-study.

• Self-Study Evaluation

▪Review narratives and supporting documentation based on Standards and Conditions

▪Team reviews the documentation uploaded in the EDVera to ensure the evidence and documentation requirements are met

▪Team collaboration on evidence and documentation validation and the team request for additional information if needed

•Team Interviews to confirm institutional evidence and documentation with the following ▪Faculty

▪Staff

▪Students

• Tour facilities(s), locations, and work base sites

• Documentation of the Self Study evaluation in EDVera

▪No items of concern with the Standards and Conditions will be a "Yes" response

▪Items of concern with the Standards and Conditions will be a "No" response accompanied by a written narrative response

▪Not Applicable to the Standards and Conditions

▪Commendations suggested by the visiting Team

▪Recommendations suggested by the visiting Team

V. Team Visit Exit Meeting

The purpose of the Team Exit meeting is to allow visiting team the opportunity to share the following with the Institution:

• Standards and Conditions Evidence and Documentation

○ Areas in which the institution did not have items of concern based on the information submitted.

• Standards and Conditions that are identified as Items of Concern

○ Standards and Conditions in which the team did find items of concern based on the evidence provided

• Institutional Commendations

○ Areas in which an institution excelled in one or more Standards and Conditions

• Institutional Suggestions

○ Areas in which team offers suggestions for improvement

VI. Team Report

The Team Report provides written documentation of institutional items of concern.

• Responsibilities of the Team Leaders

▪Explains the purpose and requirements of responding to the team report to the institution ▪ ☿Submit the team report within 30 days of the Team Exit meeting in EDVera

• Responsibilities of the Institution

○ No Items of Concerns

▪Must write a letter acknowledging receipt of the team report and request initial accreditation or reaffirmation of accreditation to the Commission.

▪Must be received within 30 days of the date the team report was transmitted from the Council office

Items of Concern

▪Must submit an Institutional Response in EDVera addressing each item of concern

▪Describe each item of concern

▪Submit documentation action taken by the institution to demonstrate the items of concerns have been properly addressed for the Commission to review

▪Must be received within 30 days of the date the team report was transmitted from the Council Office

VII. Commission Review The purpose of the Commission review is to examine the team reports and the response to the team reports. The Commission may make the following recommendations:

• _Provide Accreditation or Reaffirmation Status

o The Commission reviews the institution's letter acknowledging receipt of the team report and request initial accreditation or reaffirmation of accreditation to the Commission.

o Grant initial accreditation or reaffirmation (NOTE: The Commission may dictate the duration of the accreditation status)

o Defer initial accreditation or reaffirmation statues until next Commission meeting due to:

▪Lack of supportive documentation to demonstrate compliance

▪Need to request additional information from institution

▪Unable to provide supportive documentation within the 30 days due to but not limited to:

▪Unable to conduct necessary advisory board meetings within the time specified frame

▪Unforeseen Substantive changes due to natural disasters and or governmental mandates. o

▪Impose Statuses

▪Notification of Apparent Deficiency

▪Warning

▪Probation

o Deny initial accreditation or reaffirmation of accreditation

G. Institutional Response Report

In those instances where a visiting team reports a failure of an institution to comply with one or more Standards, Criteria, and/or Conditions for accreditation (i.e., when the team makes one or more findings of non-compliance), the institution is required to take corrective action immediately. The institution **must** submit a written report that addresses each violation by describing and documenting the action taken by the institution to comply with the requirement. (The Commission reserves the right to limit the length of institutional responses to official team reports or other requests for documentation and to require workshop attendance.)

Institutions that receive no findings or suggestions in an official team report must write a letter acknowledging receipt of the team report and requesting initial accreditation, reaffirmation of accreditation, approval of the substantive change, or a positive determination after the Commission's review of a focused visit team report.

Institutional responses (reports or letters) **must** be received within 30 days of the date that the team report was transmitted from the Council office. Specific instructions for preparing and submitting the institutional response report are published in the Guidelines for Accreditation Visiting Teams adopted by the Commission.

The Commission often requests the submission of additional documentation as part of the review process before action is taken on a variety of matters. When the Commission requests additional documentation, it reserves the right to limit the length of institutional responses to official team reports or other requests for documentation and to require workshop attendance.

H. Annual Documentation Required for Renewal of Candidacy or Accreditation

Continued candidate status or accreditation is determined annually by Commission approval of institutional annual reports. Candidate institutions **must** show progress toward meeting Standards and Criteria, and accredited institutions **must** show that they are complying with Standards, Criteria, and Conditions for continued accreditation.

The institution **must** provide applicable information requested in the annual report. Reporting substantive changes in the annual report does not constitute written notification of these changes to the Council.

Failure to submit an annual report or additional information regarding the annual report by the due date established by the Commission **shall** be grounds for an institution to lose its candidate or accredited status.

I. Institutional Eligibility Requirements for Candidacy

• Council on Occupational Education's Definition of an Institution

- A school, center, unit, or other provider of occupational education,
- An institution is a physical location **at the address identified on the application** (a brick and mortar **educational facility**) where students, faculty, administrators, and other staff are present and where primary and supportive resources are available to instruct students in each course required of every approved program offered by the institution.
- This includes the designation of physical areas (classrooms, lab areas, administrative and common areas) appropriate for meeting the needs of students, staff, faculty, and others present at the campus.

• Specific Eligibility Requirements

- Must be legally authorized to or licensed to operate as provider of postsecondary education
- Must be legally authorized to operate within the jurisdiction in which it is located for a minimum of one year **by applicable regulatory agencies.**
- Have been in possession of current and applicable licensure/authorization for a minimum of one year **by applicable regulatory agencies**. (Note- approvals for specific programs issued by state, federal, or other agencies are not synonymous with the Council's definition of an institution).

(Note- approvals for specific programs issued by state, federal, or other agencies are not synonymous with the Council's definition of an institution).

J. Commission Action

1. Possible Commission Decisions

The Commission has a variety of options for action when making decisions regarding the award, maintenance, or termination of status with the Council for candidate and accredited institutions. The following options are available:

a. Grant candidate status
b. Deny candidate status
c. Renew candidate status (based on submission and approval of an institutional annual report)
d. Drop from candidacy (this action may be taken for individual programs or locations)
e. Grant initial accreditation
f. Deny initial accreditation
g. Renew accreditation (based on submission and approval of an institutional annual report)
h. Reaffirm accreditation
i. Deny reaffirmation of accreditation
j. Impose statuses:
   (1) Notification of Apparent Deficiency
   (2) Warning
   (3) Probation
   (4) Show Cause Order
k. Defer decisions
l. Drop from accreditation (this action may be taken for individual programs or locations)
m. Grant approval of substantive changes
n. Deny approval of substantive changes

The review of the status of any institution may be conducted periodically as specified in the

procedures of the Commission. A focused review may be prompted by a notice of substantive change; by a complaint; by notification of possible unethical conduct; or by a possible violation of Standards, Criteria, or Condition adopted by the Council. The Commission may take the same actions in both periodic and ancillary visits regarding the institution's status.

With respect to institutions which are currently holding Candidate for Accreditation status, the Commission reviews the Self-Study Report, visiting team report, institutional response, and other sources of information to choose one of three alternative actions: (1) continue candidate status, (2) grant initial accreditation, or (3) deny initial accreditation.

With respect to institutions that are currently accredited, the Commission may continue the institution's accredited status, may assign any of four statuses, or may drop the institution from accreditation.

If the Commission acts to drop an institution from candidate or accredited status, it may act to extend candidacy or accreditation for a period of time reasonable for completing activities outlined in its teach-out plan or to fulfill the obligations of any teach-out agreements to assist students in transferring or completing their programs.

Institutions will be notified within 30 days of adverse Commission decisions which affect their candidate or accredited status by letter sent by certified mail or other signature-required delivery service addressed to the commander or Chief Administrative Official. The letter includes: the decision, a statement of the substance of the basis for the decision, and the deadline for an institutional response or appeal which may be permitted.

In all cases where the number of days for taking action or making a response is specified, "days" means calendar days unless otherwise indicated. In all situations specifying the number of days within which the institution is required to make a response, the deadline is computed from the date the notice prompting such a reply was transmitted by the Commission.

The Commission may, to provide time for supplementary activity, choose not to take action but may defer its decision. Such a deferral causes an institution's status to remain unchanged unless the Commission, in announcing its deferral action, specifies otherwise.

If in the judgment of the Commission the conditions warrant, the Commission may impose one of the four statuses on an institution. A status may be withdrawn by the Commission upon clarification or remediation, but is not subject to appeal.

The four statuses are defined as follows:

Monitoring Status

Notification of Apparent Deficiency—Notification of Apparent Deficiency is a status which signifies that the institution is apparently deficient with respect to a requirement of the Commission. The institution has 30 calendar days to respond. This status may be removed at any time by the Commission upon clarification or remediation of the apparent deficiency or may be changed by the Commission to a violation status.

Violation Statuses

Violation statuses are imposed by the Commission when, after a thorough review of issue-specific documentation, it determines that an institution is in violation of one or more of the Standards, Criteria, and/or Conditions of the Council. Violation statuses, when imposed, are a matter of public record and will be published on the Council's website in the form of a

notification.

Time Period for Compliance

The Commission will require the institution to demonstrate compliance with the agency's Standards, Criteria, and/or Conditions in a time period specified by the Commission, but not to exceed

(1) twelve months, if the program, or the longest program offered by the institution is less than one year in length;
(2) eighteen months, if the program, or the longest program offered by the institution, is at least one year, but less than two years in length; or
(3) two years, if the program, or the longest program offered by the institution, is at least two years in length.

The Commission may use its discretion to specify a time period for compliance that is more restrictive than those listed above, based upon circumstances. Once the stated time period for compliance expires, the institution will be subject to adverse action to be effective by the deadline specified in the Commission's letter. The Commission may extend the time period for compliance with good cause.

Violation statuses can be restrictive or nonrestrictive. A nonrestrictive violation status allows an institution to come before the Commission to seek a grant of initial accreditation or reaffirmation of accreditation, and to apply for substantive change approval. Restrictive violations, however, prevent an institution from seeking a grant of initial accreditation or reaffirmation of accreditation, or approval of any substantive change.

Warning—Warning is a nonrestrictive status imposed by the Commission if it determines that an institution is in violation of one or more of the Standards, Criteria, and/or Conditions of the Council. The Commission will require the institution to submit periodic reports during the imposition of this status in order to determine the institution's progress toward compliance. The types and the requirements for reporting will be established by the Commission and may include, but are not limited to, reports on financial stability, administrative capability, and program outcomes. Compliance must be demonstrated within a time period not to exceed that which is based on the length of the longest program offered by the institution (above), but may be more restrictive, based upon circumstances. The deadline for compliance may be extended with good cause. An ancillary visit may include a Commission representative, as required.

Probation—Probation is a restrictive status imposed when, in the judgment of the Commission, there is a violation of Standards, Criteria, and/or Conditions of the Council that must be corrected or the institution will suffer loss of candidate status or accreditation. Probation may be imposed for a period not to exceed one year. Imposition of this status will not extend the original time period for compliance previously specified by the Commission unless good cause has been demonstrated by the institution.

Show Cause Order—Show Cause is a restrictive status assigned by the Commission because of one or more serious violations of the Standards, Criteria, and/or Conditions of the Council. Once imposed, Show Cause provides an institution with 30 calendar days to show why it should not be dropped. Imposition of this status will not extend the original time period for compliance previously specified by the Commission unless good cause has been demonstrated by the institution.

- In the event the Commission provides a written notice of a final decision of Probation, Show Cause or an initiated adverse action the notification of that decision will be sent to the identified parties and follow the required timeline as

documented in Section 602.26 of the U.S. Department of Education Office of Postsecondary Education Accreditation Group Accreditation Handbook. The Commission in its discretion to monitor said institutions will also require additional documentation which includes, but is not limited to, an institutional Teach-out Plan (with agreements as necessary), Audited Same Day Balance Sheet, Financial Viability Compliance Plan covering past, current and projected enrollment by program, past, current and projected staffing levels, Monthly Revenue and Expenditures, Monthly Accounts Receivable and Payable.

As stated previously, initial accreditation or reaffirmation of accreditation will not be granted during the time that a restrictive violation status is imposed. Substantive change applications will not be processed, whether new or pending, before the resolution of a restrictive violation status (Probation or Show Cause) or pending of an appeal of a decision of the Commission.

When an institution continues to be in violation of Standards, Criteria, and/or Conditions after being placed on Warning, Probation, or issued a Show Cause Order, or where circumstances are deemed sufficiently compelling, the Commission has the responsibility to take an Adverse Action against an institution (e.g., drop the institution from candidate or accredited status, deny initial accreditation or reaffirmation of accreditation, etc.), no later than the original deadline for compliance, if any, as stated in the Commission's letter. The Commission shall notify the Chief Administrative Official/commander of the institution as to the nature of the action and the procedure to be followed if an appeal is filed. The decision of the Commission is final, subject to the appeal procedure, and will be made known to the public.

No institutional response is required; however, an institution may choose to follow the appeals procedure described in Section IV.E.3. Appealable Actions.

An institution that does not choose to appeal may comment in writing regarding the Commission's action provided the response complies with Commission procedures and is received by the Commission within 20 calendar days of the notice of the Commission's action. Any response received by the Commission within 20 calendar days shall be included in the Commission's final report to the appropriate federal and/or special agencies.

The Commission need not follow any specific sequence in the assignment of statuses. Assignment to any one status is not required before an institution may be assigned to another status. Ordinarily, Warning, Probation, and Show Cause Order status will be assigned in succession to provide an opportunity for remediation and correction before a decision is made by the Commission to drop the institution from accreditation or candidate status. It is important to note that the original time period for compliance specified in the Commission's letter is the maximum length of time allowed to remedy a violation - including the successive assignment of other statuses that may occur during that period. However, where the Commission deems the circumstances sufficiently extreme to warrant a prompt response, it may drop an institution without the prior assignment of any status.

2. Appearance before the Commission

Since all Commission decisions are based upon written documents, there are normally two instances where officials of an institution might appear before the Commission:

a. Upon request by the Commission for the purpose of answering questions concerning an accreditation matter
b. Upon approval of the President/CEO when the institution is making a special request of the Commission

All requests to appear before the Commission **must** be submitted in writing to the President/CEO and be received at least 30 days prior to the scheduled meeting. Such a request must describe in detail why the appearance is necessary. Documentation supporting the request must be submitted with the letter.

The President/CEO may approve the request at which time the institution will be informed of the date, time, and place of the appearance. In the event the President/CEO defers action on a request to appear, the matter is taken before the Executive Committee for review and action.

3. Appealable Actions

Institutions that have filed a complete application for candidate status, institutions that are accredited by the Commission, and institutions that are seeking approval of a change of governance or control may appeal the following actions of the Commission:

a. Denial of candidate status
b. Drop from candidate status
c. Decision to deny initial accreditation or reaffirmation of accreditation after the self-study is conducted and a team visit has been hosted
d. Decision to drop from accreditation (membership)
e. Decision to deny approval of a change of governance or control

An appeal shall be based on one or more of the following grounds:

a. Errors and/or omissions in applying the Standards, Criteria, and/or Conditions of the Council were made by the evaluation team(s) and/or the Commission.
b. Demonstrable bias or prejudice was displayed by one or more members of the Commission, which significantly affected the decision.
c. The documentation before the Commission at the time of the negative decision was materially in error.
d. The decision of the Commission was contrary to the substantial weight of the documentation.

If an institution is aggrieved by any one of the four actions listed above, the Chief Administrative Official/commander of the institution, with the approval of the governing board of the institution, must give notice of intent to appeal such action to be received in the Commission office within 20 calendar days of the date of the notice of the Commission's action. The notice shall be submitted to the Commission's President/CEO in the form of a letter sent by certified mail or other signature-required delivery service. The letter **must** include the following components:

a. A request that an appeal board be convened
b. The specific grounds for the request with a statement explaining the reason(s) for each ground
c. Documentation (such as a copy of a resolution) showing the approval of such appeal action taken by the institution's governing board
d. A statement in the letter indicating the willingness of the institution to abide by the appeals conditions and procedures

The request **shall** be accompanied by a cashier's check in the amount of $35,000 to cover the necessary cost of the appeal. The $35,000 consists of a $5,000 notice-of-intent-to-appeal fee (non-refundable) and a $30,000 deposit to cover the costs of the appeal board proceedings. Any funds left over from the deposit will be refunded to the institution. Should there be an outstanding balance after

the deposit is applied, the institution must pay the outstanding balance.

Upon proper notice of intention to appeal, the prior status of the institution, if any, shall be restored and will remain the same pending the disposition of the appeal.

The Commission is responsible for defining the procedures to be used in the appeal process so as to ensure that the process is fair and equitable for all affected parties.

4. Arbitration Policy

Pursuant to 20 U.S.C. §1099b(e) and 34 CFR §600.4 (c), the U.S. Secretary of Education may not recognize the accreditation of any institution of higher education unless the institution of higher education agrees to submit any dispute involving the final denial, withdrawal, or termination of accreditation to initial arbitration prior to any other legal action. Candidates for accreditation and accredited institutions shall acknowledge on the candidate application and in the Annual Report submission that any dispute involving the final denial, withdrawal, or termination of accreditation to initial arbitration prior to any other legal action. The Arbitration policy is detailed in the Policy and Rules of the Commission publication pages 41-45).

5. Resolution of Disagreements

a. Interpretation of Membership Agreements

As a condition of receiving any status with the Council, each institution agrees that agreements created by the Commission's granting such status **shall** be deemed to have been entered into in Fulton County, Georgia, and shall be interpreted in accordance with the laws of the State of Georgia. Further, each institution agrees that jurisdiction and venue for any action which might arise from any membership agreement between the institution and the Council, regardless of which party shall initiate the action, **shall** be exclusively in the United States District Court for the Northern District of Georgia or the state courts of Fulton County, Georgia, whichever of these courts shall have proper subject matter jurisdiction.

b. Litigation Bond

An institution that files suit against the Council **shall** be required to post a bond of $100,000 per location. Should the court rule in favor of the Council, the institution **shall** pay all court costs, Council attorney fees, and all other costs incurred by the Council in its defense.

SECTION V
Obligations of Affiliation

Affiliation of an institution with the Council creates certain obligations that must be met by the institution. Those obligations are grouped and described below under two headings: Administrative and Substantive.

A. Administrative Obligations

1. Chief Administrative Official (CAO)

Each institution must designate an accreditation Chief Administrative Official (CAO) and notify the Council when the CAO changes. The CAO is a senior employee who serves as the administrative head of a federal or military institution and is the person with whom primary responsibility for institutional operation rests. The CAO is the first contact of record for the Council and is the person to whom official correspondence regarding accreditation will be addressed. The CAO holds the authority (either positional or delegated) to requisition institutional resources and direct activities toward the achievement and maintenance of obligations of affiliation with the Council. The CAO must be a full-time employee of the institution and must maintain his/her office on-site at the main campus.

2. Accreditation Liaison Official (ALO)

Each institution must designate an Accreditation Liaison Official (ALO) by notifying the Council. The ALO must be a permanent, full-time staff member at the main campus of the institution - other than the Chief Administrative Official (CAO). This is the person with whom the Commission staff will discuss accreditation matters concerning the institution when the CAO or commander is not available. However, when authorized as such by the CAO of a federal or military institution, the ALO may serve as the primary contact.

3. Accreditation Manager (AM)

Many organizations will often designate an individual, who is not a part of the command team, to manage accreditation, annual reporting, and the development of the Self-Study Report. Any individual who is in this role must be a part of all communications between COE and the organization. Therefore, each institution may choose to, but is not required to, designate an Accreditation Manager (AM) by notifying the Council. The AM must be a permanent, full-time staff member at the main campus of the institution - other than the Chief Administrative Official or Accreditation Liaison Official. The AM will be able to communicate directly with COE to plan, ask questions, and generally manage the organization's accreditation processes, files, etc. to keep them current with the annual changes from the Commission. This individual should also be a primary person to attend annual COE conferences to stay abreast of annual accreditation updates.

4. Official Communications

Only written communication from the Commission will be considered official. Official communications from the Commission to candidate or accredited institutions shall be transmitted to the main campus Chief Administrative Official (CAO), commander, or, if applicable, to the institution's Accreditation Liaison Official (ALO). Official communications from candidate or accredited institutions must be from

the main campus CAO, commander, or, if applicable, from the institution's ALO and in written form. (Written communications may be transmitted to the Commission via email or forms provided on the Council's website.)

5. Requested Report or Documentation

Decisions are made by the Commission based on written documentation. Self-certification (attestations) will not be accepted by the Commission as written documentation of compliance with any Condition, Criterion, or policy.

Any report or documentation requested by the Commission must arrive in the Council office by the date due. Failure to submit any report or documentation requested by the due date **shall** be grounds for an institution to lose its candidate or accredited status.

6. Confidentiality of Materials

The accreditation of occupational education institutions by the Commission is an activity requiring a high degree of confidentiality. The findings of non-compliance (if any), suggestions, and other information relating to an institution are, by implied agreement, exchanged within an atmosphere of trust, confidentiality, and professional integrity. The Commission makes such information available to the participating institution and to other agencies, accrediting bodies, institutions, or individuals only upon the approval of the participating institution, pursuant to these conditions; as required by law; or as required by federal regulations applicable to accrediting agencies recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education.

The participating institution may disseminate any of the information it receives from the Commission; however, experience has indicated such dissemination should occur only after the completion of the process leading to an action, not during the process. A number of activities and cautions are employed by the Commission to ensure integrity and institution/Commission confidentiality.

7. Maintenance of Accreditation File

An institution that is accredited by the Commission **must** maintain a permanent accreditation file. The file must contain the following documents in chronological order:

a. A copy of substantive correspondence between the institution and the Commission (COE/COEI) to include, but is not limited to, letters related to accreditation, reaffirmation of accreditation, substantive changes, and official actions of the Commission
b. A copy of the last Self-Study Report
c. A copy of the last accreditation visiting team report and all other team reports since the last accreditation visiting team
d. A copy of the institution's response report for the last accreditation team and other response reports to visiting teams since the last accreditation visiting team
e. A copy of substantive change applications since the last accreditation visiting team
f. A copy of all COE annual reports (including all supporting documentation; for example, Record of Allowable Subtractions form, etc.) since the last accreditation visiting team

Failure to maintain the accreditation file as requested will call into question the administrative capability of the institution.

8. Publication of Status with the Commission

An institution must be accurate in reporting its status with the Commission to the public. In catalogs, brochures, advertisements, websites, and news releases, any reference made to its status with the Commission must be accurate and must include the name and contact information of the Commission as follows: Council on Occupational Education, 7840 Roswell Road, Building 300, Suite 325, Atlanta, GA 30350, Telephone: 770-396-3898 / FAX: 770-396-3790, www.council.org.

Any Federal institution that is found to misrepresent its status with the Commission **shall** issue a correction in an appropriate newspaper, website, and/or other forum to correct the misrepresentation. Documentation that the correction has been made **must** be submitted to the Commission office.

Each candidate or accredited institution when referring to its status with the Council on Occupational Education **must** use the appropriate choice of the two statements that follow:

(Name of Institution) is a Candidate for Accreditation by the Commission of the Council on Occupational Education.

(Name of Institution) is accredited by the Commission of the Council on Occupational Education.

Accredited institutions may use the accreditation seal of the Commission of the Council on Occupational Education.

The accreditation seal must be used with discretion. It is not to be used for advertising purposes, but rather to identify institutions as being members of a nationally recognized accrediting agency. The seal may be used only on letterheads, catalogs, certificates, diplomas, transcripts, and websites, and for employee orientation and command briefing activities. If the seal is used on an institution's website, it must be linked to the Council's website (www.council.org).

The Commission may publish, as it deems appropriate, through its President/CEO, information contained in official notification letters from the Commission to the institution which relate to the following actions:

a. Granting candidate status or accreditation
b. Extending candidate status or accreditation reaffirmation
c. Terminating candidate status or withdrawing accreditation
d. Notifying an institution that there is or may be a violation of a Standard or Condition resulting in placement on special status or being dropped from candidate or accredited status
e. Denying an application for candidate status, accreditation, or a change of governance or control
f. Withdrawing from candidate or accredited status

The Commission shall make public the correction of any misleading or incorrect information made public concerning the candidacy or accredited status of an institution, the contents of visiting team reports, or accrediting actions. Misinformation published in the official publications of the Commission shall be corrected in the next issue of the relevant publication. Any misinformation submitted by letter to an institution relative to its status as a candidate for accreditation; its status as to meeting the Standards, Criteria, and/or Conditions of the Council; or the actions of the Commission toward the institution shall be corrected by letter. If the letter containing the misinformation was copied to any federal agency, state agency, another nationally recognized accrediting agency, or anyone else, the letter of correction shall be copied to every agency or person to whom the letter of misinformation was copied.

Likewise, should the Commission discover misleading or incorrect information published by institutions in candidate or accredited status concerning the contents of visiting team reports, accrediting actions of the Commission, or the candidacy or accredited status of the institution, it shall make public a correction of the misinformation. Additionally, the Commission shall notify applicable federal agencies, state agencies, and other nationally recognized accrediting agencies of the misinformation.

If an institution's operation, recruiting practices, or other actions become a matter of public or Commission concern, the Commission may announce, through its President/CEO, any action the Commission has taken and the basis for that action, including pertinent information in the possession of the Commission.

9. Voluntary Withdrawal of Status by the Institution

A candidate for accreditation or an accredited institution can withdraw their candidate or accredited status at any time by written notification to the Commission. The withdrawal notification must be submitted by the chief administrator and may be submitted in one of three ways: 1) an official letter (on institutional letterhead), 2) an email addressed to the President/CEO of the Council, or 3) by completing and submitting a *Withdrawal from Candidacy or Accreditation Application* in EDvera. When the Council receives notification from the institution, the request to withdraw will be processed based on the notification date. The effective date of withdrawal from candidate or accredited status will be the date the Council is notified, or a future date as specified in the notice from the institution. The effective date of withdrawal will be the date the Council receives official notification from the institution or a future identified date.

When an institution voluntarily withdraws its candidate status or accreditation, the Commission shall notify the U.S. Department of Education and other appropriate agencies of the institution's voluntary withdrawal within 10 business days of receiving notification from the institution. Should the institution be under a violation status or possess an outstanding financial obligation at the time of withdrawal, the notice would indicate that voluntary withdrawal occurred while in that status and/or with an outstanding balance.

Institutions that fail to submit official notification of their withdrawal from status will be listed as withdrawn by a date determined by the Commission based on any and all information available to the Commission at that time (i.e., email notifications from the institution or state/federal agencies).

Failure of a candidate or accredited institution to pay its dues, fees, penalties, evaluation costs, or other financial obligation to the Council within 90 days of the due date will be taken by the Commission as conclusive evidence that the institution has voluntarily withdrawn its candidate or accredited status. As indicated above, the notice of the institution's withdrawal for non-payment of its financial obligations shall be sent to the appropriate agencies within 10 business days.

Institutions that have voluntarily withdrawn from candidate or accreditation status may file a new application for candidacy for accreditation one year after the effective date of withdrawal. An eligible representative of the institution must attend the Candidate Academy prior to submitting the new application. [See Section III. C. Guidelines and Requirements for Workshop Attendance.] Institutions that re-apply for membership with the Council must pay outstanding invoices, if any, from their prior status before approval for a new application for membership will be considered.

10. Payment of Dues and Fees

Federal institutions should generally follow the fee schedules outlined below. However, COE recognizes and is sensitive to the unique operating models employed by the Federal Community and will work with those institutions to find a fair and reasonable fee structure.

a. Dues for Candidates for Accreditation

Dues—Institutions that have applied to and have been accepted by the Commission as Candidates for Accreditation **must** pay annual dues. Dues are the same for candidates and accredited institutions. [See Section V. b. Dues for Candidate and Accredited Institutions.]

Initial Payment—When an institution makes an application to the Commission, a payment (electronic or cashier's check) for the amount of the annual dues and application fees **must** be included. The check is made payable to the "Council on Occupational Education." The initial payment is applied to the fiscal year in which the institution is accepted as a candidate for accreditation with the exception that institutions accepted during the last 60 days of any fiscal year will have their initial dues payment credited to the next fiscal year.

Annual Payment—The annual dues for candidate institutions are payable upon receipt of an invoice from the Council on Occupational Education. Institutions will be invoiced prior to the first day of July for annual dues that apply to the fiscal year July 1 - June 30.

Refund Policy—An institution that makes application to the Commission and is not accepted as a candidate for accreditation is refunded the initial dues less the actual cost of the candidate visit to the institution and any other expenses incurred. An institution that withdraws its application for candidate for accreditation prior to being accepted will be refunded the dues less the cost of the candidate visit and any other expenses incurred. After an institution has been accepted as a candidate for accreditation, no refund of dues will be made. Application fees are non-refundable.

b. Dues for Candidate and Accredited Institutions

Annual Dues—Each candidate or accredited institution **shall** pay annual dues based on enrollment (Full-Time Equivalent or FTE) according to the following schedule at https://council.org/annual-membership-dues/ . Failure to pay fees after 60 days of the due date may result in the institution being dropped from accreditation.

* One FTE is equal to 900 student contact (clock) hours, 45 quarter credit hours, or 30 semester credit hours.
** In some cases, a Federal institution may use an "Average-on-Board (AOB)" measure in place of FTEs in computing dues.

Non-Main Campus Dues—In addition to the annual dues based on total enrollment (FTE) or Average on Board enrollment (AOB), Federal institutions having non-main campus sites that are not exempt from annual dues **shall** pay annual dues of $1,500 for each affiliate campus, $1,000 for instructional service center, and $750 for each extension campus according to the following schedule at https://council.org/annual-membership-dues/ . (Exemption: For institutions in candidate or accredited status with the Commission on June 30, 1985, affiliates in operation on that date are exempt from affiliate campus dues)..

Annual Payment—Payment of annual dues for candidate and accredited institutions **must** be made upon receipt of an invoice from the Council on Occupational Education. Invoices are transmitted prior to July 1 of each year. Annual dues are for the fiscal year July 1 - June 30 and are due July 1.

Refund Policy—No refund of annual dues is made to a candidate or accredited institution.

c. Full-Time Equivalent (FTE)Average on Board (AOB)

Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) is a unit of measurement used by the Commission to define the amount of scheduled instruction that equates to one full-time student during one academic year. The Commission defines an FTE as 900 contact (clock) hours, 45 quarter credit hours, or 30 semester credit hours of scheduled instruction. The clock or credit hours used to calculate an institution's FTE must reflect coursework in which a student has enrolled and matriculated. The FTE does not include hours or credits transferred from other institutions or awarded as CLEP courses. In some cases, Federal institutions may use an "Average-on-Board (AOB)" measure in place of FTEs for computing dues. (See the Policies and Rules of the Commission for a discussion of the rationale for this definition.)

d. Cost of Institutional Evaluations

Institutions **must** reimburse the Council for all costs of institutional team visits (i.e., team visits for candidacy, initial accreditation, reaffirmation of accreditation, focused review, and substantive changes). Reimbursable items include the cost of transportation, lodging, and meals for visiting team members and staff members and/or Commission representatives. Specific procedures regarding deposits, reimbursement, and travel regulations are presented in the Policies and Rules of the Commission.

e. Fees

Fees shall be assessed according to the schedule below. Fees are non-refundable. Other fees apply to substantive changes. [See chart on page 35.]

Application for Candidate for Accreditation	$ 3,000
Warning Status	500
Probation Status	750
Show Cause Order	1,000
Focused Review Visit	750
Notice of Intent to Appeal	5,000
Initial Accreditation	1,000
Renewal of Accreditation	1,000

f. Penalties

Failure to pay dues, fees, penalties,
or any charges by the due date .....10% of the original amount due
Failure to pay fees, penalties, or any charges within
30 days after the due date.....Additional 20% of the original amount due
Failure to provide annual report or other report by due date ..... $ 2,000
Failure to attend a workshop required by policy or action
of the Commission within the specified time period.....2,000
Failure to disclose a substantive change to the Commission 1,500
Failure to implement an approved substantive change and host a site visit,
if required, within 180 days of the date of initial approval.....1,500
Failure to provide a complete Application, Report, or Response.....250

Federal institutions should work closely with COE to identify each perceived change consistent with intent and timelines described within this Handbook. Once confirmed as a substantive change, COE may consider fee reductions and/or waivers based on the special needs and circumstances of each institution.

g. Deposits

The Council, when requiring a deposit, may apply the unused portion of the deposit (if any) toward outstanding debt owed by an institution.

B. Substantive Obligations

1. Institution's Relationship with the Council

a. Institutional Ethics and Integrity

The Commission **must** be assured that any institution which seeks candidate status, accreditation, reaffirmation of accreditation, or approval of a change of governance or control conducts its affairs with acceptable standards of honesty and integrity. When the Commission has any cause to believe that a candidate or accredited institution has acted in an unethical or untruthful manner, it will evaluate the matter and take action as described in the policies governing statuses. [Section IV.E.1. Possible Commission Decisions.]

If an institution misrepresents itself in documents filed with the Commission for purposes of candidate status, accreditation, reaffirmation, or change of governance or control, the Commission will immediately sever its relationship with the institution and may publish the decision.

Institutions **must** meet all lawful obligations. Failure of an institution to conform to legal obligations imposed by governments and their agencies **shall** be cause for the Commission to remove the institution's candidate or accredited status. The Commission may publish an action taken for such cause.

b. Maintaining Eligibility Requirements

Each educational institution applying for affiliation with the Council **must** initially demonstrate that it satisfies each of the eligibility requirements to become a Candidate for Accreditation as stated in Section III.A.2. Candidate for Accreditation: Eligibility Requirements. Further, each educational institution that applies for accreditation must demonstrate that it satisfies each of the eligibility requirements for initial accreditation as stated in Section III.B.1. Eligibility Requirements. An institution must continue to meet the requirements for both candidacy and accreditation in order to

maintain its accredited status with the Council.

c. Reports

(1) Annual Report

Continued candidate or accredited status is determined annually by Commission approval of annual reports. Candidate institutions **must** show progress toward meeting Standards and Criteria; and accredited institutions **must** show that they are complying with Standards, Criteria, and Conditions adopted by the Council.

(2) Ancillary Institutional Report

The Commission may request an ancillary report from an institution if, in the judgment of the Commission, substantive changes, the institution's operation becoming a matter of public concern, or conditions justify a re-evaluation of the school's status. Topics or areas of concern to be addressed in the report will be delineated when the report is requested.

An institution that has not had its response to an ancillary team report accepted by the Commission as having complied with all issues under the re-evaluation of its status within 12 months following the initial review by the Commission, shall be dropped from candidate or accredited status.

d. Comprehensive Review for Continuation of Accreditation (Reaffirmation)

Reaffirmation **must** occur from two to six years after initial accreditation or any subsequent reaffirmation decision. The time interval for reaffirmation is determined by the Commission as a part of its accreditation or reaffirmation decision. Institutions **must** meet the same requirements for reaffirmation as required for initial accreditation. [See Section III.B.1. Eligibility Requirements.] At the discretion of the Commission, the institution may be required to undergo reaffirmation earlier than the previously determined year.

Consultants, if retained, must not be present during Council site visits required for candidacy, accreditation, focused review, or approval of substantive changes.

Institutions seeking reaffirmation **must** complete a Self-Study Report and host a visiting team. Reaffirmation decisions are made by the Commission following a complete review of the Self-Study Report, the visiting team report, the response report, and other sources of information resulting from the institution's completing a Self-Study Report and hosting a visiting team. An institution that has not been reaffirmed within 12 months following the initial review by the Commission shall be dropped from accreditation.

e. Legal Action Taken Against Candidate or Accredited Institutions Legal action taken against candidate and accredited institutions may be considered a violation of any Condition, Standard, Criterion, or procedure of the Commission. Specific charges made against institutions can also be considered a certified complaint for practical purposes and necessitate further inquiry and/or action by the Commission. (See Policies and Rules of the Commission, Complaint Procedures of the Commission. All candidate and accredited institutions must notify the Commission within five (5) working days of being served a legal notice or lawsuit and must provide a copy of the legal notice/lawsuit against the institution to the Council office. The notice and any documentation or correspondence related to the legal action must be transmitted to the Council office via the COE document management system.

f. Ancillary Visits

Ancillary visits are conducted when certain substantive change applications are received or when, in the judgment of the Commission, a re-evaluation of the institution's compliance with the Commission's Standards, Criteria, Conditions, Policies, and/or procedures is necessary (cost to be borne by the institution).

Consultants, if retained, must not be present during Council site visits required for candidacy, accreditation, focused review, or approval of substantive changes.

Accreditation by the Commission is an expression of confidence that an institution is effectively achieving its stated mission. Circumstances, including actions of an institution which become a matter of constituent or Commission concern, may require an ancillary visit by the Commission.

The Commission may require the institution to host an ancillary visit or may require the institution to complete a new Self-Study Report and host a full accreditation visiting team earlier than previously scheduled if, in the judgment of the Commission, substantive change(s), institution's operation becoming a matter of constituent concern, or conditions justify a re-evaluation of the institution's status.

The team may evaluate any area of the institution's compliance with the Standards, Criteria, and Conditions of accreditation. The institution shall be provided with a copy of the team's report and shall submit its response to the team's findings of non-compliance for receipt in the Council office within 30 days from the date that the report is transmitted from the Council office.

(The Commission reserves the right to limit the length of institutional responses to official team reports or other requests for documentation and to require workshop attendance.)

An institution that has not had its response to an ancillary team report accepted by the Commission as having complied with all issues under the re-evaluation of its status within 12 months following the initial review by the Commission, shall be dropped from candidate or accredited status.

Disruption of an institution by forces beyond its control, although not excused, does not result in summary loss of accreditation. Prolonged inability, for whatever reasons, to conduct its programs **will** require a review of the institution and a reconsideration of its candidate or accredited status. When the alleged circumstances appear to be a violation of Standards, Criteria, or Conditions adopted by the Council, the President/CEO reviews the matter with the Executive Committee and may conduct an inquiry and/or arrange for an ancillary visit.

g. Substantive and Other Changes

(1) Planned and Unplanned Substantive Changes

A substantive change is one which significantly alters an institution's scope, programs, location, standing with another nationally recognized accrediting agency, federal agency, financial stability, governance, or control. In accordance with federal regulations, examples of a substantive change include but are not limited to:

- Substantially changing the established mission or objectives of an institution or its programs
- Changing the legal status, form of control, or ownership of an institution
- Changing the governance of an institution
- Merging or consolidating two or more institutions or entities
- Acquiring another institution or any program or location of another institution

- Relocating an institution or an additional location of an institution (including an affiliate campus)
- Offering courses or programs (i.e., credentials) at a higher or lower degree level than currently authorized
- Changing the way an institution measures student progress, whether in clock hours or credit-hours; semesters, trimesters, or quarters; or time-based or non–time-based methods or measures
- Adding a program that is a significant departure from the existing programs, or method of delivery, from those offered when the institution was last evaluated
- Adding an additional method of delivery to a currently offered program
- Substantially increasing or decreasing the number of clock hours or credit hours awarded or competencies demonstrated, or an increase in the level of credential awarded, for successful completion of one or more programs
- Adding a new additional location including a branch campus or an affiliate campus
- Adding a permanent location at a site at which an institution is conducting a teach-out program for students of another institution that has ceased operating before all students have completed their program of study
- Closing an institution, a program, a method of delivery, an additional location, or a program at an additional location.

A substantive change may be planned or unplanned.

Planned substantive changes include, but are not limited to, the following:

Substantive Change	Documentation Required		Approval Required	*Site Visit Required	Fee Required
	Public Institutions	Non-Public Institutions			
GOVERNANCE/CONTROL					
Change of Ownership/Control/Legal Status/Governance		L, A	Commission	Yes	Yes
Change of Stock(less than 50%)		L	Staff		
Change of 50% or More in the Voting Membership of a Non-Profit Institution's Board		L, A	Commission	Yes	Yes
INSTITUTIONAL					
Substantial Change in Mission and/or objectives of an institution or its programs	L, A	L, A	Commission		Yes
Converting an Affiliate Campus to a Main Campus	L, A	L, A	Commission	Yes	Yes
Main Campus/Affiliate Campus Relationship Change	L, A	L, A	Commission	Yes	Yes
Significant Reduction in Funding Level	L	L			
Merger/Acquisition	L, A	L, A	Commission	Yes	Yes
Change of Name	L, A	L, A	Staff		Yes

Change of Location (A change of location is defined as a physical relocation of an existing main, an affiliate, branch, instructional service center, or extension)	L, A	L, A	Commission	Yes	Yes
Withdrawal from Accreditation/Candidacy	L, A	L, A	Staff		
Institutional/Campus Teach-out Plan	Teach-out Plan	Teach-out Plan	Commission		
Teach-out Agreement (with another entity)	Teach-out Agreement	Teach-out Agreement	Commission		
Monitoring Institutional Growth	L	L			
Title IV participation	L	L			
Contractual Agreements for Consulting or Recruiting (Third-party review fee may apply)	L	L	Commission		Yes
ADDITIONAL LOCATIONS (Only one application for the establishment of an additional location shall be accepted at a time. An application for a second additional site will not be accepted until after the on-site visit of the first application is completed and final approval is granted by the Commission.)					
Branch Campus	L, A	L, A	Dept. of Ed/ Commission	Yes	Yes
Affiliate Campus	L, A	L, A	Commission	Yes	Yes
Extension Campus	L, A	L, A	Commission	Yes	Yes
Instructional Service Center	L, A	L, A	Commission	Yes	Yes
Extended Campus	L, A	L, A	Commission	Yes	Yes
Permanent Closing of a Additional Location	L, A	L, A	Staff		
Withdrawal from Candidacy or Accreditation	L, A	L, A	Staff		

Substantive Change	Documentation Required		Approval Required	*Site Visit Required	Fee Required
	Public Institutions	Non-Public Institutions			
PROGRAMMATIC					
New Non-Degree Program – Within Current Scope	A	A	Staff		Yes
Change of Scope: New Program – New Occupational Area Outside Current Scope	L, A	L, A	Staff or Commission	Yes	Yes
Change of Scope: Initial Associate Degree	L, A	L, A	Staff or Commission	Yes	Yes

Associate Degree Program – Within Current Scope	L, A	L, A	Staff		Yes
Program Relocation/Replication (Non-Public Institutions)		A	Staff		Yes
Change in Existing Program	A	A	Staff		Yes
Change of Program Name	A	A	Staff		
Institutional Distance Education Delivery	A	A	Commission	Yes (Virtual)	Yes
Contractual Agreements for Instruction (with entities that are/are not Title IV, HEA certified)	L, A	L, A	Commission		Yes
Deleting an Educational Program (Programs with no students currently enrolled)	A	A	Staff		
Teach Out of a Program (Conducted within the institution)	A	A	Staff		

IMPORTANT: A moratorium will be placed on the acceptance, processing, and approval (both initial and final) of ALL substantive changes beginning six months prior to the original scheduled dates of accreditation team visits through the date the Commission grants initial accreditation or reaffirmation of accreditation.

EXCEPTION: Program additions and changes may be approved after the last day of an accreditation visit for initial or reaffirmation of accreditation only for the purpose of compliance with findings stated in the official team report.

Institutions in candidate status and those placed on restrictive violation statuses are not permitted to apply for approval of substantive changes of any kind.

The President/CEO may elect at any time to defer decisions regarding substantive changes to the Commission for approval.

A – Application L – Letter of Intent that includes program details, location(s) affected, and appropriate approvals

A planned substantive change within an accredited institution **must** be approved by the Commission or the President/CEO before the change takes place.

Institutions planning a substantive change must first submit to the Council a notice of intent to implement the change at least 30 days prior to submitting the substantive change application. The institution must then submit an application for approval (if required) no later than 90 days prior to the change being implemented. Failure to submit applications in a timely manner may delay approval. Approval for substantive changes must be granted by the Commission before the changes can be implemented. After applications for approval are received, the Commission provides consulting

services to the institution to ensure that an orderly transition, consistent with the procedures of the Commission, is accomplished. The institution must not provide a consulting honorarium to the Commission representative or team members but reimburses all expenses.

A moratorium will be placed on the acceptance, processing, and approval (both initial and final) of ALL substantive changes beginning six months prior to the original scheduled dates of accreditation team visits through the date the Commission grants initial accreditation or reaffirmation of accreditation. Waivers of this policy may be granted when changes are mandated by the federal authority over the institution.

Failure to implement approved substantive changes within 180 days of the effective date of Commission approval will result in the revocation of the initial approval.

Consultants, if retained, must not be present during Council site visits required for candidacy, accreditation, focused review, or approval of substantive changes.

The Commission **must** be notified within five working days after an unplanned substantive change occurs. If applicable, a copy of the letter and/or document informing the institution of the unplanned substantive change **must** accompany the notification to the Commission. Within thirty days of notifying the Commission of an unplanned substantive change, the institution must submit to the Commission applications required by the Commission for such a change. The President/CEO will then refer the application(s) to the Commission for action at its next meeting. The Commission reserves the right to require a preliminary visit to the institution prior to granting initial approval.

Substantive change applications are reviewed by the staff, and approval may be given by the President/CEO unless otherwise indicated. The Commission has reserved the authority to approve certain specified substantive changes. The approval by the President/CEO is subject to approval by the Commission.

A substantive change may require a visit by representatives of the Commission. When a visit is required, the team will confirm the accuracy of information provided by the institution in its substantive change application and may evaluate the institution for compliance with any of the Standards, Criteria, and Conditions adopted by the Council. Final approval for planned substantive changes requiring site visits must be granted before additional applications for changes requiring site visits will be accepted.

An institution that has not received initial or final approval of a substantive change application within 12 months following the initial review of the initial or final approval documentation shall be denied initial or final approval for that change. This circumstance may also call into question the accredited status of the institution.

Failure to notify the Commission of a substantive change may result in the imposition of a penalty or may cause loss of accredited status.

Initial approval for substantive changes will be revoked should the institution fail to implement the approved change and/or fail to host any required site visit within 180 days from the effective date of the initial approval. The institution will then be placed on the next Commission agenda for consideration of adverse action and penalties may apply.

An application for a planned substantive change **shall not** be accepted until any unplanned substantive change has been resolved.

Substantive change applications will not be processed, whether new or pending, before the resolution of certain restrictive statuses (Probation or Show Cause), during the pending of an appeal of a decision of the Commission, or when an institution is past due on an invoice for money owed to COE.

Institutions that make or propose substantive changes will be required to complete a new comprehensive evaluation of its compliance with Commission Conditions, Standards, Criteria, and Policies when those changes meet one of the following guidelines:

1. Multiple changes made or proposed within a 12-month period include BOTH

    a. a Change in Governance/Control - the institution has made or proposes to make a change to governance/control that requires a site visit as described in the substantive change chart; AND
    b. changes classified as Institutional and/or Additional Non-Main Campus Sites - the institution has made or proposes to make any TWO substantive changes that require a site visit that fall under one or more of these headings in the substantive change chart.

2. Change(s) made or proposed compromise its ability to fulfill its responsibility to deliver promised instruction and support services to the students it serves.

    One or more substantive changes made or proposed negatively impact the institution's ability to maintain educational programs, physical facilities for students and staff, student services and activities, learning resources, adequate numbers of administrative staff, faculty, and support staff.

The Commission will notify the institution when this requirement is imposed and will require the institution to complete a new institutional Self-Study Report and host a site visit to confirm its compliance with accreditation Conditions, Standards, Criteria, and Policies. The site visit must be conducted within 18 months from the date of the Commission's notice to the institution in order for the institution to continue its status with the Commission.

Substantive Changes for the Federal Community *	Documentation Required		Commission Approval Required	Site Visit Required	Fee Required	Notify Federal COPPOC
	Letter of Notification	Application				
GOVERNANCE/CONTROL						
Change in Chief Administrative Official, Commander, or Accreditation Liaison Official assigned to the institution	•					•
Change of Governance	•					
Execution of an Agreement which Effectively Nullifies the Power of the Governing Board of an Institution to Control the Institution	•					
INSTITUTIONAL						
Change in Institutional Mission	•					
Change of Name/ Institutional Name (doing business as, or DBA)	•				YES	
Converting an affiliate campus to a Main Campus		•	•	•	YES	
Change of Location (a physical relocation of an existing main, affiliate campus, or extension campus)		•	•	•	YES	
Main Campus/Affiliate Campus Relationship Change		•	•	•	YES	
Significant Change in Institutional Funding or Resourcing Over the Previous Year (greater than 25%)	•					
Merger of Two or More Institutions		•	•	•	YES	
Contractual Agreements for Instruction		•	•		YES	
Withdrawal from Accreditation	•					
ADDITIONAL NON-MAIN CAMPUS SITES						
Affiliate Campus		•	•	•	YES	
Extension Campus		•	•	•	YES	
Permanent Closing of a Non-Main Campus Site	•				YES	
PROGRAMMATIC						
Change of Programmatic Scope	•					
Institutional Distance Education Delivery		•	•	•	YES	

***Federal institutions should work closely with COE to identify each perceived change consistent with intent and timelines described within this *Handbook*. Once confirmed as a substantive change, COE may consider fee reductions and/or waivers based on the special needs and circumstances of each institution.**

IMPORTANT: A moratorium will be placed on the acceptance, processing, and approval of ALL substantive changes beginning six months prior to the original **scheduled dates of accreditation team visits through the date the Commission grants initial accreditation or reaffirmation of accreditation.**

While it is not the normal practice to allow for a dba name change, it may be possible under the following conditions:
1.The institution has gained official and documented approval from the institution's "Secretary of State" Business entity;
2.The institution plans to use the same name across all of its publications, both internal and external;
3.The institution is recognized as using the same name at the State Postsecondary level, Council on Occupational Education, and the U.S. Department of Education.

Unplanned substantive changes include, but are not limited to, the following activities:

(a) The loss of candidate or accredited status, or being placed on public probation by another nationally recognized accrediting agency, either institutional or programmatic, while a candidate or accredited with the Commission
(b) The loss of good standing with a regulatory or governing body
(c) The findings of a regulatory/oversight agency (e.g., U.S. Department of Education or nationally recognized accrediting agency) which may affect operations and/or institutional stability
(d) The permanent or temporary closing of the main campus or an additional site (affiliate or extension)
(e) A substantial disruption of classes due to any number of reasons including natural disasters (hurricanes, floods, earthquake) that may cause significant degradation in operations or the temporary displacement of students to alternative learning sites
(f) An unplanned change of location

An unplanned substantive change shall be reviewed promptly to determine if the candidate or accredited status should be withdrawn.

(2) Other Changes: Institutions having status with the Commission should inform the Commission within five working days of any change which would affect communication between the Commission and the institution. Such changes shall include, but are not limited to, the following activities:

(a) A change in mailing address
(b) A change in on-site Chief Administrative Official (CAO), commander, or Accreditation Liaison Official (ALO)
(c) A change in email address of the on-site Chief Administrative Official (CAO), commander, or Accreditation Liaison Official (ALO)

(3) Change to Degree-Granting Status

If an accredited institution begins preliminary discussions that may result in the institution initiating an applied associate degree program, it **must** demonstrate that the program meets applicable Conditions and accreditation Criteria specified in the *Handbook of Accreditation*.

An application **must** be submitted for approval by the Commission. The application will require documentation that includes, but is not limited to, the following items:

(a) Authorization for the degree
(b) Needs assessment and implementation schedule
(c) Syllabi
(d) Proposed publication of new program(s) including catalogs, brochures,

etc.

(e) Faculty credentials
(f) Budgetary information
(g) Facilities requirement(s)

Upon receipt of a complete application, including required documentation and application fee, the President/CEO shall conduct a review of the application in accordance with the procedures outlined in the Policies and Rules of the Commission and shall refer the application to the Commission for review and action and may request additional documentation.

An institution may apply for subsequent associate degree programs only after final approval of the initial associate degree program has been granted by the Commission.

h. Non-Main Campus Sites

A candidate or accredited institution may offer programs at multiple sites to achieve its mission. If an institution conducts educational activities at one or more sites in addition to its main campus, it **must** comply with the definitions and requirements below in designating the type for each site. Procedures for obtaining approval of additional sites are specified by the Commission and presented in the *Policies and Rules of the Commission*.

The Commission does not approve sites where work-based activities such as internships, externships, clinicals or apprenticeships occur. [See VII. Definitions - Work-Based Activities.]

Non-main campus sites approved by the Commission must offer instruction on a continuous basis and must demonstrate that at least 25% of the FTE at each site is derived from enrollment in traditional programs.

If any site fails to have students in continuous attendance, except for regularly scheduled holidays and breaks, the institution must notify the Commission of the status of the site (i.e., closure, suspension, or other).

An **affiliate campus** is a subordinate site, not a main campus. The following requirements describe the characteristics of an affiliate campus (as opposed to any other type of non-main campus site).

An affiliate campus **must** meet each of the following requirements:

(1) Operate under the same federal authority as the main campus
(2) Operate under the supervision of a full-time, on-site administrator who reports to the Chief Administrative Official at the main campus
(3) Bear the same name as the main campus, and must expand the name to clearly identify different locations or specific program offerings of the affiliate campus with approval from the Commission
(4) Comply with all educational requirements and operational policies of the main campus
(5) Comply with the following publication requirements:
    (a) Does not issue a separate catalog but may supplement the main campus catalog. (Institutions accredited first by another nationally recognized accrediting agency that requires a separate affiliate campus catalog may issue such as long as the institution is accredited by the other accrediting agency.)
    (b) Ensures that the relationship between the affiliate campus and the main campus of the institution is clearly specified in institutional publications
    (c) Ensures that the complete name of the main campus and the affiliate campus is identified is identified in publications and advertisements when using a campus name

(6) Keep duplicate records on personnel, financial matters, student attendance, and student educational progress and outcomes data at the main campus
(7) Provide a full range of student services and activities and comply with Criteria of Standard 10 – Student Services and Activities
(8) Maintain the educational integrity of the institution and must not endanger its compliance with the Standards, Criteria, and Conditions adopted by the Council

An **extension** of a main campus is a subordinate site, not a main campus. The following requirements describe the characteristics of an extension campus (as opposed to any other type of non-main campus site).

An extension campus **must** meet each of the following requirements:

(1) Operate under the same federal authority as the main campus
(2) Be located within a fifty-mile radius of the main campus
(3) Be directly supervised and controlled by the main campus
(4) Maintain staff who are limited primarily to instructors and support staff
(5) Maintain personnel and student records at the main campus
(6) Have program offerings included in the main campus catalog

Other Non-Traditional Means to Deliver Quality Education/Training: The Commission recognizes that accredited institutions within the Federal Community are increasingly being asked to employ a wide-variety of means outside the traditional campus structure (noted above) to meet global demands for education and training. In doing so, accredited institutions may employ any number of innovative and responsive approaches to include, but not limited to: Learning Centers, Extended Learning Sites, Remote Classrooms, Satellite Classrooms, Mobile Training and/or Rapid Deployment Training Teams.

Irrespective of the term or approach used to deliver training, it is incumbent upon the accredited institution to ensure that any instruction, offered as part of an approved program, is systematically overseen to ensure that it is of high quality and comparable with that offered at the main, affiliate, or extension campus.

Further, should an informal site which traditionally hosts non-continuous training evolve over time to host continuous training, the accredited institution, at a minimum, must notify the Commission. Through that formal notification process, the Commission will work closely with the accredited institution to shape appropriate definition, recognition, approval, and/or review procedures going forward.

Similarly, other types of distributed training such as emerging synchronous or asynchronous e-learning opportunities must also be reported to the Commission.

For locations and modes of instruction, governance **must** originate from the main campus.

Formal instruction delivered at any site used by an accredited institution must be in compliance with the Standards, Criteria, and Conditions adopted by the Council. Failure to comply with these Standards, Criteria, and Conditions jeopardizes the accreditation of the main campus.

i. Converting an Affiliate to a Main Campus

An affiliate **must** exist for two years with all services of a main campus and **must** operate in its accredited status with the Commission for one year (of the two years) before being eligible to apply to be a main campus.

Upon receipt of a satisfactorily completed application and a check for the application and payment (electronic or cashier's check) for the application fee, the President/CEO shall review the application and may request additional documentation or refer the application to the Commission for action at its next meeting. The Commission reserves the right to require a preliminary visit to the main campus and the affiliate prior to granting initial approval for the conversion of an affiliate to a main campus.

Within 18 months after the initial approval of the conversion of an affiliate to a main campus, the institution must complete a Self-Study Report and host a visiting team. The visiting team will submit a written report to the President/CEO within 30 days after completing the site visit. A copy of the team report will be transmitted to the institution. The institution **must** submit a response to all findings of non-compliance to the President/CEO for receipt within 30 days of the date that the report is transmitted to the institution.

The cost of the on-site evaluation will be borne by the institution.

The Commission shall review the application, Self-Study Report, team report, response report, and other sources of information, and will make a decision on final approval of the conversion of the affiliate to a main campus.

j. Change of Location

A change of location is defined as a physical relocation of an existing main, affiliate, or extension campus. A Change of Location must be no greater distance than 25 miles; otherwise, it is considered a new campus.

An institution desiring to relocate a main, affiliate, or extension campus **must** submit an application to the Commission for initial approval at least 90 days prior to the change of location unless the move is an unplanned relocation. [See Section V.B.1.f. Substantive and Other Changes.]

COE-accredited Federal institutions moving as a result of Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) actions should work very closely with COE to identify the appropriate reporting requirements and the sequence of actions needed to successful maintain accreditation during such transitions.

The Commission shall prescribe the procedures for obtaining approval of a change of location and publish them in the Policies and Rules of the Commission.

k. Closure or Recombination through Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC)

Closing or realigning educational institutions requires extensive planning particularly if it involves reorganizing or integrating one formally independent institution within another formally independent institution (either of which may have been previously accredited).

The Commission expects the institution's governing board to use the same planning and responsible leadership during BRAC relocations, closures, and mergers as with any other planned or unplanned substantive change. For this reason, such a decision requires specific plans for providing, in appropriate ways, for the students, faculty, administrative staff, and support staff. Depending on the situation, such complex mergers, relocations, and/or closures will require various combinations of applications, site visits, and/or fees. To help the Federal Community navigate through these uncertain waters, COE stands ready to assist its Federal institutions impacted by the BRAC process.

Institutions must comply with federal rules, regulations, and guidelines regarding the closing of an

educational program or an institution.

2. Institution's Relationships with Other Constituencies

a. Transfer of Credit

Institutions that elect to accept credit earned from other sources must verify that the source of the credit accepted is accredited by an agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education or whose acceptance is required by a state or federal approving agency.

b. Recruitment

Many Federal institutions may not specifically control the recruitment process, but those that do **must** demonstrate compliance with the following requirements:

(1) Recruitment activities are truthful and avoid any false or misleading impressions of the institution, its programs and services, or employment.
(2) Materials used in recruitment activities include a policy regarding the transfer of students between programs within the institution and the transfer of students from other institutions that is clearly defined and published, and this information is available to prospective students prior to enrollment.
(3) Information about the institution's academic courses/programs, prerequisites, and associated policies are available to prospective students prior to enrollment.
(4) Recruitment practices ensure that prospective students are informed of the costs, equipment, services, time, and technical competencies, if any, required by its programs, including (if applicable), personal data collection and processes associated with verification of student identity prior to enrollment. (Institutions must follow regulations established by the Federal government concerning personally identifiable information [PII].)

The following practices in student recruitment **are prohibited:**

(1) Misrepresenting opportunities for advancement
(2) Misrepresenting abilities required to complete intended programs
(3) Misrepresenting transfer of credit to another institution
(4) Misrepresenting its accreditation status

c. Requirements Applicable to Advertising/Marketing

Candidate and accredited institutions **must** demonstrate compliance with the following requirements for advertising programs:

(1) Media used by an institution is truthful and presented with dignity to avoid any false or misleading impressions of the institution, its programs and services, or employment.
(2) The institution is emphasized more than accreditation status in promotional and institutional materials.
(3) Advertising seeking prospective students that is placed by the institution, its representatives, or third parties appears under "instruction," "education," "training," or a similarly titled classification and is not published under any "help wanted" or "employment" classification.
(4) Advertisements seeking prospective students that are placed by the institution or its representatives through direct mail, radio, television, internet,

or directories clearly indicate that education is being offered, and do not, either by actual statement, commission, or intimation imply that prospective employees are being sought.

(5) Media comments do not criticize other institutions.

(6) Printed bulletins or other promotional information are specific with respect to the prerequisites for admission to the institution's programs, the curricula, the content of courses, and the graduation requirements.

(7) The institution's physical facilities and educational programs are accurately portrayed on websites, in bulletins, and other publications, whether printed or online.

(8) A record or copy of all promotional and advertising material is kept on file for three years.

(9) Full responsibility for representations made by its recruiting personnel or other employees in recruiting students on its behalf is assumed by the candidate or accredited institution.

d. Contractual Arrangements

An accredited institution may be asked to submit to the Commission for review and/or approval copies of contracts existing between the institution and any agency, corporation, institution, or individual when such contracts involve instruction, recruiting, or consulting services.

The role of contractors hired by candidate/accredited institutions must exclude the authority to make official decisions for the institution or to serve in the role of Accreditation Liaison Official (ALO) for the institution. Furthermore, contractors employed by the federal government shall not be used for the performance of inherent governmental functions.

e. Legal Action Taken Against Candidate or Accredited Institutions

Legal action taken against candidate and accredited institutions may be considered a violation of any Condition, Standard, Criterion, or procedure of the Commission. Specific charges made against institutions can also be considered a certified complaint for practical purposes and necessitate further inquiry and/or action by the Commission. (See Policies and Rules of the Commission, Complaint Procedures of the Commission.)

All candidate and accredited institutions must notify the Commission within five (5) working days of being served a legal notice or lawsuit and must provide a copy of the legal notice/lawsuit against the institution to the Council office. The notice and any documentation or correspondence related to the legal action must be transmitted to the Council office via the COE document management system.

3. Institution's Relationships to Federal Requirements Applicable to Accreditation

Since the Commission is an accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education, certain requirements of Federal Regulations must be observed with respect to institutions that can be considered for candidacy or accreditation. There are also Federal Regulations that are imposed on the Commission if candidacy or accreditation is granted to institutions under certain conditions. An institution that seeks candidacy or accreditation with the Commission **must** conform to or allow the Commission to conform to these requirements.

a. Requirements Applicable to Applicants for Candidacy or Accreditation

(1) The institution is not the subject of an interim action by the Federal

government potentially leading to the suspension, revocation, withdrawal or termination of the institution's legal authority to provide postsecondary education in any state in which it operates.

(2) The institution has not had its instructional authority suspended, revoked, withdrawn, or terminated, even if the required due process procedures have not been completed in any state in which it operates.

(3) The institution has not been denied candidacy or accreditation by a nationally recognized accrediting agency within the previous 24 months.

(4) The institution has not voluntarily withdrawn its candidacy or accreditation while not in good standing from another recognized accrediting agency besides COE.

(5) The institution has not had its candidacy or accreditation withdrawn or been placed on public probation by another recognized accrediting agency besides COE.

(6) The institution is not the subject of an interim action by another recognized accrediting agency besides COE potentially leading to the suspension, revocation, or withdrawal of candidacy or accreditation.

(7) The institution has not been notified of the loss of another recognized accrediting agency besides COE's accreditation even if the due process procedures have not been completed.

(8) The institution describes itself in identical terms with regard to identity (i.e., main campus, affiliate campus to main campus relationship), mission, governance, programs, degrees, diplomas, certificates, personnel, finances, and constituents to federal, state, and other agencies, including accrediting agencies.

(9) Institutions being considered for candidate for accreditation, initial accreditation, or reaffirmation of accreditation have given notice at least sixty (60) days prior to hosting the candidate or accreditation team visit in order to provide the public an opportunity to comment on the institution's qualifications for status with the Commission. The notice is posted on the training page of the institution's website and on at least one social media platform until accreditation is granted or reaffirmed. The notice states that the institution is applying to become a candidate for accreditation or for initial or reaffirmation of accreditation with the Commission of the Council on Occupational Education. In addition, it states that persons wishing to make comments should either write to the President/CEO of the Commission, Council on Occupational Education, 7840 Roswell Road, Building 300, Suite 325, Atlanta, Georgia 30350, or submit their comments through the Council's website (www.council.org). Persons making comments have provided their names and mailing addresses.

b. Requirements Applicable to the Commission

(1) The Commission will not grant candidacy, initial accreditation, or reaffirmation of accreditation to an institution if it knows, or has reasonable cause to know, that an institution applying for candidacy or accreditation (initial or reaffirmation) is the subject of one of the following actions of a recognized institutional accrediting agency or state agency:

(a) A pending or final action brought by a state agency to suspend, revoke, withdraw, or terminate the institution's legal authority to provide postsecondary education in any state in which it operates

(b) A decision by a recognized accrediting agency to deny accreditation or candidacy

(c) A pending or final action brought by a recognized accrediting agency to suspend, revoke, withdraw, or terminate the institution's accreditation or candidacy

(d) A decision by a recognized accrediting agency to impose Probation or an equivalent status

(2) The Commission will take adverse action for failure of an institution to demonstrate compliance with the Standards, Criteria, and/or Conditions of the Council within 12 months immediately following the first deferral of action by the Commission, unless the Commission extends the time period for compliance with good cause. [See Section VII. Definitions - Good Cause.]

(3) The Commission will submit a summary of the Commission's major activities during the previous year upon request from the Secretary of Education.

(4) The Commission shall maintain complete and accurate records of its last review of each institution and an accurate, permanent record of its decisions with respect to candidate and accredited institutions.

(5) The President/CEO shall notify, at the same time, the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, the appropriate state licensing or authorizing agency, the appropriate accrediting agencies, and the public within 24 hours, but no later than 30 days, after the following actions have occurred:

(a) Accepting an institution as a candidate for accreditation, accrediting an institution, or reaffirming accreditation of an institution

(b) Making a final decision to place a candidate or accredited institution on Probation or Show Cause

(c) Making a final accrediting decision involving denial, termination or suspension of candidacy or accreditation (to be provided as a summary of the review that resulted in this action, including comments from the affected institution or notification that the institution was given the opportunity to provide comments)

(d) Having been informed by an institution that it is voluntarily withdrawing from candidacy or accreditation

(e) Ascertaining that an institution has allowed its candidacy or accreditation to lapse

(6) The President/CEO shall notify the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, the appropriate state licensing or authorizing agency, and the appropriate accrediting agencies at the same time it notifies an institution if the Commission makes a final decision to deny or withdraw candidacy or accreditation or take other adverse action against an institution.

(7) The President/CEO shall notify the public within 24 hours of its notice to an institution if the Commission makes a final decision to deny or withdraw candidacy or accreditation or take other adverse action against an institution.

(8) The President/CEO shall make available to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, the appropriate state licensing or authorizing agency, and the public a summary of the Commission's decision to deny, limit, suspend, or withdraw the candidacy or accreditation of an institution no later than 30 days after a final decision is made.

(9) A copy of the annual report of the Council on Occupational Education will be submitted to the U.S. Secretary of Education as soon as the report is printed each year.

(10) The Commission will initiate action to make changes to its Standards within 12 months of determining that it needs to do so and will complete that action within a reasonable period of time. Furthermore, before any changes to Standards are finalized, the Commission will provide notice to all relevant

constituencies and other interested parties of the changes the Commission proposes to make and will provide those parties the opportunity to comment on the proposed changes. All comments submitted regarding proposed changes to the Standards will be taken into account.

(11) All proposed revisions in the Standards, Criteria, Conditions, and/or procedures of the Council will be submitted to the U.S. Secretary of Education at the same time that they are submitted to the membership for consideration, if the revisions might alter the Council's scope of recognition or its compliance with the requirements for submission of information to the Secretary. Additionally, the Council will post these actions on its website (www.council.org) in order to encourage input from potential employers and the general public.

c. Non-Discriminatory Policy of the Council

Federal institutions should first bring any EEO issue through their Agency, Service or DoD specific EEO focal point. If the issue is not resolved at that level or the complainant chooses to bypass that process they will be handled as noted below.

The Council does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, color, national origin, age, or disability in any of its programs or activities.

Any individual who believes that he or she has been discriminated against because of his/her sex, race, color, national origin, age, or disability should immediately contact the President/CEO, Dr. Kirk Nooks, who is the Council's coordinator for Title IX compliance. Dr. Nooks can be reached at 7840 Roswell Road, Building 300, Suite 325, Atlanta, Georgia 30350, (770) 396-3898, extension 105.

Complaints alleging discrimination on the basis of any of the above circumstances may also be made to:

The Office for Civil Rights
U.S. Department of Education, Customer Service Team
Hotline # 1-800-421-3481 or (202) 205-5413
Fax # (202) 205-9862 TTY # (877) 521-2172
ocr@ed.gov

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SECTION VI
Accreditation Standards, Objectives, and Criteria

The Standards, Objectives, and Criteria for accreditation by the Council are derived from the mission, goals, and objectives of the Council as an accrediting agency. [See Section II.C. Mission, Goals, and Objectives of the Council.]

The specific Objectives of the COE accreditation process, as used in evaluating providers of occupational education, are grouped within 10 categories or "Standards" representing institutional aspects to be evaluated by the COE accreditation process. The Objectives subsumed by each Standard provide more specific delineation of the scope of each Standard and the basis for deriving the Criteria addressed in conducting an institutional evaluation for accreditation. The Standards are the following:

Standard 1 - Institutional Mission

Standard 2 - Educational Programs
- A. Educational Program Administration
- B. Program Curriculum and Instruction

Standard 3 - Program Outcomes

Standard 4 - Strategic Planning

Standard 5 -Educational Resources
- A. Educational Resources
- B. Instructional Equipment and Supplies

Standard 6 - Institutional Infrastructure

Standard 7 - Financial Resources

Standard 8 - Human Resources
- A. General
- B. Faculty
- C. Administrative and Supervisory Personnel
- D. Instructional Support Staff
- E. Non-Instructional Support Staff

Standard 9 - Organizational Structure
Standard 10 - Student Services and Activities

The Criteria listed in each Standard support the achievement of Objectives stated at the beginning of each Standard.

Institutions are required to provide documentation to demonstrate compliance with each Criterion of the Standards.

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STANDARD ONE
Institutional Mission

Objectives of Accreditation Related to "Institutional Mission"

1. To ensure that the institution's primary mission is career development and technical education

2. To ensure that the current mission is clearly stated and is publicly available

3. To ensure that the mission is formulated with broad-based participation by the communities of interest served and promoted through appropriate and relevant channels

Criteria of Accreditation Related to "Institutional Mission"

1. The primary mission of the institution is to instruct students to such competency levels that they are qualified for initial employment and/or career advancement. (Objective 1-1)

2. The institution's mission is clearly, concisely, and consistently stated in written form and represents the official statement of the institution. (Objective 1-2)

3. The institution has a hard-copy and/or online publication which it uses to accurately present its mission statement and the educational courses and/or programs offered to achieve its mission. (Objective 1-2)

4. The mission includes a process for evaluating the mission statement annually.

5. The institution's recruitment, publications and all promotional materials represent the practices, educational programs, and accreditation status of the institution, and are provided to students.

6. If applicable, programs that are pending COE's approval are communicated with students, faculty, staff, and external constituencies.

7. The institution publishes current academic calendars for students and the public. The calendars include, at a minimum, key academic dates and key campus dates, meeting the requirements of the Commission and all applicable state and federal regulations.

8. The institution's publications include information about educational programs, accreditation contact information and address, admissions, financial aid, student support services and activities, institutional mission, institutional address, and facilities.

STANDARD TWO
Educational Programs

Objectives of Accreditation Related to "Educational Programs"

A. Programs

1. To verify that the educational programs offered by the institution are congruent with the mission of the institution

2. To ensure courses and/or programs are objective-based and evaluated annually

3. To ensure currency of instructional content

4. To ensure that programs provide for timely and meaningful interaction among faculty and students.

5. To ensure that measures of program length and the objectives of the degrees or credentials offered by institutions must document and demonstrate compliance by maintaining verifiable evidence for each program.

6. To ensure institution's grading policies are consistently applied across all programs and courses.

B. Instruction

1. To ensure that instruction is competency-based, including current knowledge, skills, and work ethics relevant to the occupations for which the programs prepare students

2. To ensure that competencies are taught with equipment and in settings reflecting current workplace requirements

3. To require documentation that instruction for each course and/or program is organized and appropriately documented to achieve its objectives

4. To require that methods of evaluating individual student achievement indicate a focus on student achievement and competencies and are used to document student progress

5. To require that work-based activities have objectives appropriate for the respective programs and are properly planned and supervised

C. Coursework Delivered via Distance Education

1. To ensure that the institution is compliant with relevant elements regarding the delivery of instruction via distance education methods and can document, at a minimum, that academic rigor, faculty interaction with students, currency and quality of courseware and templates used for instructional delivery, student identity confirmation, and measurement of student progress are addressed.

2. To ensure the Institution has a written policy to notify students of any projected additional student charges associated with verification of student identity in any

format of distance education courses at the time of registration or enrollment.

Criteria of Accreditation Related to "Educational Programs"

A. Educational Program Administration

1.Educational programs offered by the institution align with the mission of the institution, have clearly stated objectives, and have content that remains current and meets the needs of constituents.

2. All programs are evaluated using methodologies reflective of the professional and practice-based competencies of their respective occupations.

3. All programs offered by the institution, regardless of location or method of delivery, are qualitatively and quantitatively consistent.

4. All programs are approved and administered with involvement of administrators and faculty.

5. Entry level earnings of completers is considered in relation to the cost and length of programs.

6. The clock hour to credit hour ratio meets the minimum acceptable requirements as defined in the Criteria.

7. The measures of program length and the objectives of the degrees or credentials offered by institutions must document and demonstrate compliance by maintaining verifiable evidence for each program.

8. The institution has an approved curriculum outline showing the total clock or credit hours and the distribution of instructional, laboratory, and clinical or externship hours.

9. The institution published program descriptions that are consistent across the catalog and syllabi.

10. The institution has evidence of approval or authorization from state and or programmatic certification agencies, if applicable

11. The institution demonstrates that the length of each program offered is accurately expressed in instructional weeks and reflects the normal time required for program completion.

12. The institution's grading policies are consistently applied across all programs and courses.

B. Program Curriculum and Instruction

1. A curriculum or instructional plan for each program has been developed, is in use to ensure the integration of academic and occupational education in programs

2. A curriculum or instructional plan for each program has been developed, is in use to ensure that instructional activities include knowledge, skills, work habits, and attitudes required of the occupation.

3. Instruction for each program is organized and sequenced to achieve its objectives.

4. All programs are offered using methodologies reflective of professional and practice-based competencies and provide for timely and meaningful interaction among faculty and students.

5.Job-related health and safety elements are incorporated into curricula as appropriate to the occupation.

6.Instruction includes orientation to technology appropriate for the occupation and that practice using current workplace technologies, equipment, and materials is provided to students in order to develop skill proficiency for the profession.

7.Methods of evaluating individual student achievement indicate a focus on student achievement, learning objectives and competencies and that the results are made part of the student's permanent record.

8. Opportunities are provided for students to obtain exposure to and appreciation of the dynamics of the industry/occupational environment for which they are being prepared.

C. Coursework Delivered via Distance Education

1. Institution has a written policy to notify students of any projected additional student charges associated with verification of student identity in any format of distance education courses at the time of registration or enrollment.

2. Distance education courses and programs adhere to the same standards, rigor, breadth, and completion requirements as their on-campus counterparts, ensuring consistent quality and awarding equivalent credentials.

3. Faculty teaching distance education courses ensure timeliness of their responses (synchronously or asynchronously) to students' requests by following institutional requirements on response times of no more than 24 hours within the published operational schedule of the program/course.

4. The institution has processes in place to determine that the student who registers for a distance education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives the academic credit (with methods such as secure logins, passwords, or proctored examinations).

5. The institution directly verifies the currency and quality of all contracted courseware on an annual basis, is directly responsible for such currency and quality, and maintains

curriculum oversight responsibility within all contracts.

6. The institution monitors student progress in distance education activities; such monitoring may include frequency of logins, confirmation of student time online, and the percentage of coursework completed.

7. **For all coursework delivered via distance education**: Faculty delivering instruction in a distance education format are employees of the institution.

8. **For all coursework delivered via distance education:** The institution provides training for faculty who use technology in distance education courses and programs.

STANDARD THREE
Program Outcomes

Objectives of Accreditation Related to "Program Outcomes"

To ensure that course and/or program completers and employers are satisfied with the education that was received

Criteria of Accreditation Related to "Program Outcomes"

1. The institution has a written plan to ensure that program outcomes follow-up [External Evaluation] is systematic and continuous. [See Section VII. Definitions - Plan.] (Objective 3-1)

The institution's written plan for program outcomes follow-up includes the following elements:

2. Identification of responsibility for coordination of follow-up activities
3. A description of the collection process used to assemble information from completers and/or from the organizations and units which employ them
4. A description of the information collected from completers and/or from the organizations and units which employ them. Collected information must focus on course/program effectiveness and relevance to job requirements

(Objective 3-1)

5. Program outcomes follow-up information is used to evaluate and improve the quality of program outcomes. (Objective 3-1)

6. Follow-up information is made available at least on an annual basis to instructional personnel and administrative staff. (Objective 3-1)

STANDARD FOUR
Strategic Planning

Objectives of Accreditation Related to "Strategic Planning"

1. To ensure that the institution uses a systematic process

2. To ensure that strategic planning leads to the establishment of priorities and appropriate action

3. To ensure that the strategic plan is subject to systematic and periodic review by the institution and a formally constituted governing body appropriate to the institution and its mission

Criteria of Accreditation Related to "Strategic Planning"

1. The institution has a written strategic plan. [See Section VII. Definitions - Plan.] (Objectives 4-1 through 4-4)

The institution's written strategic plan includes, at a minimum, the following components:

2. The mission of the institution.
3. The vision of the institution.
4. Objectives for a minimum period of three years (updated annually)
5. Strategies for achieving the objectives.
6. Strategies for the continuous improvement of programmatic student outcomes data with emphasis on programs below CPL benchmarks.
7. Current and projected financial resources that provide a basis for initiatives specified in the strategic plan.
8. Annual evaluation of progress toward achieving the objectives (Objectives 4-1 and 4-3)
9. The faculty, staff, administration, and institutional advisory committee annually review the strategic plan and the institution's progress toward meeting its stated objectives (and revise as necessary). (Objective 4-4)

STANDARD FIVE
Educational Resources

Objectives of Accreditation Related to "Educational Resources"

1. To verify the presence and adequate maintenance of learning resources appropriate and essential for the achievement of the objectives for each program offered

2. To verify that the learning resources are readily available and used by students and faculty

3. To verify that learning resources meet applicable safety standards

Criteria of Accreditation Related to "Educational Resources"

A. Educational Services

1. The institution documents that its educational resources, including media services, technology, facilities, and materials are comprehensive and current (Objective 5-2)
2. There is a clear indication that the institution's educational resources and services, including instructional supplies, physical resources, and fiscal resources, are relevant, current, and available to support the programs offered by the institution. (Objective 5-2)

3. The institution can demonstrate that educational resources are selected with faculty input and are accessible to the faculty and students. (Objective 5-2)

4. The institution clearly demonstrates that the educational resources made available to faculty, staff, and students focus on the achievement of desired outcomes and learning objectives, as well as appropriate for the method(s) of program delivery.

5. The institution has identified administrative, supervisory, or instructional staff responsible for the coordination and control of educational resources.

6. The institution provides a documented orientation on the use of educational resources and services applicable to instructors, staff, and students. (Objective 5-2)

7. The institution budgets annually for educational resources. (Objective 5-1)

8. The institution annually evaluates the effectiveness of its educational resources and uses documented results to modify and improve its resources and services. (Objective 5-2)

9. Educational resources are selected with faculty input and accessible to the faculty and students.

B. Instructional Equipment and Supplies

1.The institution has a procedure for purchasing and storing instructional equipment and supplies. (Objective 5-1)

2.Funds are budgeted and made available to provide instructional equipment and supplies at a level that supports quality occupational education. (Objective 5-2)

3.To support continuous instruction, the institution has procedure(s) in place to maintain instructional equipment and supplies, specifically addressing the following:

4. Repair
5. Maintenance
6. Replacement
7. Disposal and
8. Emergency purchases to ensure acquisition and repair within a reasonable period of time. (Objective 5-2)

9. Instructional equipment and supplies meet appropriate and required safety standards. (Objective 5-3)

STANDARD SIX
Institutional Infrastructure

Objectives of Accreditation Related to "Institutional Infrastructure"

1. To verify the presence and adequate maintenance of physical resources and technical infrastructure essential for institutional operations and achievement of the objectives for each program offered

2. To ensure that the physical resources provide for the protection of the health and safety of students, faculty, administrative staff, and visitors

3. To ensure that the institution's technical infrastructure provides for the privacy, safety, and security of institutional data contained within it

4. To ensure that the institution's technical infrastructure provides for the reliable accessibility and backup of institutional data contained within it

Criteria of Accreditation Related to "Institutional Infrastructure"

1. The institution plans for and/or participates in broader long-range planning related to its facilities improvement and technical infrastructure efforts. This planning addresses the following elements:
   - Adequacy of and improvements to physical facilities
   - Budget available for facility maintenance and improvement
   - Personnel
   - Non-instructional equipment and supplies
   - Compliance with relevant federal codes and procedures
   - Distance learning infrastructure, if applicable
   - Annual evaluation of the plan (and revised as necessary)

   (Objective 6-1)

2. The technology used by the institution to deliver services and, if applicable, program/course content to students meets the needs of the students without creating barriers to student support or learning. (Objective 6-1)

3. Physical facilities at all locations provide adequate, safe, and clean facilities with appropriate supporting utilities for classrooms, laboratories/shops, offices, restrooms, lounges, meeting rooms, parking, etc. (Objective 6-2)

4. The institution plans for and/or participates in broader planning decisions relative to the health and safety of its faculty, staff, students, and guests to maintain readiness in cases of sickness, accidents, or emergency health care needs on campus. (Objective 6-2)

5. First aid supplies are readily available. (Objective 6-2)

6. A plan to ensure the privacy, safety, and security of data contained within the technical infrastructure of the institution networks, whether provided directly by the institution or through contractual arrangements, has been developed and is in use. (Objectives 6-3 and 6-4)

7. The institution ensures computer system and network reliability and emergency backup for all technical services whether provided directly by the institution or through contractual arrangements. (Objective 6-4)

8. Procedures for preserving and protecting student coursework, testing, and records are provided by measures that ensure their preservation and protection. (Objectives 6-3 and 6-4)

STANDARD SEVEN
Financial Resources

Objectives of Accreditation Related to "Financial Resources"

1. To verify that the institution has the necessary financial resources to achieve the objectives of its programs and services

2. To verify that the institution has the financial stability to enable it to continue to meet financial obligations and achieve its objectives

3. To verify that revenues and expenditures are capably managed and accurately documented

Criteria of Accreditation Related to "Financial Resources"

1. A qualified financial officer or department oversees the financial and business operations of the institution. (Objectives 7-1 and 7-2)

2. Financial records maintained through Planning Programming, Budgeting and Execution (PPBE), are maintained so that the institution's fiscal status can be analyzed in a timely manner. (Objectives 7-1 and 7-2)

3. The institution has funds sufficient to maintain quality educational programs and to complete the education of students enrolled. (Objectives 7-1 and 7-2)

4. The institution uses adequate auditing and budgetary controls and procedures consistent with federal requirements. (Objective 7-3)

5. The institution exercises proper management, financial controls, and business practices to ensure responsible financial management. (Objective 7-3)

6. Qualified personnel are responsible for proper financial record-keeping, reporting, and auditing. Personnel are enrolled in the financial management certification program as appropriate.) (Objective 7-3)

STANDARD EIGHT
Human Resources

Objectives of Accreditation Related to "Human Resources"

A. General

1. To verify that accurate and current job descriptions are available for all employee positions

2. To verify that complaint/grievance procedures for employees are published, maintained, and followed equitably

3. To verify that procedures for evaluating the effectiveness of employees are published, maintained, and followed equitably

4. The Chief Administrative Officer and Accreditation Liaison Officer are expected to maintain annually updated accreditation training/attendance, demonstrated competencies appropriate to their areas of responsibility. (Objective 8-C-2)

B. Faculty

1. To ensure that the number of faculty is sufficient to fulfill the mission and operate the programs of the institution

2. To verify that the faculty are and remain well prepared by virtue of education and experience to perform the duties assigned to them including teaching at a distance where applicable

3. To verify that, in addition to teaching, faculty are appropriately involved in curriculum development, student advisement, work with business and industry, and planned programs of professional development to remain current in their teaching fields

C. Administrative and Supervisory Personnel

1. To ensure that the number of administrative and supervisory personnel is sufficient to fulfill the mission and operate the programs of the institution

2. To verify that administrative and supervisory personnel are and remain well prepared by virtue of education and/or experience to perform the duties assigned to them

D. Instructional Support Staff

1. To ensure that the number of instructional support staff is sufficient to fulfill the mission and operate the programs of the institution

2. To verify that instructional support staff are and remain well prepared by virtue of education and/or experience to perform the duties assigned to them

E. Non-Instructional Support Services

To verify there are adequate non-instructional support staff and services provided by qualified personnel or contracted services to support the institution's mission

Criteria of Accreditation Related to "Human Resources"

A. General

1. Duties and responsibilities of positions are specified in written job descriptions made available to administrators, faculty, and staff of the institution. (Objective 8-A-1)

2. The institution has published and implemented procedures for handling complaints/ grievances from faculty and staff that are consistent with the policies of the institution's governing board including complaints/grievances filed against the institution's Chief Administrative Official, if any. (Objective 8-A-2)

3. Policies and procedures are in place for the continuous evaluation of the performance and effectiveness of full- and part-time employees, with at least an annual written review and evaluation. (Objective 8-A-3)

4. Orientation procedures for employees are maintained and followed equitably (e.g., new employee orientation, institution orientation, course orientation, etc.). (Objective 8-A-3)

B. Faculty

1. The institution has a sufficient number of faculty members to fulfill its mission and operate its programs. (Objective 8-B-1)

Each faculty member possesses

2. at least a high school diploma (or equivalent),
3. expertise in their areas of responsibility that is actively maintained,
4. additional requirements established for faculty members by the institution, its governing board, state regulatory agencies and/or programmatic accrediting organizations. (Objective 8-B-2)

5. Faculty members who teach general education courses in associate degree programs hold a minimum of a bachelor's degree with 15 semester hours or 23 quarter hours in the teaching discipline with a grade of at least a 'C' in these courses. (Objective 8-B-2)

6. Faculty members who teach technical courses in associate degree programs have a minimum of an associate degree in an area that is related to the technical courses they teach. (In exceptional cases, evidence of documented work experience and skills in the technical field may be considered instead of formal academic requirements.) (Objective 8-B-2)

7. **For coursework delivered via distance education:** Faculty delivering instruction in a distance education or hybrid format are employees of the institution. (Objective 8-B-2).

8. **For coursework delivered via distance education:** The institution provides training for faculty who use technology in distance education courses and programs. (Objective 8-B-2)

9. The institution plans, provides, supports, and annually documents professional growth opportunities for and participation by all faculty members. (Objectives 8-B-2 and 8-B-3)

C. Administrative and Supervisory Personnel

1. The institution has a sufficient number of administrative and supervisory personnel to fulfill its mission and to oversee the operation of its programs and services. (Objective 8-C-1)

2. Administrative and supervisory personnel possess postsecondary education credentials and/or experience and demonstrated competencies appropriate to their areas of responsibility. (Objective 8-C-2)

D. Instructional Support Staff

1. The institution has a sufficient number of instructional support staff members to fulfill its mission and enable its programs. (Objective 8-D-1)

2. Personnel are employed to maintain student records and to assist in producing instructional materials; and to prepare correspondence, reports, and other documents as needed. (Objective 8-D-1)

3. Instructional support staff possess education credentials and/or experience and demonstrated competencies appropriate to their areas of responsibility. (Objective 8-D-2)

E. Non-Instructional Support Services

1. Custodial services are available to provide routine care and maintenance of facilities and grounds for the institution. (Objective 8-E)

2. Preventative maintenance services ensure continued operation of the facilities. (Objective 8-E)

STANDARD NINE
Organizational Structure

Objectives of Accreditation Related to "Organizational Structure"

1. To ensure that the institution has a properly constituted governing body with authority and responsibility for the institution's operations

2. To ensure that the governing body designates a Chief Administrative Official or commander responsible for the institution's operations

3. To ensure that the institutional structure promotes effective and efficient operation of the educational programs and non-instructional services to students

Criteria of Accreditation Related to "Organizational Structure"

1. The institution has a properly constituted governing body (either external or internal) with authority and responsibility for the institution's operation and control. (Objective 9-1)

2. The institution's Chief Administrative Official or commander is responsible for the institution's daily operations. (Objective 9-2)

3. The Chief Administrative Official or commander is the designated person of record for purposes of the Commission, is a full-time staff member of the institution, has his/her office on the main campus, and is the Commission's point of contact for all locations of the institution. (Objective 9-2)

4. An organizational chart is available to show the functional relationships among the personnel of the institution that promote the effective operation of educational programs and institutional services for students. (Objective 9-3)

STANDARD TEN
Student Services and Activities

Objectives of Accreditation Related to "Student Services and Activities"

1. To assure that adequate and appropriate student services are available to support the mission and programs of the institution. These services include:

    a. Academic advisement
    b. Orientation
    c. Grievances
    d. Records
    e. Admissions
    f. Others as appropriate to the institution (i.e., registration, human resource center, etc.)

Criteria of Accreditation Related to "Student Services and Activities"

1. The institution provides academic advisement services (formal or informal) as required to assist students in planning for and/or completing their courses or programs. (Objective 10-1-a)

2. Tests or other means of assessing the achievement and aptitudes of students for various occupations are used to provide personalized career guidance to students. (Objective 10-1-a)

3. There is a process to acquaint new students with the policies, functions, and personnel of the institution. (Objective 10-1-b)

4. There The institution publishes attendance requirements and informs students of these requirements. (Objective 10-1-b)

5. The institution has implemented appropriate grievance policies (i.e. Chain of Command, IG, EEO, JAG, etc.) which are further described in the institution's catalog or student handbook for handling student complaints. (Objective 10-1-c)

6. Institutional records reflect that program complaints and grievances received by the institution obtain due process and include evidence of resolution. (Objective 10-1-c)

7. As an avenue of last resort, the Commission's mailing address, telephone number, and website address are included within the grievance policy and made available to students, faculty, and staff. (Objective 10-1-c)

8. Records on student complaints are filed by the appropriate office in accordance with the parent headquarters, agency, or Service policy. (Objective 10-1-c)

9. A designated staff member is responsible for maintaining official files and records of students. (Objective 10-1-d)

10. Written procedures are established for access to student coursework, testing, and records to ensure confidentiality, limiting access to authorized personnel only. (Objective 10-1-d)

11. The institution, upon request by current and former students, provides transcripts or procedures for obtaining transcripts containing, at a minimum, the following information: the program of study, courses or units of study completed with corresponding grades, period of enrollment, and credential awarded, if applicable. (Objective 10-1-d)

12. Student records, including period-of-enrollment, academic, and current educational progress records, as well as program completion status, are available at the institution. (Objective 10-1-d)

13. Information about the institution's academic courses/programs, enrollment, prerequisites, related information technology, and associated policies are current, accurate, clearly stated, and consistently recorded in printed and online publications. (Objective 10-1-e)

14. Course and/or program requirements offer reasonable expectations for successful completion regardless of the delivery mode. (Objective 10-1-e)

15. If students with special needs are admitted into the program, then the institution makes reasonable accommodations to meet their needs. (Objectives 10-1-e and 10-1-f)

16. The institution complies with all FERPA and Collecting and Storing Personal Identifiable Information protection as outlined in the definitions of the policy and rules.

17. The institution has a written plan for student services and ensures that the plan identifies responsibilities for coordination of student services and provides for the support and services of students.

18. The institution has policies and procedures that help ensure the effectiveness of student services, document a systematic evaluation of those services, and provide for dissemination of any results to the staff so that pertinent information can be used to improve the student services. (Objective 10-1-f)

19. The institution provides students an opportunity to evaluate services and results are shared with staff for continuous improvement.

20. The institution has a written plan for student services and ensures that the plan is evaluated on an annual basis (and revised as necessary) (See Section VII. Definitions-Plan.)

21. The institution's statements regarding advertising and official publications are clear, accurate and current and portray the institution's educational programs, recruitment, and student services.

22. The institution provides a complete, accurate, and easily accessible catalog to students.

23. The institution's catalog outlines institutional policies, requirements, and responsibilities applicable to both the institution and the students.

24. The institution's catalog includes detailed information on educational programs, courses, and campuses.

SECTION VII
Definitions

Accreditation—A process by which quality is certified. As applied by the Commission, a self-regulatory process by which the Commission recognizes educational institutions that have been found to meet or exceed stated Standards applicable to occupational education institutions and/or programs (quality-assessment).

Accreditation Liaison Official (ALO)—Each institution must designate an Accreditation Liaison Official (ALO) by notifying the Council. The ALO must be a permanent, full-time staff member at the main campus of the institution - other than the Chief Administrative Official (CAO). This is the person with whom the Commission staff will discuss accreditation matters concerning the institution when the CAO or commander is not available. However, when authorized as such by the CAO of a federal or military institution, the ALO may serve as the primary contact.

Accreditation Manager (AM)—Many organizations will often designate an individual, who is not a part of the command team, to manage accreditation, annual reporting, and the development of the Self-Study Report. Any individual who is in this role must be a part of all communications between COE and the organization. Therefore, each institution may choose to, but is not required to, designate an Accreditation Manager (AM) by notifying the Council. The AM must be a permanent, full-time staff member at the main campus of the institution - other than the Chief Administrative Official or Accreditation Liaison Official. The AM will be able to communicate directly with COE to plan, ask questions, and generally manage the organization's accreditation processes, files, etc. to keep them current with the annual changes from the Commission. This individual should also be a primary person to attend annual COE conferences to stay abreast of annual accreditation updates.

Administration—The professional staff who provide formal leadership in an institution. The institutional administrative staff includes the Chief Administrative Official and other personnel who perform the administrative functions defined by institutional policy.

Administrator—A full- or part-time employee of an institution to whom has been given the responsibility of coordinating operational and/or instructional activities of the institution.

Admission(s)—The process through which a student is enrolled in an institution and/or placed into a program.

Adverse Action—An action taken by the Commission or Appeal Board to deny, withdraw, suspend, revoke, or terminate candidacy or accreditation.

Annual/Annually—Occurring once per calendar year (January through December).

Associate Degree—As defined in the U.S. Secretary of Education's scope of recognition for the Council, the term 'associate degree' refers to an 'applied' program with a credential awarded upon completion that is designed to lead the individual directly to employment in a specific career. The sole focus of associate degree programs accredited by the Council must not be described as transferability to a program offering a bachelor's degree. Although the objective of this degree is to enhance employment opportunities, some bachelors' degree institutions have developed upper-division programs to recognize this degree for transfer purposes, and this trend is to be encouraged when appropriate. When articulation agreements with four-year institutions do exist, those

opportunities may be described in appropriate publications. However, institutions approved to offer applied associate degree programs by the Council must take care not to guarantee the transferability of credit to other institutions by way of the title of the programs or the descriptions of the programs.

Benchmark—A standard of excellence or achievement against which similar things must be measured or judged. (Benchmarks for minimally-acceptable percentages of completion, placement, and licensure exam pass rates can be found within the Council's annual report software and on the Council's web site – www.council.org.)

Candidacy/Candidate for Accreditation [Pre-accreditation]—A status granted to an institution that has demonstrated compliance with specified eligibility requirements that define the universe of entities that may seek accreditation by the Commission.

Career Development—Professional development and skill enhancements necessary for individual growth and lifelong learning.

Certification—Credentials that enhance employability, but are not necessarily required for employment in specific occupational positions (e.g., software certifications for programmers: MSE certification, A+ Certification, etc.).

Chief Administrative Official (CAO)—Each institution must designate an accreditation Chief Administrative Official (CAO) and notify the Council when the CAO changes. The CAO is a senior employee who serves as the administrative head of a federal or military institution and is the person with whom primary responsibility for institutional operation rests. The CAO is the first contact of record for the Council and is the person to whom official correspondence regarding accreditation will be addressed. The CAO holds the authority (either positional or delegated) to requisition institutional resources and direct activities toward the achievement and maintenance of obligations of affiliation with the Council. The CAO must be a full-time employee of the institution and must maintain his/her office on-site at the main campus. (Chief Administrative Officials of federal institutions often carry titles such as: Commandant, Commander, President, Administrator, Director, Principal, etc.)

COE Fellow - The Fellow will function as the liaison for COE during accreditation and pre-accreditation visits. The primary responsibility of the Fellow is strictly preparatory and advisory, whereby supporting team leaders and institutions regarding conditions and standards of the Council on Occupational Education.

College-Level Examination Program (CLEP)—A set of standardized tests in various subjects, qualifying scores on which can be used to earn college credits.

Clinical Instruction—Supervised instruction involving or concerned with the direct observation and treatment of patients.

Clock Hour—A period of 60 minutes with a minimum of 50 minutes of instruction.

Co-Location—An arrangement between two legally separate educational institutions in which administration, faculty, staff, websites, links to websites, telephone numbers, and/or physical facilities may be shared. (This arrangement excludes the contracts between separate institutions that result in instructional service centers or other Commission-approved partnerships.)

Commission—The body of 19 elected members who serve as the governing board of the Council and its accreditation decision-making board.

Community—Group or groups comprised of institutional constituents/ stakeholders (i.e., students, staff, faculty, potential employers, governmental and other entities) who are served by or have an interest in the educational programs offered by an institution. **Competencies**—The specialized knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for successful performance in a specific occupation.

Competency Test—A group of questions and/or tasks to which a student responds to produce a quantitative representation of the student's knowledge, skill, and/or performance in a specific occupational area.

Completer—A student who has demonstrated the competencies required for a program and has been awarded the appropriate credential (graduate completer) or has acquired sufficient competencies through a program to become employed in the field of education pursued or a related field as evidenced by such employment (non-graduate completer).

Condition—A process, status, or situation adopted by the Council with which an institution must comply in order to become and maintain status as a candidate for accreditation or an accredited institution.

Constituency—The persons and, if applicable, entities that they represent who are to be served by an institution through one or more of its educational programs.

Continuing Occupational Education—Educational activities or experiences designed to assist in the development of knowledge and skills with the goal of maintaining one's current professional occupation (as opposed to advancing one's career). Participants in continuing education are assumed to have previously attained a basic level of education, training, or experience in the occupational area in which they are enrolling. These activities are not included in the institutional Self-Study Report, FTE calculation, or student achievement data collection, and are not required to be included on the COE approved program list. [See Section VII. Definitions - Job Upgrade Training.]

Contractor (Vendor)—A company or individual who provides goods and/or services to an institution for an agreed upon price. Contractors are not considered full-time employees for the purpose of meeting workshop attendance required by the Council's accreditation processes.

Correspondence Education—Instruction delivered via e-mail or traditional mail service and that employs print-based media, which may or may not be supplemented with video tape, CDRom, audio tape instruction/demonstrations, as well as online learning resources. Correspondence education requires minimal interaction between faculty and student. (The Council does not accredit correspondence education programs.)

Council (on Occupational Education)—The legal entity incorporated in the State of Georgia whose membership is all institutions accredited by the Commission.

Course—A series of lectures, laboratory, and/or work-based activities that pertain to a particular subject and that are typically required as part of a broader curriculum (e.g., a program).

Courseware—A term that combines the words "course" with "software". It is a term given to materials which are part of an educational course or class. Although courseware refers to all types of materials, it is mostly associated with technology-based materials, particularly software, and is often times is used synonymously with educational software. In general, courseware is materials necessary for students to complete a course, e.g., reading materials, student handouts library links, reference materials, etc.

Course Work—A term to describe written or practical work done by a student during a course of study, usually assessed in order to count toward a final mark or grade. This is assigned work the student performs as part of their course of study.

Credential—A diploma, certificate, degree, or other official acknowledgment by an institution that a student has completed a program.

Criterion—A characteristic of an institution that must be possessed or demonstrated as evidence of compliance with an accreditation Standard.

Distance Education— An educational delivery method that uses one or more technologies to provide instruction to students who are separated from faculty and support regular and substantive instruction between students and faculty, synchronously or asynchronously. Technologies used may include the internet, print-based media, email, one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices; audio conferencing; or video cassettes, DVD's, and CD-ROMs, if the cassettes, DVD's, or CD-ROMs are used in a course in conjunction with any of the technologies listed. Limitations specified under 'Contractual Agreements/Contracts for Instruction' apply to distance education delivery of instruction.

Distance Education Program—A program that makes available any portion of its required instructional hours via distance education.

Educational Quality—Determined on the basis of (1) the appropriateness of institutional/program objectives and (2) the effectiveness with which the institution/program is utilizing its resources to achieve these objectives.

Educational Resources—includes instructional materials textbooks, course materials, modules, streaming videos, tests, software, and any other tools, materials, media, or techniques used to support access to knowledge.

Eligibility Requirements—Requirements that define the kind of institution or program that an accrediting agency considers a part of its universe and thus within the scope of accrediting activities for which the agency assumes responsibility.

Emergency Evacuation—An emergency evacuation can include exiting the building in case of fire or moving to a safe place inside the facility in case of natural disasters.

Employee—An individual hired by an institution and paid compensation in the form of an hourly wage or annual salary. Employees of an institution are often eligible for additional benefits in the form of retirement, paid vacation and other leave days, various types of insurances, etc. Employment taxes for these persons are paid by the hiring institution. Equipment used for the performance of the employee's duties is provided by the hiring institution.

Final Approval—The second of two required approvals granted by the Commission for certain substantive changes upon the satisfactory completion of hosting a Council site visit (physical or virtual, in the case of distance education applications) and review by the Commission of all documentation related to the substantive change (the application, the site visit report, and the institution's response to the site visit report – if applicable).

Follow-Up—The act of making formal contact to obtain specified factual and/or perceptual information from a person or group of persons.

Full-Time Equivalent (FTE)—A unit of measurement used by the Commission to define the amount of scheduled instruction that equates to one full-time student during one academic year. The Commission defines an FTE as 900 contact (clock) hours, 45 quarter credit hours, or 30 semester credit hours of scheduled instruction. The clock or credit hours used to calculate an institution's FTE must reflect coursework in which a student has enrolled and matriculated. The FTE does not include hours or credits transferred from other institutions or awarded as CLEP courses. (In some cases, a Federal institution may use an "Average-on-Board (AOB)" measure in place of FTEs for computing dues.)

Goals of the COE Accreditation Process—The significant values and major purposes to whose realization the efforts of individuals and groups are directed.

Good Cause—The Commission may grant an extension of time for compliance with any of the Conditions, Standards, Criteria, or procedures for a period of time, not to exceed three years unless the Commission determines there is good cause for the extended period of time, and if:

The Commission and the institution can show that the circumstances requiring the period of non-compliance are beyond the institution's or program's control, due to a natural disaster or other significant catastrophic event significantly impacting an institution's or program's operations; Accepting students from another institution that is implementing a teach-out or closing. Significant and documented local or national economic changes, such as economic recession or closure of large local employer; Changes relating to State licensure requirements; The normal application of COE standards creates an undue hardship on students, or; Instructors who do not meet COE's typical faculty standards, but who are otherwise qualified by education or work experience, to teach courses within a dual or concurrent enrollment program, as defined in 20 U.S.C. 7801, or career and technical education courses;

Good cause may be demonstrated through submission of a clear and detailed explanation of extenuating circumstances that have prevented the institution from demonstrating compliance within the time frames specified by the Commission.

The Commission will determine whether institutions have demonstrated good cause on a case-by-case basis. The grant of the period of noncompliance is approved by the Commission. The Commission possesses the discretion to impose a shorter time limit than the length of an institution's longest program. A Good Cause Extension will only be offered if the institution can present a case that demonstrates it will return to compliance by the deadline date. The Commission will take into consideration not only the extenuating circumstances described by the institution, but the institution's history of compliance with Conditions, Standards, Criteria, and procedures of the Commission, as well as the institution's standing with federal, state, and recognized accrediting agencies. The extension granted by the Commission will not exceed the length of the longest program.

Good Cause Extensions will only be granted if the Commission projects that the institution or program has the resources necessary to achieve compliance with the standard, policy, or procedure postponed within the time allotted; and the institution or program demonstrates to the satisfaction of the Commission that the period of non-compliance will not: Contribute to the cost of the program to the student without the student's consent; Create any undue hardship on, or harm to, students, or; Compromise the program's academic quality.

Governing Body or Board—An appointed or elected group of individuals who are responsible for establishing policies of the institution in compliance with applicable regulatory statutes.

Graduate—A student who has demonstrated the competencies required for a program and has

been awarded the appropriate credential by the institution.

Guidelines—Less prescriptive suggestions for operating or developing something.

Initial Approval—The first of two required approvals granted by the Commission for certain substantive changes upon the satisfactory completion and review of the information provided in a substantive change application. After initial approval is granted, Commission staff schedule physical or virtual site visits within 180 days that are required before the second required approval of the change – Final Approval – is granted. Upon the granting of initial approval, institutions may begin full implementation of the change applied for and may be eligible for approval for student financial aid funding as applicable to the change.

Institution—A school, center, unit, or other provider of occupational education. An institution is a physical location (a bricks and mortar 'schoolhouse') where students, faculty, administrators, and other staff are present and where primary and supportive resources are available to instruct students in each course required of every approved program offered by the institution. This includes the designation of physical areas (classrooms, lab areas, administrative and common areas) appropriate for meeting the needs of students, staff, faculty, and others present at the campus. Approvals for specific programs issued by state, federal, or other agencies are not synonymous with the Council's definition of an institution.

Institutional Advisory Committee—A group of at least three persons, a majority being external to the institution, who are knowledgeable of the occupational training needs relevant to the occupational area. Through regularly scheduled and documented meetings, the committee provides consultative assistance to the administration of the institution to ensure that the institution continually strives to meet the occupational education needs of the community.

Instruction—Planned activities directed by faculty for the purpose of enabling students to acquire specific knowledge, skills, and/or attitudes. Instruction may be provided through lectures, laboratory or clinical exercises, distance education, or planned work-based activities.

Instructional Media—Any print or non-print learning resources (e.g., books, manuals, periodicals, computer software, films, videotapes, audio tapes, slides, and others) and the equipment and services necessary to use them.

Instructional Supplies—Items needed for instruction.

Instructional Support Staff—Full- or part-time personnel who are responsible for those tasks which directly support the faculty.

Integrity—Wholeness or consistency between or among principles, intentions, and actions, and thus uprightness of character.

Job Upgrade Training— Educational activities or experiences that are designed to enhance existing knowledge and skills and that are offered with the goal of providing persons in specific occupations with the credentials, knowledge, and skills needed for career advancement (as opposed to maintaining one's current professional occupation position). These activities are considered to be occupational programs and are included in the institutional Self-Study Report, FTE calculation, and student achievement data collection (completion data only) and must be included on the COE approved program list. [See Section VII. Definitions - Continuing Occupational Education.]

Laboratory Instruction—An instructional setting under the supervision of institutional faculty in which students apply theories and principles learned during lectures in order to acquire the

proficiency and dexterity that is required in the occupation for which the student is being prepared.

Lecture—Instruction by a qualified faculty member or other resource which imparts to students the concepts, principles, and theories of an academic or technical subject.

Legal Authority—The power derived by an individual or group to perform specific functions based on applicable local, state, and/or federal statutory regulations.

Legal Responsibility—The obligation and/or liability placed on an individual or group by applicable local, state, and/or federal statutory regulations.

Licensure—Credentials that are required for employment in specific occupational positions (such as Licensed Practical Nursing and Cosmetologist).

Main Campus—The lead (or parent) institutional campus is the location where the offices of the Chief Administrative Official (CAO) and Accreditation Liaison Official (ALO) are maintained and to which all non-main campus sites are subordinate and accountable. The main campus must offer at least one approved occupational program and must maintain duplicates of all student records for non-main campus sites.

Merger – Two or more accredited main campuses that merge into one campus; or, an accredited institution becoming an affiliate of another accredited institution.

Mission of the Institution—The end to be attained by an institution through the programs and services provided for its students. The mission of federal institutions shall be to instruct students to such competency levels that they are qualified to perform federal jobs.

Non-Public Institution—An institution that is created, operated, and controlled by a non-governmental entity such as a business corporation, a foundation, a religious organization, or a chartered association.

Objectives of COE Accreditation—Explication in more specific terms of ideas and activities inherent in the aspects of the institution evaluated by the COE accreditation process, but not necessarily obvious or explicit in the goals of COE accreditation.

Objectives of an Educational Course/Program—Learning objectives are statements that specify the knowledge, skills, and/or attitudes (KSA) to be acquired by students through planned instructional activities. Typically, learning objectives can be classified into two categories, Terminal Learning Objectives (TLO) and Enabling Learning Objectives (ELO).

> A TLO is the highest learning level (KSA) appropriate to the human performance requirements a student will accomplish when successfully completing instruction. (Other names include: Lesson Objective, Primary Objective, and Main Objective).
>
> ELOs are the objectives students must attain in order to accomplish a terminal objective. (Other names include Secondary Objective, Sample of Behavior, Supporting Objective, Subordinate Objective, and Topical Objective).

Objectives of a Strategic Plan—Objectives are specific in nature and consist of the following elements:

1. What will be accomplished;
2. When it will be accomplished;
3. Who is responsible for accomplishing it; and,
4. How accomplishment will be measured.

Occupational Area—A general term used to broadly group vocational/technical functions to a profession. For example, a Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) identifies areas of job concentration (typically skills required for successful performance) to classify positions (duty position title, identifier(s), credentials, and authorization documents). Most federal employees are classified into occupational categories based upon work performed, skills, education, training, and credentials.

Occupational Education Institution—An education institution that has as its mission the preparation of individuals for employment and/or career enhancement. (The main campus or parent institution has a chief administrator to whom each affiliate, extension, or other type of separate site is subordinate and accountable. The institution recognizes individuals who acquire targeted knowledge, skills, attitudes, and other competencies by awarding appropriate credentials such as applied associate degrees, diplomas, certificates, and/or other acceptable credentials.)

Occupational Education Program—A sequence of instruction and related activities (e.g., laboratory activities and/or work-based activities) designed to provide educational and workplace competencies that lead to a credential. (Such programs offered by Commission accredited institutions are designed to prepare individuals for job entry and/or career advancement. Test preparation activities do not qualify as occupational education programs.)

Official Meeting—A meeting is considered 'official' if it: a) is planned or called by the institution, b) requires the attendance of members, c) follows an agenda, and d) is recorded in official minutes.

Operational Procedure—Specific provisions that have been established by the institution to implement policies adopted by the governing board.

Placement—A completer of a program that (1) is employed in the field of education pursued or in a related field or (2) has received the appropriate credential and entered the military or continued his/her education. Valid employment in the field or a related field includes placement in a permanent full- or part-time position with an employer or employment agency, or self-employment in the field of education or a related field. Internships and externships, either paid or unpaid, do not qualify as placements.

Plan—A detailed written proposal/method for achieving an objective. The following elements must be included in a plan: scope of services, budgetary resources, major activities, evaluations of the plan, and stakeholders with whom the plan is shared.

Policies—A set of written statements providing the bounds within which all procedures, programs, goals, objectives, and activities of the institution are carried out. These are adopted by the governing board of an institution (or in military institutions, by higher military command headquarters) to ensure operations comply with statutory regulations and are consistent with the stated mission.

Position—An attitude or stance of an entity—the way a body (organization) looks at an issue or takes a stand on such. A mental or emotional stance adopted with respect to something.

Pre-accreditation [Candidacy/Candidate for Accreditation]—A status granted to an institution that has demonstrated compliance with specified eligibility requirements that define the universe of entities that may seek accreditation by the Commission.

Procedure—A formal or set order of operating or doing something—a method of conducting affairs.

Process—A series of progressive and independent steps by which an end is attained.

Professional Growth—Planned activities to increase the knowledge, skills, and/or abilities of

professional personnel in areas related directly to job responsibilities.

Publications (Federal) The institution publishes the following information which must be readily available to students, prospective students, and other constituents:

(Federal institutions are required to take appropriate measures to ensure personally identifiable information [PII] is not released to unauthorized entities.)

a. The website and other official information documents must contain and accurately depict the following information:
   1. The institutional mission
   2. Admission requirements and procedures
   3. The institution's policy on the transfer of students between programs within the institution
   4. The institution's policy on the transfer of credits that includes a statement of the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution
   5. Basic information on programs and courses, with any required sequences and frequency of course offerings explicitly stated
   6. Program completion requirements, including length of time required to obtain certification of completion
   7. Faculty (full-time and part-time listed separately) with degrees held and the conferring institution
   8. A description of institutional facilities readily available for educational use
   9. Rules and regulations for conduct
   10. National and/or state legal requirements for eligibility for licensure or entry into an occupation or profession for which education and training are offered
   11. Any unique requirements for career paths or for employment and advancement opportunities in the profession or occupation described
   12. The grading system
   13. The institution's academic/school calendar
   14. The institution's attendance requirements
   15. The street address and telephone number of each campus of the institution (main campus and each additional permanent site)
   16. The institution's student grievance policy, which includes successive procedures showing the Commission's mailing address, telephone number, and website address as an avenue of last resort

b. Other publications that make any reference to the institution's status (candidacy or accredited) with the Commission must be accurate and must include the name, address, telephone number, and website address of the Commission. (In lieu of reference to the Commission, the institution may use the following statement: "For information about national and program accreditation, contact the institution.")

c. The website is readily and publicly available to students, prospective students, and other constituents to provide current information as specified below:
   1. The name of the institution exactly as approved by the Commission and the institution's authorizing agency
   2. The name, email address and telephone number of the institution's main contact

Real, Threatened, or Impending Danger—Any situation which could cause injury to persons on the institution's campus, including but not limited to fires, tornadoes, floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, bomb threats, or violent acts by an individual.

Registrant—A person who registers for instruction with intent to attend.

Related Field (Placement)—Placement of graduate and non-graduate completers in a broader field of work that uses the knowledge and skills gained in the program of study regardless of whether the work title specifically references the program of study. Graduate completers who secure employment in a field that does not require the knowledge and skills gained in the program of study for securing that employment must be classified as placed in an 'unrelated' field. (Non-graduate completers, by definition, must secure employment in the field of study or a related field, employment that requires knowledge and skills gained in the program, or must be classified as withdrawals from the program of study.)

Scope (change of)—Any instance in which an institution departs significantly from its mission with regard to the occupational areas for which it offers preparation.

Service Area—Service area is defined as the geographical area surrounding the institution from which the institution expects to attract students and serve employers.

Staff—The administrative, supervisory, faculty, and non-instructional personnel employed by an institution.

Standard—Generalizable conditions determined to be essential for objectives to be achieved.

Strategic Planning—A formalized, systematic process institutions use to develop forecasts or projections so as to identify future goals and create objectives for achieving those goals.

Student—A person who is formally engaged in learning as demonstrated by a commitment to attend class.

Syllabus (Syllabi)—An outline or other brief statement of the main points of the subjects of a course or lecture, the contents of a curriculum, etc.

Technical Infrastructure—The framework of an institution's electronic student, financial, and IT information system inclusive of hardware and software that supports students, faculty, and staff services that guide institutional operations including the delivery of distance education as approved by the Council.

Traditional Program—A program that requires all instructional hours to be completed on campus.

Vision of the Institution—A values-based description of a desired future for the institution that clarifies the institution's image and how it should conduct itself as it fulfills its mission.

Withdrawal—A student who enrolled in an institution but withdrew before acquiring sufficient competencies for employment and before earning a credential in the field of education pursued or a related field.

Work-Based Activities—Structured learning activities conducted in supervised work settings external to the institution or in a setting within the program that involves the public (e.g., clients who are served by the institution in cosmetology clinical or automotive technology settings) that are components of educational programs (e.g., externships, internships, clinical experiences, industrial cooperative education, and similar activities). These activities must be planned with at least two objectives:

1. To provide students with the opportunity to develop and apply a 'real-world' work

experience using the knowledge and skills they attained in their program of study

2. To provide the institution with objective input from potential employers or customers of program graduates

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The *Handbook of Accreditation for Federal Institutions* was revised by the Council on December 10, 2025.

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