COUNCIL ON OCCUPATIONAL EDUCATION

POLICIES AND RULES OF THE COMMISSION

Revised October 2026v1

Policies and Rules of the Commission

All previous editions are obsolete.

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Preface

The Bylaws of the Council on Occupational Education assign to the Commission the responsibility of "establishing and implementing appropriate policies and rules for the enforcement of the approved accreditation standards and membership conditions" (Bylaws of the Council on Occupational Education, Article IV. The Commission, Section 4.2, Commission Responsibilities).

Further, the current *Handbook of Accreditation* states in several instances that the Commission will establish policies and/or rules for candidate and accredited institutions to observe in order to maintain their status with the Council. Policies and rules are understood by the Commission to include procedures that may be required to maintain compliance with the Council's standards and conditions.

The purpose of this document is to communicate to interested and affected parties the policies and rules that have been adopted by the Commission in fulfillment of its obligation under the *Bylaws of the Council*. The order of topics in this document follows the order in which they appear in either the *Bylaws* or the *Handbook of Accreditation*. In those cases where the action of the Commission is mandated by the provisions in the *Handbook of Accreditation*, a reference is given with the specific page number where the mandate appears.

These policies and rules are subject to revision, including additions and deletions, at any time by the Commission as the Commission deems appropriate to carry out its responsibilities under the Bylaws of the Council. The Commission has total and final authority in determining institutional compliance with these policies and rules.

Changes and amendments to these Policies and Rules are highlighted in blue.

Changes made as a result of mandates of the U.S Department of Education are highlighted in yellow.

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Policies and Rules Applicable to the Bylaws of the Council on Occupational Education

References for Policies and Rules stated in this section are provided for the specific sections where they appear in the *Bylaws of the Council on Occupational Education*. The subsections that follow are consistent with the order in which the topics appear in the *Bylaws*.

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ELIGIBILITY TO SERVE AS A PUBLIC MEMBER OF THE COMMISSION OR THE COUNCIL APPEAL PANEL

An individual who represents the general public on the Commission or the Appeal Panel of the Council on Occupational Education must not be

(1) an employee, member of the governing board, owner, or shareholder of, or consultant to an institution that either is a candidate for accreditation or is accredited by the Council or has applied for candidacy or accreditation by the Council;
(2) a member of any trade association or membership organization related to, affiliated with, or associated with the Council; or
(3) a spouse, parent, child, or sibling, of an individual identified in item (1) or item (2) above.

REFERENCE: *Bylaws of the Council on Occupational Education*, Article III. Membership and Voting, Section 3.8 Council Appeal Panel, and Article IV. The Commission, Section 4.3 Election and Terms of the Members of the Commission

AVAILABILITY OF COE PUBLICATIONS

Institutions interested in membership with the Council on Occupational Education may obtain copies of all current Council publications, applications, and forms from the Council's website (www.council.org) or within the EDvera portal.

Candidate visiting team leaders will confirm that institutions applying for candidacy have access to the most current copies of the *Handbook of Accreditation*, *Policies and Rules of the Commission*, *Self-Study Manual,* and *Guidelines for Accreditation Visiting Teams*.

Institutions in candidate or accredited status will be notified when revised editions of the Council's primary publications are available on the Council's website.

Institutions will be directed to download the latest edition of the Self-Study Manual upon notifying the Commission that they are ready to begin their self-study.

Team leaders and members shall have access to the appropriate versions of the *Handbook of Accreditation*, the *Policies and Rules of the Commission*, and the *Guidelines for Accreditation Visiting Teams* on the Council's website. Team leaders will also have access to the *Self-Study Manual*.

Institutions are free to reproduce any of the above publications downloaded from the website or purchase hard copies of Council publications by placing an order with the office of the Commission of the Council on Occupational Education.

REFERENCE: *Bylaws of the Council on Occupational Education*, Article IV. The Commission, Section 4.2, Commission Responsibilities

COMMISSION REVIEW COMMITTEE

The Commission Review Committee is established by the Commission as a standing committee. The committee will be composed of all current members of the Commission and 20 to 25 members who will be elected annually by the Commission to serve one-year terms. Persons elected to the Commission Review Committee are eligible for election to successive one-year terms without limitation. The Chair and Vice Chair of the Commission Executive Committee will serve as the Chair and Vice Chair, respectively, of the Commission Review Committee. The Chief Executive Officer of the Commission shall serve as Secretary of the Commission Review Committee.

The function of the Commission Review Committee will be to review institutional materials, educational programs, and any other materials and/or documents that relate to the Standards, Criteria, Conditions, Policies, and/or procedures of the Commission. These functions may be performed by the committee as a whole or by subgroups of the committee as may be appropriate for the particular task.

REFERENCE: *Bylaws of the Council on Occupational Education*, Article IV. The Commission, Section 4.16, Commission Committees

PROCEDURES FOR SELECTION OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF THE COUNCIL AND COMMISSION

When a vacancy occurs (or is about to occur) in the position of Chief Executive Officer of the Council and Commission, the Commission shall establish a selection committee composed of the Executive Committee of the Commission.

NOTE: The chair and vice-chair of the Commission shall serve as chair and vice-chair of the selection committee.

The duties of the selection committee are:

(a) To solicit applications from persons to be considered and screen these applicants as to qualifications.

(b) To nominate at least three (3) acceptable candidates for the position to the Commission. (The Commission may appoint one of these candidates. Should the Commission choose not to appoint one of the candidates, the selection process shall continue.)

REFERENCE: *Bylaws of the Council on Occupational Education*, Article IV. The Commission, Section 4.17, Executive Committee

Policies and Rules Applicable to
Conditions of Accreditation

References for Policies and Rules stated in this section are provided for the specific sections where they appear in the *Handbook of Accreditation*. The subsections that follow are consistent with the order in which the topics appear in the *Handbook of Accreditation*.

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AFFILIATION WITH COE

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM POLICIES OF THE COUNCIL

Approved Programs

The Council defines an occupational education program as 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.) Traditional and distance education programs are included in the Council on Occupational Education's scope of recognition with the U.S Department of Education. Correspondence courses and direct assessment education are not currently included in the Council's scope of recognition, nor does the Council elect to expand its scope of recognition for the inclusion of these type programs at this time.

The Council on Occupational Education does not accredit or preaccredit an institution comprising fewer than all of the programs, branch campuses, and locations of an institution as certified for title IV participation by the Secretary, except with notice to and permission from the Secretary.

Establishment of the list of Approved Programs

The Council defines an occupational education program as 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.) Traditional and distance education programs are included in the Council on Occupational Education's scope of recognition

with the U.S. Department of Education. Correspondence courses and direct assessment education are not currently included in the Council's scope of recognition, nor does the Council elect to expand its scope of recognition for the inclusion of these type programs at this time.

An official listing of approved programs is established for each campus in the Council's database once an institution is accepted as a candidate for accreditation. The programs to include on the list are initially provided by the institution in the candidate application. Each program on the list includes a program code (using the Classification of Instructional Programs code – CIP code); program name; mode of delivery (traditional or distance education); specific length in clock hours: specific length in semester credit, and/or quarter credit hours if applicable; and whether or not an applied associate degree credential is awarded for program completion.

IMPORTANT: Federal institutions are not required to follow the same procedure for establishing a list of programs. Information about federal training is initially collected through the candidate application process and detailed further in the institutional self-study performed by federal institution candidates and members.

Programs to Include on the List of Approved Programs

The programs included on the list of approved programs are primarily postsecondary and offered by institutions exclusively for career and technical education.

The following criteria are important when determining which programs must appear on the list:

1. The Council is an institutional accreditor. This means that accreditation by the Council includes all programs that offer instruction for job entry or career advancement. Therefore, all career and technical education programs (applied associate degree and non-degree) must be included on the list, including those labeled as job upgrade training* and Vocational English-as-a-Second-Language programs.
2. The Council does not accredit institutions offering programs beyond the applied associate degree credential. Institutions offering academic degrees or degrees at baccalaureate level or beyond must seek accreditation by another agency.
3. The Council does not accredit avocational programs (such as stand-alone ESL programs). Institutions offering programs or courses that do not prepare students for job entry or career advancement are not included in the list of approved programs accredited by the Council. IMPORTANT: Institutions offering avocational programs/courses must clearly specify that those offerings are not accredited by the Council and do not qualify for Title IV financial aid assistance in all publications in which they appear.
4. There is no minimum or maximum length defined by the Commission for career and technical education programs. All career and technical education programs, regardless of their length, must be included on the list.
5. The names and lengths of programs on the list must be identically stated in all institutional publications (catalogs, brochures, websites, etc.) and on all state and federal authorizing agencies and/or board approvals and licenses.
6. Programs that appear on the list of approved programs are considered to be 'active' programs. That is, they are marketed with the goal of enrolling students, they are mentioned specifically on an enrollment agreement the students sign, and they award a specific credential. ALSO, the programs on the list meet one of the following conditions: (a) currently have students enrolled;
7. (b) have had students enrolled in the past 12 months; (c) have been approved by the Commission within the past 180 days; or (d) are secondary occupational programs that, due to state regulations, currently have or may have postsecondary (adult) enrollments. At least one of these conditions is true at any point in time. Programs that fail to meet at least one of these conditions must be removed from the list.
8. Institutions must provide student achievement data (completion, placement and possibly, licensure exam pass rates) for each program on the list of approved programs. *
9. The list of approved programs (and student enrollment and number of campuses) is an important factor when establishing the size of accreditation visiting teams and choosing team members with appropriate education and experience for the evaluation of the programs on the list.
10. The institutional Self-Study Report must address compliance with accreditation Standards for all programs on the list of approved programs, even if a program does not have students enrolled at the time of the accreditation team visit. (See subsection entitled "Changing the List of Approved Programs".)
11. Programs on the list of approved programs may be eligible for Title IV Student Financial Aid or other funding sources, but this is not the only factor in determining which programs must be included. The previous points one through nine, alone, determine whether or not programs are included on the list. However, because the Council's accreditation process is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as meeting one of the eligibility requirements for Title IV Student Financial Aid programs, institutions must be sure that all Title IV eligible programs appear accurately on the list of approved programs.
12. COE does not require the application of the standard described below to institutions that do not participate in Title IV, HEA programs. Under such circumstances, the COE's grants of accreditation or preaccreditation must specify that the grant, by request of the institution, does not include participation by the institution in Title IV, HEA programs.

For institutions that request, in writing to COE, not to participate in the Title IV, HEA programs: these institutions are not required to provide the record of compliance with the institution's program responsibilities under Title IV of the Act. based on the most recent student loan default rate data provided by the Secretary, the results of compliance audits, program reviews, and any other information that the Secretary may provide to the agency.

13. The Council does not accredit programs where the institution is facilitating (serving as an agent) rather than providing the training. The operational and curricular oversight of the program is the responsibility of the external organization rather than the institution and the training is not approved by any oversight agency. If students are not enrolled in the institution, do not receive Title IV Student Financial Aid, do not receive placement services, and do not receive a credential from the institution, these programs would not be included in the self-study report, FTE calculations or student achievement data collection and are not required to be included on the COE approved program list.
IMPORTANT: Institutions must clearly specify that those programs are not accredited by the Council and do not qualify for Title IV financial aid assistance in all publications/websites in which they appear.

Member institutions are required to notify the Commission of additions, changes, and deletions to the list of approved programs. Institutions that fail to notify the Commission in a timely manner will be subject to penalties. (See the latest edition of the *Handbook of Accreditation*, chart of substantive changes.)

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. Also, institutions in candidate status are not permitted to apply for approval of substantive changes of any kind. Waivers of this policy may be granted when changes are mandated by the institution's local school district or state agency. (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.)

*See Definitions - Job Upgrade Training and Continuing Occupational Education. Continuing occupational education programs are not included on the list of approved programs.

Programs with Credentialed Exit Points

Programs are often designed with embedded exit points (also referred to as occupational completion points). These exit points are created during a formal program planning process that is documented and includes input from the program's occupational advisory committee. Students enrolled in the program who demonstrate acceptable progress are issued credentials (such as certificates of completion) when these points are reached. They indicate specific points within the program at which it is determined, during the program planning process, that a student has gained marketable skills and is employable.

For example, a Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) program that is 1,200 clock hours in length (required for a diploma) may be designed with an exit point credential titled 'Certified Nursing Assistant Certificate' (CNA). The CNA certificate is issued to students who complete at least 250 clock hours of the LPN program. Students who choose to leave the LPN program before completing the hours required for the diploma will still be rewarded with a credential for completion of a certain portion of instruction that indicates the student gained a certain level of knowledge and skills. This certificate may greatly benefit the student who seeks employment in the field of Allied Health, even though it may be at a lower level of

pay and long-term opportunity.

Institutions are not required to list all exit points on the list of approved programs for the Council. However, if the institution advertises enrollment in an exit point program, like the CNA program mentioned in the example above, it MUST list the CNA program separately on the list of approved programs. Institutions' admissions offices must never enroll a student who is seeking only a lower-level credential (like the CNA example, which requires only 250 clock hours and is not eligible for Title IV financial aid) into a longer program (like the LPN program, which requires 1,200 clock hours) that is eligible for Title IV financial aid in order to access that funding.

Overall, it is best to remember this rule: If the institution advertises a workforce preparation/career advancement program (regardless of the length of the program, whether or not it is an exit point of another longer program, or the credential offered) on its website, in newspapers, on television, or any other media, for the purpose of enrolling students, it MUST include that program on the Council's list of approved programs. It must also include those programs in the Self-Study Report and FTE calculation, and it must collect student achievement data for that program. (There are options, however, when reporting student achievement data for exit points within the Council's annual report software that are described in the Help Manual for the software and discussed during Council workshops.)

Applied Associate Degree Programs

The official recognition of the Council by the U.S. Department of Education includes the accreditation of institutions that offer programs with credentials through the applied associate degree. Institutions offering academic degrees or degrees at the baccalaureate level or beyond must seek accreditation by another agency.

Institutions accredited by the Council must demonstrate that all applied associate degree programs comply with:

1. The requirement for institutions that do not teach the general education courses required of applied associate degree programs to verify and document that general education courses from other sources are accepted only through formal articulation agreements; these institutions must be accredited by an agency recognized by the Department of Education.
2. The requirement that general education courses are academic courses that are not applicable to a specific occupation.
3. Criteria from each Standard that are applicable to all programs offered by the institution.
4. Policies that govern the establishment and maintenance of the Council's list of approved programs for the institution, as specified in the *Policies and Rules of the Commission*.
5. Additional criteria that govern clock hour/credit hour conversion and academic coursework required of degree programs.
6. Benchmarks for completion, placement, and licensure exam pass rates as specified in the *Policies and Rules of the Commission*. (When reporting student achievement data for degree programs, institutions may not combine degree data with the same programs offering a lesser credential level, such as a diploma or certificate. However, diploma and certificate data from the same program may be combined and reported with degree-level data.)

Institutions that seek approval to offer an applied associate degree must begin the process by applying for a change of scope described in this manual.

Additionally, dual accreditation of applied associate degree nursing programs by the Council and the Accrediting Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN) is available upon request by COE-accredited

institutions. Additional criteria required by ACEN for their accreditation of nursing programs is included within Standard Two – Educational Programs in the *Handbook of Accreditation*.

Apprenticeship Program Classification and Responsibilities

The Council classifies apprenticeship program activities conducted by accredited institutions as either standard instructional or independent activities. The primary factors for the classification of apprenticeship programs are the following:

- Funding of program activities;
- Curriculum management, including the definition of learning objectives and development of instructional activities, labs, and assessments;
- Facilities, instructional equipment, and learning resources; and
- Faculty employment, supervision, and evaluation.

The Council reserves the right to make individual determinations when necessary and acknowledges that this list may not be exhaustive.

1. Standard Apprenticeship Programs

The program is classified as a "standard" apprenticeship program if the institution directly owns and controls the classification factors defined above. Standard apprenticeship programs are considered occupational education programs and must comply with accreditation requirements defined in the Handbook of Accreditation for Public and Non-Public Institutions. Institutions must also submit institutional Self-Study Reports, FTE enrollment calculations, and student achievement data for these programs.

2. Independent Apprenticeship Programs

When public institutions partner with external organizations such as unions, trade associations, other professional organizations, or single employers to offer instruction for apprenticeship and the apprenticeship determination factors are the responsibility of the external organization rather than the institution, these activities are classified as ‘independent’.

The Council does not accredit or approve independent apprenticeship programs. As such, institutions should not include these programs in Self-Study Reports, FTE enrollment calculations, or student achievement reporting.

Independent Apprenticeship Programs must comply with criteria defined in the Handbook of Accreditation for Registered Apprenticeship Schools & National ERISA Training Institutes.

3. Additional Responsibilities for Independent Apprenticeship Programs

Public institutions involved in independent apprenticeship programs must specify that those programs are not accredited by the Council.

Credentials issued by Council-accredited institutions for these activities must not include the Council’s seal of accreditation, nor by any other implication – direct or indirect – suggest that these programs are accredited by the Council.

Institutions are expected to make changes to their publications to comply with these requirements. Website information must be revised – if needed – immediately. Hard copy and digital publications, such as catalogs, brochures, etc., must be revised – if needed – upon the next review/revision cycle for those

documents.

Calculating and Reporting Program Length

As stated previously, there is no minimum or maximum program length that determines which programs must be included on the list of approved programs.

The Council uses the following definitions to describe the methods of measurement of program length:

> **Clock Hour**: A period of time consisting of (i) A 50- to 60-minute class, lecture, or recitation in a 60- minute period; (ii) A 50- to 60-minute faculty-supervised laboratory, shop training, or internship in a 60-minute period; (iii) In distance education, 50 to 60 minutes in a 60-minute period of attendance in (A) A synchronous or asynchronous class, lecture, or recitation where there is opportunity for direct interaction between the instructor and students; or (B) An asynchronous learning activity involving academic engagement in which the student interacts with technology that can monitor and document the amount of time that the student participates in the activity.
>
> **Credit Hour:** An amount of student work defined by an institution, as approved by COE or State approval agency, that is consistent with commonly accepted practice in postsecondary education and that (1) Reasonably approximates not less than (i) One hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or ten to twelve weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different period of time; or (ii) At least an equivalent amount of work as required in (1) of this definition for other academic activities as established by the institution, including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours; and (2) Permits an institution, in determining the amount of work associated with a credit hour, to take into account a variety of delivery methods, measurements of student work, academic calendars, disciplines, and degree levels.
>
> **Semester Credit Hour**: A unit of program measurement that equals a minimum of 15 clock hours of lecture or 30 clock hours of laboratory instruction, or 45 clock hours of work-based activities
>
> **Quarter Credit Hour**: A unit of program measurement that equals a minimum of 10 clock hours of lecture, 20 clock hours of laboratory, or 30 clock hours of work-based activities

Credit Hours Policy

The Department of Education establishes the credit hour as the basis for determining an institution's eligibility for federal funding. A credit hour is a unit of measure that reflects the level of instruction, academic rigor, and time requirements associated with a course offered by an institution of higher education. COE recognizes that institutions may use different methodologies to assign credit hours. Each institution should develop a methodology for assigning credit hours to courses and programs that accurately reflects the level of instruction, academic rigor, and time requirements of the course. The institution should also be able to demonstrate that its educational programs have sufficient content, depth, and program length appropriate to the objectives of the degree or credential awarded. The institution's methodology for assigning and awarding credit hours should align with commonly accepted practices in higher education and comply with applicable laws and regulations in the state or jurisdiction where the institution operates. Consistency in credit hour determinations, both within and across institutions, has important implications for transferability of credit and for reducing the loss of

credit by students. COE shall review an institution's policy, procedures, and/or methodology for determining credit hours to ensure that the methodology provides a reasonable approximation of student work and is consistent with commonly accepted practice in postsecondary education.

The Commission is aware that some postsecondary institutional licensing agencies approve courses and/or programs with the number of credit hours being calculated to as many as two decimal places.

The Commission is also aware that the general practice in the postsecondary education community is to measure courses and programs in whole numbers of credit hours.

The policy of the Commission is that the conversion of clock hours to credit hours for individual courses may be calculated to include a fraction or decimal but must not be inflated by rounding up. The sum of the course credit hours for a program must equal a whole number without rounding up.

Guidelines for Reporting Secondary Programs

The Commission offers its evaluative services to postsecondary institutions that enroll secondary students in career and technical education programs. Institutions electing to include secondary programs in the self-study process of the Council must specify this in their application for candidate status with the Council and indicate which programs enroll secondary students.

Once secondary program evaluation is indicated, the institution must

a. include secondary programs in the Self-Study Report,
b. include secondary students in the institution's FTE calculation, and
c. collect completion rate data on the secondary student population.

Secondary programs included on the list of approved programs are those that are occupational in nature and enroll high school students (grades 11 and 12).

In some states, institutions may enroll adult students in secondary occupational programs. When this is the case, those programs that have adults enrolled or MAY enroll adults must be on the list of approved programs, especially if those adults are eligible for Title IV Student Financial Aid.

Vocational English-as-a-Second-Language Programs

A Vocational English-as-a-Second-Language (VESL) Program is a stand-alone program that is limited to persons already possessing occupational competencies who would be employable if they could demonstrate adequate English language skills. The program consists solely of English-as-a-Second Language courses and must meet the following requirements:

a. The program must meet the Objectives and Criteria required of all COE-approved educational programs.
b. The institution must admit only students who need instruction in English to be able to use the knowledge and skills that they already possess in order to obtain employment.
c. The institution must demonstrate that students enrolled in the VESL program possess job skills, as evidenced by documentation such as credentials, test scores, job experience, or verification of skill competencies by a qualified third party.
d. The institution must accept the responsibility for placement assistance upon graduation, in compliance with COE placement requirements.
e. The institution must submit student achievement data to verify completion rates, placement rates and, if applicable, licensure exam pass rates, for all students enrolled in

Vocational ESL programs.

Vocational English-as-a-Second-Language Programs must be included on the list of approved programs.

Conversely, 'Avocational' English-as-a-Second-Language programs (or 'stand-alone' ESL programs) are those English language programs that enroll members of the community who are interested in learning the language for purposes other than seeking employment. Avocational English-as-a-Second-Language Programs are not included in the Council's scope of accreditation and are not included on the list of approved programs. Institutions offering any avocational programs must specify that the programs are not accredited by the Council and do not qualify for Title IV financial aid assistance in appropriate publications and brochures.

Instructional Delivery Methods

The instructional delivery method is one of the program specifics contained on the list of approved programs. The two types of instructional delivery methods indicated on the list are defined as follows:

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

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

When Council publications use the term 'Distance Education' in context of a method of program delivery, it is defined as follows:

Distance Education: Education that uses one or more technologies to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and support regular and substantive instruction between students and the instructor, 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, DVDs, and CD-ROMs, if the cassettes, DVDs, or CD-ROMs are used in a course in conjunction with any of the technologies listed.

Guidance on Distance Education Courses

When distance education constitutes a significant portion of an institution's educational offerings, this should be reflected in the institution's mission. Faculty employed by the institution should assume primary responsibility for the oversight of distance education courses and programs, ensuring that both the rigor and instructional quality are comparable to that of campus-based instruction. The technologies used to deliver instruction shall be appropriate to the nature and intended learning outcomes of the programs and courses, and institutional expectations for students' access to and use of those technologies shall be clearly communicated.

Faculty teaching Distance Education

An institution offering distance education courses or programs should ensure that there is a sufficient number of faculty qualified to develop, design, and teach the courses/programs. In accordance with Department of Education guidelines, the instructor is the individual responsible for delivering course content and who meets the qualifications for instruction established in the Council's Standards, Conditions, and Criteria. Faculty teaching distance education courses are expected to have regular and substantive interaction with students. Substantive interaction includes engaging students in teaching, learning, and assessment, consistent with the content under discussion, and also includes providing

direct instruction and at least two of the following—

(i) Assessing or providing feedback on a student's coursework;
(ii) Providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency;
(iii) Facilitating a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency; or
(iv) Other instructional activities approved by the institution's or program's accrediting agency.

An institution ensures regular interaction between a student and an instructor or instructors by—

(i) Providing the opportunity for substantive interactions with the student on a predictable and scheduled basis commensurate with the length of time and the amount of content in the course; and
(ii) Monitoring the student's academic engagement and success and ensuring that an instructor is responsible for promptly and proactively engaging in substantive interaction with the student when needed on the basis of such monitoring, or upon request by the student prior to the student's completion of a course.

Resources and Student Services for Distance Education

The institution is responsible for ensuring that students enrolled in distance education programs and courses have adequate access to the services and resources necessary to support learning and success. This responsibility includes ensuring that advertising, recruiting, and admissions information accurately represent program requirements. The institution should also ensure that students enrolled through distance education are able to use the instructional technologies employed, are informed of the equipment necessary to succeed, and are provided timely assistance in using required technologies.

In addition, the institution should ensure that students have adequate access to services and can effectively use resources necessary to support learning, including library, financial aid, academic, and student support services, and that students and faculty have access to laboratories, facilities, and equipment appropriate to the courses and programs offered through distance education. The institution must clearly identify an individual whom students can contact if they have questions. Contact information, including a phone number and email address for this individual, must be clearly stated.

Information regarding approval of distance education as a delivery method is discussed in this manual in the section titled: Procedures Required for Approval of Institutional Distance Education Delivery.

Maintenance of the List of Approved Programs

Institutions are provided access to their current list of approved programs through the EDvera accreditation management system. Institutions should review the list at least twice each year to be sure the specifics of each program on the list are accurate and identically match institutional publications and all state, federal, authorizing agency, and/or board approvals and licenses. The Council classifies changes to the list of approved programs as ‘substantive changes’. The *Handbook of Accreditation* provides a detailed chart of these changes under the ‘Programmatic’ heading.

In most instances, applications must be provided and official approval granted in order to change the list of approved programs once it is established. Site visits and fees are sometimes a part of the approval process. The chart of programmatic substantive changes in the *Handbook of Accreditation* provides institutions with information about the process for approval and whether or not fees and site visits are necessary.

The Council’s website (www.council.org) provides institutions with access to all applications required for changing the list of approved programs. When site visits are involved as part of the approval process, the site visit forms used by team members are also available on the website.

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. Also, institutions in candidate status are not permitted to apply for approval of substantive changes of any kind. Waivers of this policy may be granted when changes are mandated by the institution's local school district or state agency. (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.)

As stated previously in this section, all programs on the list of approved programs are considered to be 'active' programs. Once a program is 'deleted', it is immediately removed from the list. The Council defines a program deletion as follows:

> **Deletion**: This term is used to describe the termination (closure) of a program offered by an institution. Deletion applies when the institution determines that a program will be permanently removed from its list of program offerings and when no students are currently enrolled. Programs that are deleted because of failure to meet student achievement benchmarks cannot be added back to the list of approved programs for 12 months after the last student completes the teach-out and require submission of a new program application.

Programs that have no enrollment for 12 consecutive months are classified as 'deleted' and must be removed from the list of approved programs. Adding a program back to the list that had been removed because of lack of enrollment for 12 consecutive months or more requires the submission of a new program application.

Changing the List of Approved Programs

Institutions applying for changes to the list of approved programs must do so in a timely manner. Applications for substantive changes must be submitted for approval no less than 90 days prior to implementing the change. Normally, approvals to the list of approved programs occur within six to eight weeks after submission of a complete application.

Institutions preparing to host an accreditation visiting team may not apply for approval of changes to the list of approved programs 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 institution's local school district or state agency. (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.)

Limits to Approvals for Changing the List of Approved Programs

There are several instances when changes to the list of approved programs (or any other substantive change) are not allowed. These instances occur

1. During the period of candidate status (no substantive changes of any kind will be approved).

2. 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 (a visit that involves the institution writing the Self-Study Report). Waivers of this policy may be granted

when changes are mandated by the institution's local school district or state agency. (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.)

3. When an unplanned substantive change approval is pending.
4. When a decision on the appeal of a Commission decision is pending.
5. When an institution has a past-due invoice for payment owed to the Council.
6. When a restrictive violation status has been imposed against an institution (Probation or Show Cause Order).

It is important to remember that failure to notify the Commission of a substantive change may result in the imposition of a penalty or cause loss of candidate or accredited status.

Dual Enrollment Policy

Dual enrollment refers to courses offered to high school students through which they earn secondary and post-secondary credit, regardless of location or mode of delivery. Students in these programs remain enrolled in high school and have not yet earned a high school diploma or equivalent. Credit earned through dual enrollment appears on the student's post-secondary transcript. These programs are typically offered through agreements between secondary and post-secondary schools, which may be formal or less structured and often take the form of articulation agreements.

Institutions must ensure that all dual enrollment courses and programs comply with COE's Standards, Criteria, and Conditions. This requirement applies to all such educational programs and services, regardless of where they are offered or how they are delivered. Institutions undergoing review must also be prepared to demonstrate clear institutional control over all dual enrollment courses and programs.

The Commission holds institutions accountable for all activities conducted in their name. Educational offerings, including dual enrollment programs, are reviewed in accordance with the Commission's accreditation standards, affiliation requirements, policies, procedures, and applicable federal regulations, with particular attention to oversight, resources, and assessment across all instructional locations and delivery methods. Institutions must also ensure that faculty teaching dual enrollment courses possess the same academic credentials and/or documented professional experience required of all institutional faculty.

Additional Guidelines for Dual Enrollment

Institutional policies and compliance

- Follow institutional policies and procedures for faculty qualifications, including any specific policy or procedure for dual enrollment.
- Meet all applicable state, system, and local education agency requirements.

Course and student requirements

- Clearly identify in the agreement with the high school which parts of the course apply to post-secondary credit, such as the learning outcomes listed in the syllabus. The high school should also specify any separate requirements for secondary school credit.

- Ensure students are enrolled in the institution's dual enrollment program.

Additional locations and agreements

- Receive substantive change approval before implementing an additional location if a student can complete the credential at the high school site.
- Articulation and transfer agreements do not require approval before implementation, but the Commission will review them during accreditation activities in accordance with the Standards for Accreditation.

REFERENCE: ***Handbook of Accreditation: 2026 Edition*****, (Public- Non-Public)** ***pages 7,44,57,60, 83, 85, 89, 90, 93***

INSTITUTIONAL/CAMPUS TEACH OUT POLICY

COE is an institutional accrediting agency and its accreditation or preaccreditation enables those institutions to obtain eligibility to participate in title IV, HEA programs, then COE must demonstrate that it has established and uses all of the following procedures:

(1) COE requires an institution it accredits to submit a teach-out plan as defined in 34 CFR 600.2 to COE for approval upon the occurrence of any of the following events:
   a. For a nonprofit or proprietary institution, the Secretary notifies COE of a determination by the institution's independent auditor expressing doubt about the institution's ability to operate as a growing concern or indicating an adverse opinion or a finding of material weakness related to financial stability.
   b. COE acts to place the institution on probation or equivalent status.
   c. The Secretary notifies COE that the institution is participating in title IV, HEA programs under a provisional program participation agreement and the Secretary has required a teach-out plan as a condition of participation.

(2) COE must require an institution it accredits or preaccredits to submit a teach-out plan and to COE for approval upon the occurrence of any of the following events:
   a. The Secretary notifies COE that is has placed the institution on the reimbursement payment method under 34 CFR 668.162 (c) or the heightened cash monitoring payment method requiring the Secretary's review of the institution's supporting documentation under 34 CFR 668.12 (d)(2).
   b. The Secretary notifies COE that the Secretary has initiated an emergency action against an institution, in accordance with section 487 (c)(1)(G) of the HEA, or an action to limit, suspend, or terminate an institution participating in any title IV, HEA program, in accordance with section 487 (c)(1)(F) of the HEA.
   c. COE's commission acts to withdraw or deny the accreditation or preaccreditation of the institution.
   d. The institution notifies COE that it intends to cease operations entirely or close a location that provides one hundred percent of at least one program, including if the location is being moved and is considered by the Secretary to be a closed school.
   e. A State licensing or authorizing agency notifies COE that an institution's license or legal authorization to provide an educational program has been removed or revoked.
   f. Additionally, in the event the Commission provides a written notice of final decision of Probation, Show Cause or an initiated adverse action, the Commission in its discretion to monitor said institutions will also require additional documentation which includes, but is not limited to, a teach-out plan (with agreements as necessary), audited same-day balance sheet, financial viability compliance plan covering past, current and projected enrollment by program, and past, current and projected staffing levels.
   g. COE requires institutions granted Candidate Status, a preaccreditation status, to submit teach-out plans as of 2024.

(3) COE must evaluate the teach-out plan to ensure it includes a list of currently enrolled students (Do not include Personally Identifiable Information, PII, for enrolled students) academic programs offered by the institution, and the names of other institutions that offer similar programs and could potentially enter into a teach-out agreement with the institution.

(4) If COE approves a teach-out plan that includes a program or institution that is accredited by another recognized accrediting agency, it must notify that accrediting agency of its approval. The proposed teach-out institution must be accredited.
(5) COE may require an institution it accredits or preaccredits to enter into a teach-out agreement as part of its teach-out plan.
(6) COE requires a closing institution to include in its teach-out agreement –
    a. A complete list of students currently enrolled in each program at the institution (no PII on list of students) and the program requirements each student has completed.
    b. A plan to provide all potentially eligible students with information about how to obtain a closed school discharge and, if applicable, information on State refund policies.
    c. A record retention plan to be provided to all enrolled students that delineates the final disposition of teach-out records (e.g., student transcripts, billing, financial aid records);
    d. Information on the number and types of credits the teach-out institution is willing to accept prior to the student's enrollment; and
    e. A clear statement to students of the tuition and fees of the educational program and the number and types of credits that will be accepted by the teach-out institution.
(7) COE requires an institution it accredits or preaccredits that enters into a teach-out agreement, either on its own or at the request of COE, to submit the teach-out agreement for approval. COE may approve the teach-out agreement only if the agreement meets the requirements of 34 CFR 600.2 and this section, is consistent with applicable standards and regulations, and provides for the equitable treatment of students being served by ensuring that teach-out institution –
    a. Has the necessary experience, resources, and support services to provide an educational program that is of acceptable quality and reasonable similar in content, delivery modality, and scheduling to that provided by the institution that is ceasing operations either entirely or at one of its locations; however, while an option via an alternate method of delivery may be made available to students, such an option is not sufficient unless an option via the same method of delivery as the original educational program is also provided.
    b. Has the capacity to carry out its mission and meet all obligations to existing students; and
    c. Demonstrates that it –
        i. Can provide student access to the program and services without requiring them to move or travel for substantial distances or durations; and
        ii. Will provide students with information about additional charges, if any.
(8) Irrespective of any teach-out plan or signed teach-out agreement, COE will not permit an institution to serve as a teach-out institution under the following conditions:
        i. The institution is subject to the conditions in paragraph (c)(1) or (2) of this section.
        ii. The institution is under investigation, subject to an action, or being prosecuted for an issue related to academic quality, misrepresentation, fraud, or other severe matters by a law enforcement agency.
(9) COE is permitted to waive requirements regarding the percentage of credits that must be earned by a student at the institution awarding the educational credential if the student is completing his or her program through a written teach-out agreement or transfer.

(10) COE requires the institution to provide copies of all notifications from the institution related to the institution's closure or to teach-out options to ensure the information accurately represents students' ability to transfer credits and may require corrections.

    a. Closed Institution: If an institution COE accredits or preaccredits closes without a teach-out plan or agreement, COE will work with the Department and the appropriate State agency, to

the extent feasible, to assist students in finding reasonable opportunities to complete their education without additional charges.

b. Transfer of credit policies: COE must confirm, as part of its review for initial accreditation or preaccreditation, or renewal of accreditation, that the institution has transfer of credit policies that –
    i. Are publicly disclosed in accordance with 668.43(a)(11); and
    ii. Include a statement of the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education.
c. Agency designations: In its accrediting practice, COE must –
    i. Adopt and apply the definitions of "branch campus" and "additional location" in 34 CFR 600.2;
    ii. On the Secretary's request, confirm its designations of an institution's branch campuses and additional locations with the Secretary's if it learns its destinations diverge; and
    iii. Ensure that it does not accredit or preaccredit an institution comprising fewer than all of the programs, branch campuses, and locations of an institution as certified for title IV participation by the Secretary, except with notice and permission from the Secretary.

Establishment of a Permanent Location at a Site Where an Institution is Conducting a Teach-out

This policy refers to the addition of a permanent location at a site at which an institution is conducting a teach-out for students of another institution that has ceased operating before all students have completed their program of study. COE's policy for approval of the teaching out of students requires that, at minimum, all institutions submit an application and a copy of the institutional teach-out plan. In cases where a COE-accredited institution partners with other entities to conduct a teach-out of students, a copy of the teach-out agreement between the entities involved must also be submitted for review and approval.

The teach-out plan and teach-out agreement with the closing institution must include a timeline detailing the expected time required to complete the teach-out of existing students. The agreement should also include an explanation detailing plans to establish a permanent location at the site at which the institution is conducting the teach-out, including the type of additional location and the intended start date. Only students included in the teach-out may attend the teach-out location prior to receiving initial approval from the Commission. The institution conducting the teach-out must seek appropriate approvals for the teach-out from the Department of Education. The institution seeking to establish a permanent location at the teach-out site should confirm and provide documentation to COE that the Department has approved the teach-out at the location where it seeks to establish a permanent site.

The institution seeking to establish a permanent location at the teach-out site must follow the Procedures Required for Approval of a New Additional Location or Procedures Required for Approval of a Branch Campus (whichever is appropriate). Advertising and new enrollment for the additional location may not commence until initial approval has been granted by the Commission.

REFERENCE: ***Handbook of Accreditation: 2026 Edition*****, (Public- Non -Public) page 50**

ANNUAL FINANCIAL DATA REPORTING REQUIREMENTS FOR INSTITUTIONS

A. Annual Submission of Financial Data

To ensure institutions comply with state and federal requirements, all public, non-public institutions, registered apprenticeship schools (RAS), and national ERISA training institutes (NETIs) that have candidate or accredited status with the Commission of the Council on Occupational Education are required to submit audited financial information on an annual basis.

Acceptable financial data includes:

- Audited financial statements
- System level data for Public Institutions
- Institutional data such as the Composite Financial Information Score (CFI) for Public Institutions

Audited financial statements must adhere to Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) and shall be prepared in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards (GAGAS).

The financial data submission must include the COE Financial Questionnaire completed by the institution.

The COE Financial Questionnaire can be obtained from the Council's website (www.council.org).

The submission due date for non-public institutions is no later than six months following the end date of the institution's fiscal year. (Public, Registered apprenticeship schools [RAS] and national ERISA training institutes [NETIs] must submit financial data and financial questionnaires no later than twelve months following the end date of the institution's fiscal year). A penalty for late submission of requested documentation will apply to submissions received after the due date, as stated in the *Handbook of Accreditation*.

B. Submission of Financial Data for Initial Accreditation

For initial accreditation, public, non-public institutions, registered apprenticeship schools (RAS), and national ERISA training institutes (NETIs) must submit audited financial data or system level data for Public Institutions (as defined above) statements for the two most recent fiscal years at least 60 days prior to hosting an initial accreditation visiting team. The first of those two years must be the financial data submitted with the institution's candidacy application and the second financial data must represent activity while the institution is in candidate status.

C. Third-Party Audit Review

The Commission reserves the right to have any audit reviewed by an independent, third-party auditor. A $1,500 fee will be assessed to an institution requiring a third-party audit review. This assessment consists of a non-refundable $250 audit review fee and a $1,250 deposit to cover the review cost. Any funds left over from the deposit are refunded to the institution. Should there be an outstanding balance after the deposit is applied, the institution must pay the outstanding balance. The institution shall be provided with a statement of expenses incurred.

REFERENCE: ***Handbook of Accreditation: 2026 Edition*****, (Public- Non -Public) pages 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 17, 73, 83, 84, 85, 88, 92**

GUIDELINES FOR ACTION ON FINANCIAL DATA
THAT FAILS TO MEET FINANCIAL STABILITY REQUIREMENTS

Institutions are required to submit financial data to the Commission each year. As stated in the *Handbook of Accreditation*, institutions must demonstrate financial stability through submission of the most recent financial statement that reflects

1. a minimum, unrounded composite score of 1.5 for non-public and registered apprenticeship institutions for the two most recent fiscal years as disclosed on a composite score worksheet included in the audit report; system level data such as Composite Financial Information Score will be used for public institutions, and
2. no condition or event which could potentially affect the institution's ability to continue operation, including but not limited to, contingent liabilities, ongoing litigation, or the financial stability of a parent corporation.

Financial data is first reviewed and summarized by COE staff, then presented to the Commission for its review and action at each of its meetings.

Institutions that fail to meet either one of the conditions above will be placed on a status and required to submit documentation. Actions the Commission may take and documentation it may request are outlined below.

CONDITION	COMMISSION ACTION	DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED
1(a). A composite score equal to 1.0, but less than 1.5	Warning Status (at a minimum)	An audited financial statement completed by an independent CPA for a fiscal year and a completed COE Financial Questionnaire. Both to be submitted on a schedule determined by the Commission. A pro forma[1] financial statement prepared by an independent CPA to be submitted as part of an interim status report. The Commission may require additional documentation or action by the institution on a schedule it determines.
1(b). A composite score of less than 1.0	Probation Status (at a minimum)	Same as above with additional documentation which includes, but is not limited to: •Teach-Out Plan (with agreements as necessary) •Audited Same Day Balance Sheet •Financial Viability Compliance Plan covering past, current and project enrollment by program; past, current and projected staffing levels; current and projected staffing levels; monthly revenue and expenditures; and Monthly Accounts Receivable and Payable.

2. Any condition or event which could potentially affect the institution's ability to continue operation, including but not limited to, contingent liabilities, ongoing litigation, or the financial stability of a parent corporation.	Warning Status (at a minimum)	Interim reports on the status of contingent liabilities on a schedule determined by the Commission. The Commission may require additional documentation or action by the institution on a schedule it determines.

[1]A financial statement that is calculated using an accountant's discretion. It does not follow GAAP or GAGAS. Rather, calculations are computed according to the estimated relevance of certain events/conditions experienced by the company. Items that are typically included/excluded from an audited financial statement using GAAP may be represented differently in a pro forma statement, depending on what the accountant feels accurately represents the company's true performance. However, the Council requires that each pro forma statement submitted must include a balance sheet, an income statement, a cash flow statement, and notes and disclosures.

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 a 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.
The Commission will evaluate submitted documents and approve or disapprove the monitoring or compliance reports it requires, provide ongoing monitoring, if warranted, and evaluate the institution's progress in resolving the finding(s) of items of concern.

Time Period for Compliance to Meet Financial Stability Requirements

The Commission requires institutions to demonstrate compliance with all financial stability requirements within a time period that does not exceed the below. The timeline may include intermediate checkpoints on the way to full compliance and must not exceed 150 percent of the length of the longest program at the institution.

(1) Twelve (12) months, if the length of the longest program is at least eight (8) months in length. Any institution with its longest program under eight (8) months would be subject to a compliance period not to exceed 150% of the length of the longest program.
(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) Three 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 more restrictive than those listed above, based upon circumstances. Once the stated time period for compliance expires, if the institution fails to demonstrate compliance with the Commission's financial stability requirements, it will be dropped from candidate status or accreditation to be effective by the deadline originally specified in the Commission's letter.

REFERENCE: *Handbook of Accreditation: 2026 Edition*, pages (Public- Non-Public) 8, 11, 22, 37, 39, 73, 74

GUIDELINES FOR ACTION ON INSTITUTIONS THAT FAIL TO MEET ESTABLISHED CPL BENCHMARKS

Upon completion of the annual report software each year, institutions are provided with a list of completion, placement, and licensure performance rates for each program reported.

The institution's rate (average outcome) across all programs in that category (e.g., Completion, Placement and Licensure) are the minimum student achievement benchmarks (i.e., Minimum Expectations of Performance) required to demonstrate compliance with the Council's Standards and Criteria regarding program outcomes (Standard Three) are as follows:

60% Total Completion Rate
70% Total Placement Rate
70% Licensure Exam Pass Rate

The Commission will take any needed action on the institution's rate (average outcome) for minimum student achievement in the event the rate falls below the aforementioned benchmarks.

Student achievement data is submitted annually by all candidate and accredited institutions (except Federal institutions) through the Council's annual reporting software.

While student achievement data will be evaluated based on completion, placement, and licensure performance rates as determined by the institution's rate (average outcome) across all programs, the institution is still obligated to examine individual programs that do not meet the established benchmarks. The institution is expected to address strategies for the continuous improvement of programmatic student outcomes data, with emphasis on programs below CPL benchmarks for all programs not meeting student achievement benchmarks as part of the institution's strategic plan. The institution is expected to have a procedure in place that is used to gather and utilize objective data for strategic planning and to facilitate the institution's process of continuous improvement (Reference COE Handbook of Accreditation, Standard 4, Strategic Planning). The Commission reserves the right to request additional documentation on individual programs that do not meet the established completion, placement, or licensure benchmarks at any time.

Institutions with one or more programs that fail to meet established benchmarks must submit, through the annual report software, an explanation for the program(s) failure to meet the benchmark(s), and a plan of improvement for each triggered program.

Once the Annual Report is submitted to the COE office, a summary of all institutional annual report data will be reviewed by the Commission at its next scheduled meeting. Institutions that fail to meet one or more of the established Institutional CPL benchmarks will typically be use the following status progression:

Notice of Apparent Deficiency
Warning
Probation

Additional actions may be requested by the Commission which may include, but are not limited to, the following activities:

(1) Attendance of the chief administrator and the COE Liaison at a Council-sponsored workshop for reporting completion, placement, and licensure exam pass rate data
(2) Attendance at a Council-sponsored workshop on program and institutional outcomes or improvement of completion, placement, and licensure exam pass rates
(3) Consultation in person or by telephone with a Council staff member
(4) The scheduling of a focused review visit to the institution

Time Period for Compliance for Failure to meet Established Institutional CPL Benchmarks

The Commission requires institutions to demonstrate compliance with all established benchmark requirements within a time period that does not exceed the below. The timeline may include intermediate checkpoints on the way to full compliance and must not exceed 150 percent of the length of the longest program at the institution.

(1) twelve (12) months, if the length of the longest program is at least eight (8) months in length. Any institution with its longest program under eight (8) months would be subject to a compliance period not to exceed 150% of the length of the longest program.

(2) eighteen (18) 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) three 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 more restrictive based upon circumstances. There are several steps an institution can take to come back into compliance. For instance, an institution may submit an official notice of the closure or teach-out of programs which are contributing to the cause of the lower institutional CPL rate. In addition, the Commission will offer an interim opportunity for submission of data that demonstrates compliance with the benchmarks. The Commission will evaluate submitted documents and approve or disapprove the monitoring or compliance reports it requires, provide ongoing monitoring, if warranted, and evaluate the institution's progress in resolving the finding(s) of non-compliance. Once the stated time period for compliance expires, if the institution fails to demonstrate compliance with the established minimum benchmarks, it will be dropped from candidate status or accreditation to be effective by the deadline originally specified in the Commission's letter.

The maximum period of non-compliance allowed for Accreditation Reviews and Focused Reviews related to accreditation follows the above section: Time Period for Compliance for Failure to meet Established Benchmarks.

For a Deferral of Accreditation, deferral is not considered an accreditation action. It is a decision to delay taking an action with regard to the accreditation of an institution. When the following conditions are met, a Deferral of Accreditation is appropriate.

a. a candidate or accredited institution is not in compliance with all of the published accreditation standards, and

b. The Commission believes the candidate or accredited institution may be able to meet the standards within a reasonable period, but requires additional evidence. 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.

GUIDELINES FOR ACTION ON INSTITUTIONS THAT FAIL TO MEET OTHER STANDARDS OR POLICIES OF THE COMMISSION

Time Period for Compliance to Meet any other standards, criteria, or policies.

The Commission requires institutions to demonstrate compliance with all requirements within a time period that does not exceed the below. The timeline may include information checkpoints on the way to full compliance and must not exceed 150 percent of the length of the longest program at the institution.

(1) twelve (12) months, if the length of the longest program is at least eight (8) months in length. Any institution with its longest program under eight (8) months would be subject to a compliance period not to exceed 150% of the length of the longest program.

(2) eighteen (18) 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) three 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 more restrictive than listed above, based upon circumstances. Once the stated time period for compliance expires, if the institution fails to demonstrate compliance with the Commission's financial stability requirements, it will be dropped from candidate status or accreditation to be effective by the deadline originally specified in the Commission's letter.

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. The Commission will require interim reporting and may require an additional site visit before making an accreditation decision. Once the Commission makes the renewal decision, the period of deferral is included in calculating the total period for grant of accreditation or renewal, not to exceed six (6) years.

The Commission follows its written policies and procedures for granting a good cause extension that may exceed the standard timeframe of this section when such an extension is determined by the Commission to be warranted. The Good Cause Extension Policy can be found on page 79 of this manual.

The Commission does have a policy for taking an immediate adverse action, and to take such an action, when it has been determined that such an action is warranted. Immediate adverse actions could include, but are not limited to, the denial of accreditation; probation; show cause; and dropped from accreditation. When such actions have been approved by the Commission, institutions are notified via email and certified letter in accord with 34 CFR 602.26.

When the Commission is not in session, the President/CEO with concurrence of the chair of the Commission, may take emergency measures to conduct an inquiry to determine the facts. This may

include, but is not limited to, a Notification of Apparent Deficiency to the institution and/or site visit. The emergency measures with findings and the institutional response will be presented to the Executive Committee and /or the Commission, within seven (7) days. Such matters as front-page news stories involving alleged improprieties, for example, may require an immediate inquiry on the part of the Commission.

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.

The Commission may limit the adverse or other action to particular programs that are offered by the institution or to particular additional locations of an institution, without necessarily taking action against the entire institution and all of its programs, provided the noncompliance was limited to that particular program or location.

COE is not responsible for enforcing the requirements in relation to 34 CFR 668.14 (Program Participation Agreements), 34 CFR 668.15 (Factors of Financial Responsibility), 34 CFR 668.16 (Standards of Administrative Capability), 34 CFR 668.41 (Reporting and Disclosure of Information), or 34 CFR 668.46 (Institutional Security Policies and Crime Statistics), but if, in the course of COE's work, it identifies instances or potential instances of noncompliance with any of these requirements, it must notify the Department.

In addition, the Secretary may not require COE to take action against an institution that does not participate in any title IV, HEA or other Federal program as a result of a requirement specified in this part.

For additional details, please see the Handbook of Accreditation, page 74 (Financial Resources).

REFERENCE: ***Handbook of Accreditation: 2026 Edition*****, (Public- Non-Public) pages 10, 66, 67, 84**

THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS

TEAM VISITS

A. General

The policy of the Commission is to select highly qualified visiting teams in order to ensure the most effective evaluation of institutions. Each visiting team is composed of at least two members representing administrative and academic positions. Larger teams may include public members. A Commission representative may accompany a visiting team. The institution will be notified as to the membership of the team prior to the distribution of the team roster. A team member may be disqualified by the institution for cause.

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. (Additionally, consultants may not serve in the role of accreditation liaison officer for an institution and should not contact the Council office for information on behalf of the institution.)

Visiting team members must certify that they have no vested interest or conflict of interest in the institution to be visited. Team members must also certify that all documents and information will be treated in a confidential manner.

A visiting team shall not be assigned to any institution that has past due invoices from the Council on Occupational Education.

The Commission uses the following guidelines for establishing teams:

1. Team Leader

    (a) Must have demonstrated competence in evaluation, leadership, and written composition
    (b) Must have served as a member of at least two teams
    (c) Must be recommended to serve as future team leader by the leader of a team on which he/she has been a member
    (d) Must agree to conduct prescribed activities within the identified time frame
    (e) Must attend a workshop for team leaders, which includes the evaluation of programs offered via traditional delivery and distance education, prior to becoming a team leader and must attend a team leader workshop at least once every three years. (NOTE: The Commission may waive this requirement in special circumstances.)

2. Team Members

    (a) Must be recommended by a team leader, a school director, a state or county department of education representative, or the Commission staff
    (b) Must have expertise or experience relevant to the field of occupational education
    (c) Must have filed a biographical data sheet with the Commission

(d) Must attend a workshop for team members, which includes the evaluation of programs offered via traditional delivery and distance education, prior to becoming a team member and must attend a team member workshop at least once every three years. (NOTE: The Commission may waive this requirement in special circumstances.)

3. Desirable Team Composition

(a) Administrators and instructors of occupational education institutions accredited by the Commission
(b) System-wide supervisors, coordinators, and directors of occupational education
(c) Teacher educators, student personnel specialists, and lay personnel (who have expertise in occupational education)

The Council staff will determine the visit date the number of team members based on several relevant factors. These factors include the number of programs offered, the number of staff members, the total student enrollment, the number of campuses, and the distance between these campuses. Additionally, the purpose of the visit, whether it is for initial accreditation or reaffirmation, will also influence the determination of the team size. This comprehensive assessment ensures that the team is appropriately sized to effectively evaluate the institution's compliance with accreditation standards.

Team members are selected who have expertise in the programs offered by the institutions and knowledge of the Standards, Criteria, Conditions, Policies, and procedures of the Commission. The team leader and team members are selected by the Commission's staff. The team leader and the team members shall come from outside the state of the main campus of the institution and certify that they have no vested interest or conflict of interest in the institution to be visited and that they will treat all institutional documents and information in accordance with the Council's Conflict of Information and Confidentiality Policy. (Army, Navy, and Air Force shall be considered as states for this purpose.) The Commission relies on the personal and professional integrity of each visiting team member and expects him or her to be sensitive to potential conflicts of interest in the review process.

B. Candidate Visiting Teams

Upon receipt of a complete application for candidate for accreditation, the Commission staff shall assign a visiting team (usually two members) to evaluate the institution. The team usually plans to arrive by noon on the first day and conduct its review through the afternoon on the following day.

The team evaluates 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 three years. The visiting team will submit a written report to the Chief Executive Officer 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 items of concern in the team report for receipt in the Council office within 30 days of the date that the team report was transmitted from the Council office.

The cost of the on-site evaluation will be borne by the institution. The Chief Executive Officer will determine the amount of the deposit for the required team visit.

C. Accreditation Visiting Teams

A current institutional self-study must be completed by the staff of the institution before the preliminary visit is made. The preliminary visit is concluded 60 days prior to the scheduled team visit. 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. The team shall evaluate the educational programs as well as determine compliance with the Standards, Criteria, Conditions, Policies, and procedures of the Commission. The Commission staff will determine the number of team members based on relevant factors such as the number of programs, staff members, students enrolled, campuses, distance between campuses, and whether the purpose of the visit is for initial accreditation or reaffirmation.

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 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.

When determining the size of a visiting team, the number of programs offered by the institution, the number of additional locations, and the distance from the main campus of additional locations will be considered when making team assignments. All teams will be comprised of at least two members, and all affiliate campuses and extension campuses will be visited by at least two team members. The total number of programs assigned to an individual team member shall not exceed **four** approved programs, the total number of standards shall not exceed **five** standards, and the combined number of program and standard assignments shall not exceed **seven** to review during a team visit

The team normally visits the institution for three to five days depending on the size of the institution, the number and location of the campus(es), and the number of programs offered. All sites of the institution are visited each time an institution goes through the reaffirmation cycle. The composition of the team is determined at the discretion of the Commission staff.

The visiting team leader will submit a written report to the Chief Executive Officer within 30 days of the date that the site visit was concluded. A copy of the official visiting team report will be transmitted to the institution. The institution must submit a response to all items of concern in the team report for receipt in the Council office within 30 days of the date the team report was transmitted from the Council office. The Commission may determine that due to the number of items of concern documented during the visit may result in the institution being placed on special status (Warning, Probation, or Show Cause Order) or losing its accreditation.

The cost of the preliminary visit as well as the cost of the team visit will be borne by the institution. The Chief Executive Officer will determine the amount of the deposit for the required team visit.

D. Preliminary Visit

As a 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 ensure alignment

with the Council's Conditions and Standards.

E. Focused Review Teams

Focused review team visits are conducted when certain substantive 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. In either circumstance, the number of team members and the length of the visit are determined by the Commission's staff based on relevant factors such as the purpose of the visit, the number of campuses to be visited, and the distance between the campuses to be visited. Focused review visits may require from one to five days on campus depending on the nature of the visit. Focused review visits may be conducted as announced or unannounced visits.

The focused review team leader will submit a written report to the Chief Executive Officer within 30 days of the date that the site visit was concluded. A copy of the official visiting team report will be transmitted to the institution.

The institution must submit a response to all items of concern in the team report for receipt in the Council office within 30 days of the date that the team report was transmitted from the Council office. Identification of deficiencies documented during the visit may result in the institution being placed on special status (Warning, Probation, or Show Cause Order) or losing its accreditation.

The cost of the on-site evaluation will be borne by the institution. The Chief Executive Officer will determine the amount of the deposit for the required team site visit.

F. Unannounced Focus Review Visit Policy

An unannounced visit is to ensure that the institution has addressed previously identified deficiencies and to review institutions undergoing their mid-year evaluation cycle to ensure that the institution is maintaining continuous compliance with accreditation standards. These Unannounced Focus Review visits will be randomly selected based on identified deficiencies, past findings, and scheduled mid-cycle reviews based on the adherence of the Standards and Conditions below

I. Criteria for Triggering an Unannounced Visit

Unannounced visits *may be* scheduled when one or more of the following conditions are present:

A. Standard Noncompliance

- The institution received ten or more total findings of noncompliance, or
- The institution received two or more findings of non-compliance during the last reaffirmation review in one of the following Standards and Criteria:

Standard 2

- Occupational Advisory Committee Activities Criterion 1-9
- Program Curriculum and Instruction Criterion 1-5

Standard 3

- Institutional Outcomes- Completion Criterion 1-2
- Institutional Outcomes- Placement Criteria 1-2

Standard 7

- Criterion 1
- Criterion 17-18
- Refund Policy Criterion 19-23

Standard 8
- General- Criterion 3-4
- Faculty-Criterion 1-4
- Administrative and Supervisory Personnel Criterion-1

Standard 10
- Admission and Retention Criterion 5-8
- Placement Services- Criterion 2-9
- Effectiveness of Student Services- Criterion 1-5

B. Reaffirmation Award Years
- Institution was awarded less than 5 years of reaffirmation based on the Standards and Criteria.

C. Complaints from Students, Staff, or Community
- Excessive complaints regarding institutional operations in the following Standards
- Complaints regarding the lack of student academic needs being met by the institution.
- Complaints regarding the lack of support for students based on Financial Aid Guidelines
- Complaints regarding lack of student services as required in institutional catalog, policies and procedures

D. Communications from U. S. Department of Education, State Agencies, and or Other Accreditation Agencies
- Notification from the U.S. Department of Educations of one or more deficiencies statuses.
- Notification from one or more associated Accreditation agencies of deficiency statuses.
- Notification from State agencies of one or more deficiency status

NOTE: All complaints will be investigated by the Council on Occupational Education to determine the need for an Unannounced Focus Review Visit.

II. Visit Procedures

A. Preparation (Evaluation Team)
- Evaluation team will determine the specific focus areas of concern (findings of non-compliance or excessive complaints)
- Evaluation team will discuss the nature of the Unannounced Focus Review Visit with COE President.
- Assemble an evaluation team with expertise in the identified areas.
- Schedule a preliminary meeting for the Evaluation Team and the Team Leader.
- Schedule Unannounced Focus Review Visit date.
- Provide the team with the Unannounced Standards and Conditions Criteria.

B. Unannounced Focus Review Visit
- Present official COE identification and/ or authorization letter upon arrival.

- Explain the purpose and scope of the visit
- Conduct evaluation using the Unannounced Focus Review Condition and Standards and conduct interviews
- Conduct Exit Interview
- Complete Team Report

III. Standard Practices for Evaluating Team

- Remain professional
- Follow the Unannounced Focus Review Standard and Conditions to ensure fairness and impartiality is maintained
- Communicate clearly that the goal of the Unannounced Focus Review Visit is for continuous improvement

G. Accreditation Onboarding for Transitioning Institutions Policy

I. Purpose and Scope

In accordance with federal guidance issued in Dear Colleague Letter GEN-25-03, the Council on Occupational Education (COE) has established an Accreditation Onboarding Policy for institutions seeking to transfer their accreditation from another U.S. Department of Education-recognized accrediting agency to COE.

This policy outlines the procedures, expectations, and limitations applicable to such transitioning institutions, ensuring alignment with the Council's Mission, Standards, and Conditions of Accreditation prior to the granting of initial accreditation. This policy is applicable only to institutions that (1) are accredited in good standing by another institutional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education, and (2) seek to designate the Council as their primary accreditor.

Policy Statement

Institutions requesting a transfer of accreditation to COE must undergo a structured, five-phase onboarding process. This process is designed to assess institutional eligibility, readiness, and compliance, and to determine alignment with the Council's accreditation requirements. Accreditation is not automatically granted as a result of prior accreditation with another agency. The Council retains sole discretion to determine whether a transitioning institution may proceed through each phase, based on eligibility and compliance with applicable federal and COE-specific requirements.

Procedural Overview

In Phase 1, the institution must complete an initial inquiry and eligibility screening. The institution is required to submit a Letter of Good Standing from its current accreditor, as well as a Preliminary Application for Institutions Seeking to Change Accrediting Agencies. This application must include basic institutional information, accreditation history, program offerings, and the rationale for seeking transfer to COE. Additional required attachments may include years of current accreditation, information on dual accreditation (if applicable), and identification of a liaison. Institutions meeting the Council's eligibility criteria will be invited to participate in the required Transition to COE Accreditation Workshop.

Phase 2 consists of participation in the Transition to COE Accreditation Workshop, which is mandatory for institutional leadership. The workshop provides an overview of the Council's philosophy, Standards and Conditions of Accreditation, the Provisional Transfer process, expectations for site visits, and relevant compliance requirements in alignment with GEN-25-03. Institutions must participate satisfactorily in this workshop to continue to the next phase.

Phase 3, known as Provisional Transfer I (PTI), encompasses the first six months of the onboarding process. During this time, the institution must execute a Provisional Transfer Agreement and submit documentation pertaining to its organizational structure, program curricula and objectives, enrollment, and student services.
Institutions must also participate in technical assistance sessions and designated training workshops, including those offered during the Spring Accreditation Institute or the COE Annual Meeting. Institutions demonstrating satisfactory readiness may advance to Phase 4.

Phase 4, Provisional Transfer II (PTII), occurs during months six through twelve and includes a formal evaluation of the institution's accreditation readiness. The institution must host an official Provisional Transfer Accreditation Visit conducted by COE Fellows or trained evaluators. Following the visit, the institution will receive a written evaluation report and must respond to any Findings of Non-Compliance, if applicable. Based on this evaluation, the institution may receive initial accreditation, be deferred, or be terminated from the process.

In Phase 5, institutions granted initial accreditation are fully integrated into the Council's accreditation cycle. The Commission will vote to approve initial accreditation, pending the completion of any remaining workshop requirements. Institutions then enter the standard two- to six-year reaffirmation cycle and must comply with all requirements, including the submission of the Annual Report and adherence to COE policies and procedures.

The Council makes no guarantee that institutions accredited by another agency will be accepted for accreditation. Institutions may not claim candidate or accredited status with the Council until official notification of such status is issued. Furthermore, institutions must remain in good standing with their current accreditor throughout the transition process, unless otherwise authorized by COE. Institutions undergoing federal or state investigations or on an adverse status at their current accrediting agency may be deemed ineligible for transfer.

The Preliminary Application for Institutions Seeking to Change Accrediting Agencies is available on the Council's website at Applications & Forms | Council.

H. Observers on Visiting Teams

The Commission's policy regarding observers of team visits differentiates between out-of-state and in- state observers. An observer is defined as an individual who is not chosen by the Commission staff to serve on a visiting team but who participates in all activities of the team visit except for evaluation of any aspect of the institution, deliberations of the visiting team, and decisions of the team.

An out-of-state individual may request to be an observer by writing the Commission. An observer is assigned to a visiting team only after receiving Commission staff approval and when concurrence is obtained from the institution to be evaluated. Upon the institution's concurrence, the observer is notified and sent appropriate materials from the team leader, the institution, and the Commission. The Commission may include staff of the U.S. Department of Education or out-of-state agencies on the visiting team. When an individual is invited by the Commission to be an observer, the expenses are reimbursed by the Commission. Persons observing at their own request are responsible for their own expenses.

With respect to in-state observers, the policy of the Commission is not to allow observers (as defined above) on visiting teams to institutions within the state of the observer's residence. Institutions being visited may permit in-state observers to visit the institution during the team evaluation; however, in-state observers do not have access to the team meetings.

I. Evaluation Team Member Assignment Policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the Council on Occupational Education selects an evaluation team that is impartial, professional and well versed in the Standards and Criteria set by the COE. This policy addresses the criteria for serving on team visits and the components that are necessary when assembling a team to conduct a comprehensive evaluation. The team composition will reflect a balance of administrative and educational expertise that focuses on industry specific knowledge aligned with the institution's scope of practice.

II. Criteria for Becoming a Team Leader

A. Must have demonstrated competence in valuation, leadership and written composition
B. Must have served as a member of at least two teams
C. Must be recommended to serve as a future team leader by the leader of a team on which he or she has been a member
D. Must attend a workshop for team leaders, which includes the evaluation of programs offered via traditional delivery and distance education, prior to becoming a team leader and must attend a team leader workshop at least once every three years. (NOTE: The Commission may waive this requirement in special circumstances.)

III. Criteria for Becoming a Team Member

E. Must be recommended by a team leader, a school director, a state or county department of education representative, or the Commission staff.
   -Recommendation submitted in writing or via electronically
F. Must have expertise or experience relevant to the field of occupational education
G. Must have filed a biographical data sheet with the Commission staff
H. Must attend a workshop for team members, which includes the evaluation of programs offered via traditional delivery and distance education, prior to becoming a team member and must attend a team member workshop at least once every three years. (NOTE: The Commission may waive this requirement in special circumstances.)

IV. Minimum Team Composition

Every evaluation team must be composed of at least one of the following:
Administrator personnel who spend greater than 50% of their job outside of the instructional classroom who fit the following titles but not limited to
-Presidents
-Vice President
-Provost
-Chancellor
-Dean
-Director
-Registrar
-Program Coordinator
-Non-instructional Staff in an administrative role

B. Every evaluation team must be composed of at least one of the following:
Academic personnel who spend greater than 50% of their job inside the instructional classroom who fit the following titles but not limited to
-Academic Dean
-Program Coordinator
-Faculty
-Instructional Staff
-Teacher educators, student personnel specialists, and lay personnel (who have expertise in occupational education)

V. Factors When Assembling Visiting Team Leaders / Members

A. Industry Expertise
- -Administrative experience and or
- -Educational experience

B. Team Standards and Conditions 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

C. Institutional Composition
- -Institutional scope of practice(s)
- -Total number of students enrolled
- -Number of programs offered
  - Number of campuses and non-main campus sites
  - Distance between institutional locations

D. Purpose of the Institutional Visit
- -Candidacy Site Visit
- -Initial Accreditation Visit
- -Reaffirmation Visit
- -Focus Review Visit
- -Substantive Change Visit

E. Ethical responsibilities of Team Leaders / Members
- -Must not reside or work in the state of the institution hosting the visit
- -Must not have any vested interest or conflict of interest in the institution to be visited
- -Must uphold the confidentiality policy

J. Postponing a Site Visit

I. Postponing a Site Visit

The postponing of a site visit may be requested in writing by the institution. All postponements of site visits must be approved by the Commission based on the following criteria:

A. Postponement of a site visit can be initiated due to unforeseen circumstances with team leaders or team members.

B. Natural Disasters (i.e. State of Emergencies, hurricanes, fires, tornadoes which have caused significant damage to the institution's facilities)

C. Unexpected Substantive Changes (i.e. unexpected and significant damage to institutional structure prohibiting the continuation of instruction)

K. Student Privacy and Verification of Identity

All institutions are required to maintain procedures and processes to ensure the protection of student privacy. These procedures and processes, including those associated with student identity verification, must include reasonable and appropriate safeguards to ensure the protection of student privacy, irrespective of instructional delivery mode or format.

Institutions offering distance education, as defined by federal regulation, must maintain processes through which the institution establishes that a student who registers for a distance education course or program is the same student who participates in, completes, and receives academic credit. Processes for verifying the identity of students participating in the course or program may include but are not limited to: secure logins and passwords, proctored examinations, or other technologies and practices that are effective in verifying student identity.

Institutions must notify students at the time of registration or enrollment of any additional charges associated with the verification of student identity

L. Site Visit Review Policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the Council on Occupational Education is conducting at least one on-site review to determine if an institution complies with agency standards. This policy will demonstrate the order of events of a site visit from the preliminary site visit through the Commission's final recommendation. The President/CEO may make reasonable adjustments to the timeline/process in the event of extenuating circumstances.

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 preliminary 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 is assigned by the COE Staff to perform the preliminary site visit prior to the team visit.

COE Fellow's purpose is strictly preparatory and advisory, whereby supporting the team leader and determining institutional readiness (e.g., likelihood of hosting a successful visit)

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

• Timelines

-COE Fellow will conduct a Preliminary Visit Conference call (with the institution) six (6) months before the on-site team visit.

-Institutions may begin the upload process in EDVera five (5) months prior to the scheduled on-site team visit
-Current "Draft" of the institutional self-study will be uploaded into EDVera four (4) months prior to the scheduled on-site team visit
-Preliminary Visit & Entrance Meeting will occur ninety (90) days prior to the scheduled on-site team visit
-COE assigned team leader Institution's Chief Administrator and COE Liaison
-COE Fellow concludes the Preliminary Visit with an Exit Meeting including the following individuals:
-COE assigned team leader
-Institution's Chief Administrator and COE Liaison
-Fifteen (15) days following the Preliminary Visit Exit meeting

-Preliminary report summary submitted by Fellow to Team Leader and COE Staff
-Final Draft of the Institutional Self Study Uploaded in EDVera will occur sixty (60) days prior to the scheduled on-site team visit. COE Staff will then assign the team leader to the Self-Study in EDvera.

II. Accreditation Kick Off Meeting

- At least 2 months (60) days prior to the scheduled on-site team visit, the Team Leader will conduct the Accreditation Kick Off Meeting with the visiting team and the COE Fellow.
- The Team Leader will inform the site visit team of the Fellow's observations during the Preliminary Visit Exit Meeting as well as to inform the team of the Fellow's supportive role during the team visit.

III. Site Visit

The purpose of the site visit is to determine the compliance and or the continued compliance according to the Standards and the Conditions of the Council. 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 5 standards
No more than 4 programs

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

Team Leader with expertise in administration and or relevant educational programs
Team Member with expertise in administration and or relevant educational programs

Sufficient duraton to conduct the site visit based on the following:
Number of programs offered
Number of locations
Student enrollment

IV. Self-Study

The Self-Study is a narrative documenting the institution's self-assessment of compliance and involves the total staff. The Self-Study documents an evaluation of the educational programs offered, along with the related functions of the institution and overall mission. The Self-Study is created to address conditions of accreditation and the TEN (10) Standards of the Commission. Findings of the institution's staff and advisory groups while conducting the Self-Study are recorded in a document referred to as the Self-Study Report (SSR). This report will indicate to what extent the institution is in compliance with the Conditions and Standards of the Commission.

Self-Study Evaluation

- Review narratives and supporting documentation based on Standards and Conditions
- Team reviews the documentation uploaded in the EDVera to ensure compliance requirements are met
- Team collaboration on compliance validation
- Seek out additional information as needed

Team Interviews to confirm institutional compliance with the following

- Faculty
- Staff
- Students

Tour facilities(s), locations, and work base sites
Documentation of the Self Study evaluation in EDVera

- Yes with the Standards and Conditions
- No with the Standards and Conditions
- 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 Overview
• Areas in which the team found evidence that the institution demonstrated that it will likely meet compliance based on the information submitted.

Standards and Conditions Items of Concern
• Areas in which team did not find evidence that the institution demonstrated that it may meet compliance based on the information 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 continuous improvement

VI. Team Report

Within 30 days of the Team Exit Meeting, the Team Leader will submit a written Team Visit Report, in EDvera, documenting the institution's level of compliance with the Standards and Conditions. This report will be review by COE staff for completeness prior to being submitted to the institution.

Responsibilities of the institution

In the event of a report documenting - Items of Concern:

• The Chief Administrator must write a letter acknowledging receipt of the team report and request initial accreditation or reaffirmation of accreditation
• Must be received within 30 days of the date the team report was transmitted from the Council Office.

In the event of a report documenting – Items of Concern
• The Chief Administrator must submit an Institutional Response in EDVera addressing each items of concern
• Describe each violation
• Submit documentation or action taken by the institution to demonstrate compliance
• 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 visit documentation (e.g., self-study, supporting documentation, team reports and the response to the team reports). The Commission may make the following possible Commission Decisions identified on p.17 of the Handbook of Accreditation.

The Commission retains sole and final authority to determine whether an institution is in compliance with the accreditation criteria. The Commission will conduct its own analysis of the self-study and supporting documentation furnished by the institution. The report on-site review, the institutions response to the report and any other information substantiated by COE by other sources to determine whether the institution complies with COE standards.

M. Status with States and Other Accrediting Agencies

The Council acknowledges that institutions may be currently affiliated, or have been affiliated with, other accrediting agencies (institutional or programmatic) or state agencies. The Council requires all pre-accredited and accredited institutions to voluntarily disclose to the Council, within five business days, any actions taken by the aforementioned entities. It is important to note, that the Council will not grant initial or renewed accreditation or pre-accreditation to an institution, if it knows, or has reasonable cause to know, that the institution is the subject of any of the following:

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 the State;

b. A decision by a recognized agency to deny accreditation or pre-accreditation;

c. A pending or final action brought by a recognized accrediting agency to suspend, revoke, withdraw, or terminate the institution's accreditation or pre-accreditation; or

d. Probation or an equivalent status imposed by a recognized agency.

N. Reviews Prompted by Information from States and Other Accrediting Agencies

As mentioned above institutions are required to report actions from States and Other Accrediting Agencies to the Council within five business days. When the Commission learns that an institution it accredits or pre-accredits is the subject of an adverse action by another state or recognized accrediting agency or has been placed on probation or an equivalent status by those entities, the policy of the Commission is to review accreditation or pre-accreditation of the institution to determine if the Commission should also take adverse action or place the institution on probation or show cause. The notification of the decision will be sent to the Secretary, the appropriate State licensing or authorizing agency, the appropriate accrediting agencies, and the public.

O. Triad Information Sharing (Upon Request)

Based upon receipt of a valid request from another recognized accrediting agency, or State approval agency, the Council on Occupational Education will provide timely and accurate documentation regarding:

1. The accreditation or initial accreditation status of an institution; and

2. Any adverse actions taken, including but not limited to probation, warning, show cause order, or drop from accreditation;

3. Voluntary actions taken by an institution such as withdrawal from accreditation, withdrawal from candidacy status, or withdrawal from initial accreditation.

P. Regard for decisions of State and other accrediting agencies

COE shall not grant initial or renewed accreditation to an institution that is subject to an action identified in 34CFR 602.28 (b), unless the Commission determines, based on a comprehensive review of the evidence, that the institution or program continues to satisfy COE accreditation standards.

If the Commission grants accreditation or preaccreditation to an institution that is subject to an action Described in 34 CFR 602.28(b), COE shall provide the U.S. Department of Education with a thorough and reasonable written **30 calendar days** of the Commission's decision. The explanation shall demonstrate, consistent with COE accreditation standards, why the action taken by the other State agency or recognized accrediting agency does not preclude the Commission's accreditation decision.

REFERENCE: ***Handbook of Accreditation: 2026 Edition*****, pages (Public- Non-Public) 9, 12, 14, 16, 33, 36, 37, 47, 57**

APPEAL PROCESS

The *Handbook of Accreditation* describes the appealable actions of the Commission, the grounds for appeals, and the basic requirements to initiate an appeal. The Commission is charged with the responsibility of defining procedures to ensure that the appeal process is fair and equitable for all parties. The procedures below are designed to achieve this requirement.

A. Request for Reconsideration

The institution may, only on one occasion, seek reconsideration by the Commission only for new financial information that could address the only remaining deficiency cited by the Commission, prior to a final adverse action decision, if the following conditions are met:

(i) The financial information was unavailable to the institution until after the decision subject to appeal was made.
(ii) The financial information is significant and bears materially on the financial deficiencies identified by the Commission. The criteria of significance and materiality are determined by the Commission.
(iii) The only remaining deficiency cited by the Commission in support of a final adverse action decision is the institution's failure to meet a Council standard pertaining to finances.

This review shall take place prior to the appeal board consideration of the adverse action. The Commission's determination relative to significance or materiality of the new information is not separately appealable by the institution.

The institution must submit an appeal document (in PDF format), to include a table of contents and consecutively numbered pages, to the Chief Executive Officer, electronically, at least 10 days in advance of the commencement of the appeal board proceedings. The appeal document shall set out, in detail, all of the facts and arguments that the institution believes support a reversal or modification of the Commission's action and include all documentation to support its appeal.

Upon receipt of the institution's appeal document, the Chief Executive Officer will provide the institution with a copy of the Commission's documents (in PDF format) for the appeal board electronically.

B. Appeal Panel

The appeal panel shall be composed of 45 members (15 to be elected each year). Members of the appeal panel shall be nominated by the Council Committee on Nominations and elected by the Council membership from among the chief administrators (administrators) and occupational supervisors or instructors (academics) of institutions accredited by the Commission and representatives of the general public. The panel members shall be selected on the basis of their academic and administrative expertise and experience in occupational education and their familiarity with the Commission's Standards, Conditions, Policies, and procedures. Elected panel members may serve out their full three-year terms, even if they retire or change positions. An appeal panel member may be removed by the Commission for cause.

After receiving a formal, complete, and properly filed notice of intent to appeal, the Commission Executive Committee shall name a five-member appeal board plus one alternate member from among the members of the appeal panel. Board selections shall fulfill academic and administrative classifications, and at least one of the five-member appeal board selected will represent the general public. The alternate member selected will also be a public member in the event that the initial public

member selected is unable to continue during the appeal. This will ensure that a public member will have the opportunity to affect the decision outcome of the appeal.

One member of the appeal board shall be named chair, and one member shall be named vice-chair. The institution will be provided with the names of members elected to the appeal board. Within 15 days,

the institution may veto, with cause, any member elected to this first appeal board. Replacements for members vetoed by the institution shall be named from the appeal panel by the Commission Executive Committee and are not subject to veto by the institution.

The alternate board member shall attend all appeal board proceedings, and shall replace any regular board member who cannot fulfill his/her responsibilities. The vice-chair will preside in the absence of the chair.

Commission members and Commission staff shall not be elected as members of the appeal panel. Should a member of the appeal panel be elected to serve as a Commission member, he/she will be automatically removed from the appeal panel. Appeal panel members from the same state as the aggrieved institution shall not serve on the appeal board. Each selected appeal panel board member shall certify that he/she has no vested interest or conflict of interest in the aggrieved institution and that they will treat all institutional documents and information in accordance with the Council's Conflict of Information and Confidentiality Policy.

C. Expense of Appeal

The notice of intent to appeal must be accompanied by a cashier's check in the amount of $35,000 to cover the cost of the appeal. The $35,000 consists of a non-refundable $5,000 notice-of-intent-to-appeal fee and a $30,000 deposit to cover the costs of the appeal board proceedings. Any funds left over from the deposit are refunded to the institution. Should there be an outstanding balance after the deposit is applied, the institution must pay the outstanding balance. The institution shall be provided a statement of expenses incurred.

The institution will bear all direct costs in connection with the appeal including, but not limited to, the following expenses:

1. Travel and subsistence of appeal board members participating in the appeal review and proceedings
2. Cost of proceedings room
3. All direct costs of the appeal, such as stenographic costs, mailing or distribution of appeal documents, and communication services
4. Travel and subsistence of three official Commission representatives
5. Court reporter costs
6. Cost of Commission Legal Counsel should the appeal board affirm the action of the Commission

D. Appeal Board Proceedings

The Chief Executive Officer will set the date, time, and place of the proceedings of the appeal board at least 30 days in advance and so notify the institution and members of the appeal board in writing. The institution shall provide the Chief Executive Officer with the names, addresses, and positions of all individuals whom the institution wants to be heard by the appeal board at least 10 days before the date for the proceedings.

The Commission chair shall designate the persons who are to appear on behalf of the Commission. The Commission chair shall submit to the appeal board and the institution a list of names, addresses, and positions of persons whom the chair has asked to appear before the appeal board at least 10 days

before the date of the proceedings.

The appeal board proceedings shall be conducted as follows:

1. The chair shall preside and act to maintain decorum. He/she shall ensure that the participants have a reasonable opportunity to be heard and to present all relevant oral and written documentation. The chair may limit presentation of documentation to avoid repetition. He/she shall have the right to vote and the authority to rule on questions which pertain to the conduct of the hearing.
2. The Commission considers an appeal to be an adversarial proceeding. The institution does not have the right to cross-examine individuals, such as the staff, members of the evaluation team, or Commission members. Only the appeal board members have the right to question individuals present at any hearing. Appeals are administrative, not judicial hearings; and, therefore, the legal rules of evidence are not applicable. Hearings on appeals are closed to the public. The institution shall not present any new documentation concerning the progress of the institution or the remedying of deficiencies since the date of the Commission's action that is being appealed. The institution has the right to be represented by legal counsel at the appeal.
3. Legal counsel will be present to advise the appeal board.
4. A court reporter will produce a transcript of the proceedings.
5. The board shall consider all of the oral and written documentation in relation to the specific grounds of appeal.

All members of the appeal board shall attend all of the proceedings. Proceedings shall be scheduled to effectuate their attendance. The designated chair shall preside at all proceedings and will rule on all procedural matters. Decisions of an appeal board will be based upon a majority vote of the board's members.

F. Limitations

The appeal board shall act within the following limitations:

1. The appeal board shall not include current members of the Commission that took the initial adverse action against the institution.
2. The appeal board affirms, amends, or remands the adverse action of the original decision-making body.

G. Responsibility

The appeal board has the responsibility to prepare a written report for the chief administrator of the institution and for the Commission. The report will give the decision of the board and the reasons for the decision. The report must be sent to the Chief Executive Officer within 30 days following the last day of the board proceedings. The Chief Executive Officer will send one copy to the institution and place the report on the agenda of the next Commission meeting. The Commission will receive the report of the appeal board, will implement the appeal board's decision, and will act in a manner consistent with the appeal board's decision regarding the institution's or program's accreditation status.

REFERENCE: ***Handbook of Accreditation: 2026 Edition*****, (Public- Non-Public) pages 12, 21, 23, 24, 25, 34, 38, 55, 56, 83**

ARBITRATION OF ADVERSE ACTIONS

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 arbitration before initiating any other legal action. The Council shall require all member and candidate institutions to affirm agreement to initiate Arbitration in adherence to this guideline on the candidate application and in the Annual Report submission. An institution may only initiate arbitration following the appeal of an adverse action of the Commission and a final written decision has been rendered by an appeal panel.

ARBITRATION PROCESS

The chief administrator of the institution, with the approval of the governing board of the institution, may initiate arbitration by submitting a written notice of its intent to arbitrate to the Commission office within ten (10) calendar days of receipt of notice of final decision of an appeal panel. 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 all of the following components:

a. A request for an arbitration hearing.
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 action of the approval to initiate arbitration taken by the institution's governing board.
d. A statement indicating the willingness of the institution to abide by the arbitration conditions and procedures.
e. A statement affirming that the institution shall be responsible for the cost of Commission Legal Counsel should the arbitrator affirm the decision of the Appeal Panel.

A timely notice of arbitration shall have the immediate effect of continuing the institution's accreditation status with the Commission as it was prior to the adverse action of the Commission until the arbitration decision is rendered.

If the institution does not notify the Commission of its intent to arbitrate within the above stated timeframe, the institution forfeits its right to arbitrate, and the decision of the Appeal Panel will become final.

Grounds for Arbitration

The grounds for arbitration shall be as follows:

1. The decision of the Appeal Panel was arbitrary or unreasonable and not based on or consistent with the evidence in the appeal record.
2. The Appeal Panel failed to follow the procedures of the appeal process outlined in the *Policy and Rules Manual*, and the procedural error was significant in leading to the decision of the Appeal Panel.

The notice of intent to arbitrate must identify the specific alleged procedural failures or the specific manner in which the decision was arbitrary or unreasonable and not based on, or consistent with, the

Policy and Rules of the Commission.

Scope of Review

The arbitration proceeding is not a *de novo* review. For the purposes of arbitration, the scope of review is based solely upon the appeal record that existed when the Appeal Panel rendered its decision. There shall be no discovery in the arbitration proceedings and no additional evidence may be submitted to the arbitrator. The transcript of the appeal hearing and the written decision of the appeal panel shall be made available to the arbitrator prior to the arbitration proceeding.

The institution shall bear the burden of proof to demonstrate that the decision of the Appeal Panel was erroneous in accordance with the *Policy and Rules Manual* and the evidence presented in the appeal record.

The arbitrator will determine whether one or more of the grounds for arbitration are met and shall have the authority to affirm or reverse the decision of the Appeal Panel.

Arbitrator Selection Process

The arbitration will be administered by a mutually selected arbitrator who is impartial and independent. As soon as practically possible after the Commission receives notification of intent to initiate arbitration from the institution, the selected arbitration firm will submit a list consisting of five (5) identical names of proposed arbitrators drawn from its National Roster of Arbitrators. The list of arbitrators shall be accompanied by a biographical description of each proposed arbitrator. The arbitration firm shall vet the potential arbitrators for conflicts of interest with either party prior to providing the lists to the institution and Commission. The potential arbitrators must affirm, in writing, that they do not have a conflict of interest with the institution as described in the Council's conflict of interest policy.

The Commission and the institution may each strike the names of two (2) potential arbitrators and return the list to the arbitration firm. From the remaining names on the list, the arbitration firm will make the appointment of the arbitrator who will administer the arbitration proceedings. If for any reason the appointment of an arbitrator cannot be determined from the list, the arbitration firm may appoint an arbitrator without the institution nor the Commission submitting additional lists.

The arbitration firm will provide written notice to the Commission and to the institution of the appointment of the arbitrator. The decision of the arbitrator shall be final.

If the appointed arbitrator is unable to perform the duties of their appointment for any reason, the arbitration firm may fill the vacancy with another arbitrator. Such action by the firm shall be final. Neither the institution nor the Commission nor anyone acting on their behalf shall communicate *ex parte* with the selected arbitrator or any potential arbitrator.

Fees and Expenses

The notice of intent to arbitration must be accompanied by a cashier's check in the amount of $35,000. The $35,000 consists of a non-refundable $5,000 notice-of-intent-to-arbitrate fee and a $30,000 deposit to cover the costs of the arbitration proceedings. Any funds left over from the deposit are refunded to the institution. Should there be an outstanding balance after the deposit is applied, the institution must pay the outstanding balance. The institution shall be provided with a statement of expenses incurred.

The institution will bear all direct costs in connection with the arbitration proceedings, including, but not limited to, the following expenses:

1. Travel and subsistence of arbitrators administering in the arbitration proceedings
2. Cost of arbitration proceedings room
3. All direct costs of the arbitration, such as stenographic costs, mailing or distribution of documents, and communication services
4. Travel and subsistence of three (3) official Commission representatives
5. Court reporter costs
6. Cost of Commission Legal Counsel should the arbitrator affirm the decision of the Appeal Panel

The arbitration firm may charge a fee for providing administrative services in connection with the arbitration. The fee is typically specified in the current schedule of fees published by the firm. The institution requesting arbitration is fully responsible for payment of the fee administrative services provided by the arbitration firm.

Representation

The institution and/or the Commission may have representatives present during the arbitration proceedings and shall notify the other party and the arbitrator of the names, phone numbers, and email addresses of the representatives at least ten (10) calendar days prior to the date set for the arbitration proceedings. No more than five (5) persons representing each party may appear during the arbitration proceedings.

The Commission and/or the institution may be represented by legal counsel during the arbitration process. The attorney's name and contact information, including the firm, must be included on the list of representatives provided to the other party.

Other than during the arbitration hearing, institutional legal counsel is expected to communicate solely with legal counsel for the Commission and with the arbitrator. At the arbitration hearing, legal counsel for either party will be permitted to make any presentation on behalf of the party it represents.

Arbitration Briefings

As noted in the *Scope of Review*, no new evidence may be presented by either party during arbitration proceedings. The arbitration proceedings are based solely upon the appeal record that existed when the Appeal Panel rendered its decision. The transcript of the appeal hearing and the written decision of the appeal panel will be made available to the arbitrator by the Commission.

Each party may prepare an arbitration principal brief explaining its respective position, not to exceed 20 pages, that references information presented in the appeal record, the transcript of the appeal hearing, and the written decision of the appeal panel. The arbitration briefs shall be sent to the other party and to the arbitrator as outlined in the arbitration process.

Preliminary Hearing

After the arbitrator has received all documents and briefs from each party, the arbitrator may hold a virtual (video or telephonic) preliminary hearing to discuss the procedure and guidelines for conducting the arbitration hearing. The date, time and modality of the preliminary hearing shall be determined by the arbitrator. Legal counsel and two (2) representatives of each party should attend the preliminary hearing.

Arbitration Process

The President/CEO of the Council will set the date, time, and place of the proceedings of the arbitration proceedings at least 30 days in advance and so notify the institution and the arbitrator in writing. At least 20 days prior to the arbitration proceeding or within a time period specified by the arbitrator, the institution shall forward an electronic copy of its appeal document and arbitration principal brief to the arbitrator. At the same time, the institution should forward an electronic copy of the principal brief to the President/CEO of the Council.

Upon receipt of the institution's arbitration principal brief, the President/CEO of the Council will provide the arbitrator with an electronic copy of the Commission's documents prepared for the appeal, a copy of the appeal transcript, the appeal panel decision letter, and the Commission's arbitration principal brief. The President/CEO will send the institution an electronic copy of its arbitration principal brief.

The arbitration hearing will be conducted in a manner as determined by the arbitrator. The arbitrator will set forth the arbitration guidelines and presentation time limits. Arbitration proceedings are administrative, not judicial hearings; therefore, there will be no cross examination of representatives by either party. Only the arbitrator will be permitted to ask questions of either party during the proceedings. The arbitrator will be requested to conduct the arbitration hearing expeditiously and may direct the parties to focus their presentations on specific issues that are most helpful in reaching a decision.

Arbitration Decision

The arbitrator shall inform the President/CEO of the Council and the institution of the decision, in writing, within 30 days of the conclusion of the arbitration hearing. The decision will either (1) Affirm the decision of the Appeal Panel or (2) Reverse the decision of the Appeal Panel. The letter should indicate the reasons for the decision.

The arbitrator will not have the authority to award monetary damages, to take accreditation actions, or otherwise take any other action.

Effect of Decision

The arbitrator may not act as a decision-making body of the Commission. The arbitrator shall have the authority to affirm or reverse the decision of the Appeal Panel. The arbitrator does not have the authority to award monetary damages, to take accreditation actions, or otherwise any other action reserved to the Commission.

If the arbitrator affirms the decision of the Appeal Panel, the accreditation action of the Commission becomes final immediately, unless the Commission's notice of adverse action sets a different effective date for the action.

If the arbitrator reverses the decision of the Appeal Panel, the Commission shall carry out that decision in a manner consistent with the policy and rules of the Commission. The Commission shall define the terms and conditions of the institution's status in conjunction with its implementation of the decision (e.g., date of the next Commission review, monitoring, status, etc.). The Commission will issue written notification to the institution of its decision within 14 days of taking final action.

Arbitration is initial and non-binding, and an institution may legally challenge an arbitration decision as permitted by applicable law.

OBLIGATIONS OF AFFILIATION

FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT

The Commission's definition of 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 establishing a rationale for specification of FTE, the Commission recognizes that numerous methods may be used by states and institutions for calculating FTE. While many institutions are open twelve months each year, some operate for only nine or ten months. Within some institutions, there are both full-time and part-time students engaged in twelve-month programs, nine-month programs, evening short courses, off-campus instruction, part-time skill upgrade instruction, and possibly other types of instructional activity. Among these institutions, some programs are measured in semester or quarter hours, particularly if they are degree programs, while other programs are measured in student contact (clock) hours. The Commission desires to conform to general practice in the technical education community to the extent feasible and, therefore, has adopted this definition of an FTE for its reporting purposes.

The FTE reported on the Annual Report each year determines the amount of dues that each institution will owe the following fiscal year. The FTE for all types of program measurement at each affiliate location, extension, extended classroom, and instructional service center must be added to the FTE for the main campus to obtain the total FTE for the institution.

With Commission approval, military institutions and Job Corps Centers may apply routinely used alternative methods of computing enrollment that yield a sufficiently accurate approximation of the FTE.

REFERENCE: ***Handbook of Accreditation: 2026 Edition*****, (Public- Non-Public) page 28, 33, 88**

COST OF TEAM VISITS

Institutions must reimburse the Council for actual expenses of team members, staff members, and/or Commission representatives. Reimbursable expenses include travel, lodging, and meals of the team, staff members, and/or Commission representatives. (There is no charge for salaries of team members, staff members, or Commission representatives.)

In addition to the expenses mentioned above, the Council will assess a fee for initial accreditation and renewal of accreditation. This fee is non-refundable.

Institutions shall not reimburse team members, staff members, or Commission representatives directly. All reimbursements are made in accordance with the policies and guidelines of the Council. Local institutional travel policies do not apply to team visits since the individuals conducting the visits act as agents of the Commission. The Council will contract with institutions or school systems that cannot otherwise reimburse the Council for team visit expenses.

The Chief Executive Officer will determine the amount of the deposit for each team visit that must be received at least 60 days in advance of the date on which the team visit begins. The institution shall be provided a statement of expenses incurred. Unused funds from the deposit shall be returned provided that the institution has no other outstanding debt with the Council; otherwise, unused funds will be applied toward any outstanding debt the institution owes the Council. Any costs in excess of the deposit must be paid by the institution.

REFERENCE: ***Handbook of Accreditation: 2026 Edition*****, (Public- Non-Public) page 33, 47, 49**

DEBARMENT APPEAL PROCEDURES

A. Notice of Appeal

A person debarred by the Commission may appeal the debarment decision by submitting a written notice of intent to appeal to the office of the Council on Occupational Education within 20 days of the date of the letter notifying the person of the debarment decision. The person (appellant) must state in the letter the grounds for the appeal and whether the appeal review will be conducted with a hearing or without a hearing.

B. Appointment of a Debarment Appeal Board

The appeal proceeding will be conducted by a three-member Debarment Appeal Board appointed by the Commission Chair from among the 45 members of the Council Appeal Panel. The Commission Chair shall designate one member of the Debarment Appeal Board as Board Chair. In any instance where two or more debarments are imposed by the Commission based on the same set of facts and/or conditions, the Debarment Appeal Board may consider any or all appeals in one proceeding. The Debarment Appeal Board Chair will establish deadlines for the submission of documentation to be considered by the Board and the subsequent schedule for the conduct of the proceeding.

C. Review without Hearing

If the appellant does not request a hearing, the Debarment Appeal Board shall meet to determine its decision regarding the appeal based on the appellant's notice of intent to appeal and any supporting documentation and written arguments submitted by the appellant in accordance with the time schedule established by the Board Chair. The Debarment Appeal Board may consult with legal counsel of the Commission in reviewing the case and making its decision on the appeal. The decision of the Debarment Appeal Board shall be transmitted to the Commission for final action at its next meeting. The appellant shall be notified of the Commission's final action within 30 days of its decision.

D. Review with Hearing

The appellant may have a hearing before the Debarment Appeal Board if requested in the letter notifying the Commission of the intent to appeal the debarment. The Chair of the Debarment Appeal Board shall notify the appellant of the date, time, and place for the hearing and the deadline for receiving, in advance of the hearing, any written submissions, including documentation and arguments related to the debarment from the appellant and legal counsel for the Commission. Such submissions must be received in the Council's office by the established deadline. The following procedures will be applicable to the hearing:

1. The appellant shall have the burden of demonstrating that the debarment should be set aside or modified.
2. The Debarment Appeal Board Chair shall establish the amount of time that will be allotted for the hearing, taking into account the number of persons whose appeals are being heard concurrently. The appellant may be represented by legal counsel. The time for the hearing will be divided between the appellant and the Commission so as to give the Commission time to present its case for debarment and the appellant time to present a rebuttal argument.
3. The Debarment Appeal Board's decision on the appeal will be transmitted to the Commission within 30 days of the conclusion of the hearing for final action at its next meeting. The appellant will be notified of the Commission's action within 30 days of the Commission's decision.

E. Authority of the Debarment Appeal Board

The Debarment Appeal Board shall have the authority to recommend any of the following actions:

1. Affirmation of the Commission's debarment decision
2. Reversal of the debarment decision if it finds that the Commission's decision was arbitrary, capricious, or contrary to the substantive obligations for accreditation by the Commission
3. Modification of the Commission's debarment decision based upon newly discovered substantive information, reversal of the grounds used for the debarment, or other material grounds deemed applicable by the Debarment Appeal Board

F. Expenses of the Debarment Appeal Board

The appellant shall bear all expenses of the debarment appeal including, but not limited to, the cost of travel and subsistence for the Debarment Appeal Board and two Council representatives, court reporter services, Commission legal counsel, hearing room, and any other direct costs of the appeal. The Council will require a deposit prior to the appeal review whether with or without a hearing, based on estimated costs of the appeal. Failure to pay the deposit by the due date shall be grounds for dismissal of the appeal without further recourse.

REFERENCE: ***Handbook of Accreditation: 2026 Edition*****, (Public- Non-Public) page 34**

SUBSTANTIVE AND OTHER CHANGES

PROCEDURES REQUIRED FOR APPROVAL OF A CHANGE OF OWNERSHIP OR CONTROL

A change of ownership or control is defined as follows:

A. For-Profit Corporation: A change of ownership is defined as the transfer of at least 50% of the assets to another person. A change of ownership or constructive ownership of stock occurs at the time a person obtains or accumulates at least 50% of the total combined voting power of all classes of stock entitled to vote or at least 50% of the total value of shares of all classes of stock. Person includes an individual, trust, estate, partnership, association, company, or corporation. Any change from one ownership structure to another constitutes a change of ownership.

   EXCEPTION: Cases when the owner of an institution dies, and the owner's interest is transferred to either a family member or another current owner of the corporation (either of whom has been active in the management of the institution for the past two years prior to the aforementioned action), will not be treated as a change of ownership.

B. Not-For-Profit Corporation and Organizations Other Than Corporations: A change of control occurs when 50% or more of the members of the governing board change or 50% or more of the controlling parties change. The membership of record with the Council for the board or controlling parties is the membership at the time candidacy is granted or approval is granted following a change of control. A change from not-for-profit to for-profit constitutes a change of control. A change from for-profit to not-for-profit constitutes a change of control.

C. Registered Apprenticeship Programs/National ERISA (Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974) Training Institutes: A change of control for a National ERISA Training Institute with Registered Apprenticeship Programs more than 50% of voting shares of joint labor or management entities, who appoint trustees, change due to a restatement of its trust agreement or a merger of ERISA funds that support the institution.

Accreditation does not transfer with a change of ownership or control of an institution. After an official notification of a change of ownership or control is received from an institution, no substantive change approvals will be granted for pending applications, nor will new applications for substantive changes be accepted. An application for a change of ownership or control will not be accepted until any substantive changes requiring a site visit have been granted final approval. Reaffirmation of accreditation cannot be granted until a pending change of ownership or control has received final approval by the Commission. The following moratorium also applies to a change of ownership or control:

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. Also, institutions in candidate status are not permitted to apply for approval of substantive changes of any kind. Waivers of this policy may be granted when changes are mandated by the institution's local school district or state agency. (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.)

The procedures defined by the Commission for approval of a change of ownership or control of an institution are described below.

A. Change of Ownership or Control of Total Institution

As previously stated, accreditation does not transfer with a change of ownership or control of an institution. Due to both Department of Education regulations and requirements of the Commission, the change of ownership or control of an institution is a time-sensitive process. The institution shall submit a letter of intent on institutional letterhead to Council staff at least 120 days prior to the anticipated date of a change of ownership or control. The institution should submit a completed application for Change of Ownership or Control along with the application fee and other applicable fees through EDvera by the documentation deadline date prior to the Commission meeting in which the Change of Ownership application is to be considered.

The application must include the institution's audited financial statements prepared by an independent certified public accountant for the two most recent fiscal years. It must also include the purchaser's audited financial statements prepared by an independent certified public accountant for the two most recent fiscal years. The closing date for the change of ownership should take place after the application has been submitted and must occur within 30 days of the Commission meeting at which the Change of Ownership application is to be considered. The purchaser must submit an audited balance sheet prepared by an independent certified public accountant for the institution as of the date of purchase to be received in the Council office within 14 days after the closing date and prior to the application review by the Commission. Financial statements shall adhere to Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) and shall be prepared in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards (GAGAS).

The Commission considers the Change in Ownership or control final as of the date of closing. In the event that, for any reason, the ownership or control reverts back to the previous owner(s) or non-profit board/ controlling parties, a new application for candidate for accreditation must be filed.

Upon receipt of a completed application, the Chief Executive Officer shall review the application and may request additional documentation. The Chief Executive Officer shall then refer the application to the Commission for review and action at its next meeting. The Commission reserves the right to require a preliminary visit to any new site prior to granting initial approval of the change of ownership or control application.

An on-site visit will be conducted at the institution as soon as practicable, but within 180 days of the closing date. The effective date of approval of the Change of Ownership will be recorded as the date the Commission grants initial approval. The cost of the on-site visit will be borne by the institution. The Chief Executive Officer will determine the amount of the deposit for the site visit. Prior to hosting the on-site visit, the change of ownership or control must be implemented and operational. If the change of ownership or control being considered has not been implemented within 180 days from the effective date, initial approval of the change of ownership or control will be rescinded. Initial approval will also be revoked should the institution fail to host any required site visit within 180 days from the effective date of initial approval. The institution will then be placed on the next Commission agenda for consideration of adverse action and penalties may apply.

The visiting team (which may include a Commission representative) will verify the accuracy

of information provided by the institution in its application and ensure that the institution continues to comply with the Standards, Criteria, Conditions, Policies, and procedures of the Commission.

The visiting team will submit a written report to the Chief Executive Officer within 30 days of the date that the site visit was concluded. A copy of the official team report will be transmitted to the institution. The institution must submit a response to all findings of non-compliance stated in the team report for receipt in the Council office within 30 days of the date that the report is transmitted from the Council office. The institution's response report, if required, must provide documentation that deficiencies or violations of the Standards, Criteria, and/or Conditions
of Accreditation have been corrected. Identification of deficiencies documented during the visit may result in the institution being placed on status (Warning, Probation, or Show Cause Order) or losing its accreditation.

The Commission will review the application, financial statements, team report, and the institution's response report, if required, and will make a final decision on the change of ownership or control at the next possible Commission meeting following the on-site visit. Should the institution be denied approval of the change of ownership or control, candidate or accredited status is terminated. The institution may appeal the decision in accordance with procedures specified by the Commission.

Following final approval of a change of ownership or control, an eligible institutional representative must attend required workshops, and the institution must complete a self-study and host a full accreditation team visit. The timing of the accreditation visit may have to be adjusted to accommodate the change of ownership process but must occur no later than 18 months after final approval is granted.

B. Change of Ownership or Control of an Affiliate or Extension Location

If an institution sells or otherwise disposes of an affiliate or extension, the accreditation of the affiliate or extension will be discontinued simultaneously with the sale or disposal action that results in a change of ownership or control. If an accredited institution acquires an affiliate or extension and wishes to continue to operate it as an affiliate or extension, the procedures required to establish a new affiliate or extension shall be followed. Should the new owner or non-profit board wish to make the affiliate or extension an accredited main campus, it must make application for candidate for accreditation.

C. Change of Ownership or Control of Candidate for Accreditation

Institutions granted candidacy for accreditation may not change ownership or control while in candidate status.

D. Partial Change of Ownership or Control

If a partial change of ownership or control (i.e., less than 50%) occurs for a candidate or accredited institution, the Commission must be informed within the time periods prescribed below:

(i) If less than 50% of the assets of a for-profit corporation are transferred to another person, notification of the transfer must be received in the Commission office at least 30 calendar days before the date that the transfer occurs.

(ii) If fewer than 50% of the members of the governing board or 50% of the controlling parties of a not-for-profit organization or organization other than a corporation change, notification of the change must be received in the Commission office within 14 calendar days after the date that the change occurs.

E. Acquisition of any other institution, program, or location of another institution.

Under 600.31 (d) (8), the acquisition of one institution to become an additional location of another institution is listed as an example of a Change in Ownership resulting in a change in control for nonprofit, private for-profit, and public institutions (unless the acquired institution closed or ceased to provide educational instruction). The acquisition of any other institution or any program or location of another institution is subject to approval by the Commission before being considered part of an institution's grant of accreditation. If the institution to be acquired is already accredited by COE, it must follow the Procedures Required for Approval of a Change of Ownership or Control. After the Department approves the Change in Ownership, if the acquiring institution plans to establish the institution to be acquired as a branch campus or an additional location of the existing COE-accredited institution, follow the Procedures Required for Approval of a New Additional Location or Procedures Required for Approval of a Branch Campus (whichever is appropriate). If the institution to be acquired is not a COE-accredited institution, the initial accreditation process must be followed by the non-COE accredited institution prior to the acquisition.

REFERENCE: ***Handbook of Accreditation: 2026 Edition*****, (Public- Non-Public) pages 24, 30, 34, 40, 43, 47, 48**

PROCEDURES REQUIRED FOR APPROVAL TO ESTABLISH A BRANCH CAMPUS

In accordance with U.S. Department of Education guideline 34 CFR 600.2, a branch campus is defined as a physical facility that is geographically separate from the main campus of the institution and within the same ownership structure of the institution, and that also—

(1) Is approved by the Secretary as a branch campus; and
(2) Is independent from the main campus, meaning the location—
(i) Is permanent in nature;
(ii) Offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized education credential;
(iii) Has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization; and
(iv) Has its own budgetary and hiring authority.

Therefore, to establish a branch campus, an institution must first obtain approval from the U.S. Department of Education. After receiving this approval, the institution is required to submit documentation of the approval to the Council within 14 days.

The institution must also seek approval from the Commission to establish a branch campus. The institution should follow the same procedures for the approval of an additional location as outlined in the Procedures Required for the Approval to Establish a New Additional Location, in the next section.

Additional Requirements for Approval of a Branch Campus

Additionally, an institution that is eligible to participate in Title IV, HEA programs, must also submit a business plan for the branch campus to the Commission at the time of application that describes:

(1) The educational programs to be offered at the branch campus; and
(2) The projected revenue and expenditures and cash flow at the branch campus.

Site Visits to Branch Campuses

The institution is required to host a site visit at the new branch campus as soon as practicable, but no later than 180 days after the establishment of the branch campus. The effective date of the establishment of the branch campus will be recorded as the date that the Department of Education approves the branch campus.

REFERENCE: ***Handbook of Accreditation: 2026 Edition*****, (Public- Non-Public) pages 40, 45, 46, 47, 48**

PROCEDURES REQUIRED FOR APPROVAL OF A CHANGE OF LOCATION

A change of location is defined as a physical relocation of an existing main, affiliate, extension campus, or instructional service center within the institution's service area, and where there is a reasonable expectation for current students, faculty, and staff to continue instruction and/or employment at the new location. A Change of Location must be no greater distance than 25 miles; otherwise, it is considered a new campus.

Institutions seeking approval for a change of location must first submit to the Commission a letter of intent for the planned change of location at least 30 days before submitting a Change of Location application. Failure to provide advance notification may call into question the entire institution's accreditation. The institution must then submit the application to the Commission for initial approval at least 90 days prior to the change of location unless the move is an unplanned relocation, thereby constituting an unplanned substantive change. The application shall include the following documentation:

1. The rationale for the change of location
2. Documentation of planning that took place including minutes, long-range plan, Annual Report, needs assessment, and other relevant documentation
3. The distance of the new location from the old location, and whether the new location is within the same service area. (Service area is defined as the contiguous geographical area surrounding the institution from which the institution expects to attract students and serve employers.)
4. A budget, to include major categories such as administration, instructional programs, personnel salaries, plant maintenance, lease or rent of building, insurance, custodial services, and security service. (Provide projected revenue, expenditures, and cash flow.)
5. A plan for accommodating students (to include teach-out agreements made with other institutions or agencies, as well as refunds to students not wishing to relocate)
6. Information concerning programs to be offered at the new location. (A New Program application for each new program and/or Program Relocation/Replication application must be submitted.)
7. A single line drawing with dimensions of facilities to be used with each area identified
8. A copy of the license, if required, indicating the new location's address
9. A copy of the lease agreement, if applicable
10. A copy of applicable insurance
11. A check for the Change of Location fee, per the *Handbook of Accreditation*

The Commission may consider no more than two substantive changes requiring site visits at one time, whether initial or final approval. No new substantive change applications will be accepted until at least of the two pending applications receives final approval.

I**MPORTANT: 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. Also, institutions in candidate status are not permitted to apply for approval of substantive changes of any kind. Waivers of this policy may be granted when changes are mandated by the institution's local school district or state agency. (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.)

Upon receipt of a completed application, the Chief Executive Officer shall review the application and may request additional documentation. The Chief Executive Officer shall then refer the application to the Commission for review and action at its next meeting. The Commission reserves the right to require a preliminary visit to any new site prior to granting initial approval of the change of location application.

Within 180 days from the effective date the Commission grants initial approval for the change of location, an on-site visit will be conducted to the new location. The cost of the on-site visit will be borne by the institution. The Chief Executive Officer will determine the amount of the deposit for the site visit. Prior to hosting the on-site visit, the change of location must be implemented and operational. If the change of location being considered has not been implemented within 180 days from the effective date of initial approval, initial approval of the change of location will be rescinded. Initial approval will be revoked should the institution fail to host any required site visit within 180 days from the effective date of initial approval. The institution will then be placed on the next Commission agenda for consideration of adverse action and penalties may apply.

The visiting team (which may include a Commission representative) will verify the accuracy of information provided by the institution in its Change of Location application, consider the adequacy of the new location, and ensure that the institution continues to comply with the Standards, Criteria, Conditions, Policies, and procedures of the Commission.

The visiting team will submit a written report to the Chief Executive Officer within 30 days of the date that the site visit was concluded. A copy of the official team report will be transmitted to the institution. The institution must submit a response to all findings of non-compliance stated in the team report for receipt in the Council office within 30 days of the date that the report is transmitted from the Council office. The institution's response report, if required, must provide documentation that deficiencies or violations of the
Standards, Criteria, and/or Conditions of Accreditation have been corrected. Identification of deficiencies documented during the visit may result in the institution being placed on status (Warning, Probation, or Show Cause Order) or losing its accreditation.

The Commission will review the application, the team report, and institutional response, if required, at its next meeting and will make a final decision on extending accreditation to include the change of location. Approval of the change of location will be recorded as the date the Commission grants initial approval.

REFERENCE: ***Handbook of Accreditation: 2026 Edition*****, (Public- Non-Public) pages 40, 48**

PROCEDURES REQUIRED FOR APPROVAL TO ESTABLISH A NEW ADDITIONAL LOCATION

(Affiliate, Extension, Instructional Service Center, Extended Classroom)

The different types of additional locations are defined in the *Handbook of Accreditation*. Refer to those definitions to determine the appropriate type of applications required for approval.

The Commission does not approve sites where work-based activities such as internships, externships, clinicals, or apprenticeships occur.

Institutions seeking approval to establish a new additional location must first submit to the Commission a letter of intent for the planned new additional location at least 30 days before submitting the appropriate new additional location application. Failure to provide advance notification may call into question the entire institution's accreditation. The institution must then submit the application to the Commission for initial approval at least 90 days before students are enrolled at the new site.

The Commission may consider no more than two substantive changes requiring site visits at one time, whether initial or final approval. No new substantive change applications will be accepted until at least of the two pending applications receives final approval.

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. Also, institutions in candidate status are not permitted to apply for approval of substantive changes of any kind. Waivers of this policy may be granted when changes are mandated by the institution's local school district or state agency. (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.)

Upon receipt of a completed application, the Chief Executive Officer shall review the application and may request additional documentation. The Chief Executive Officer shall then refer the application to the
Commission for review and action at its next meeting. The Commission reserves the right to require a preliminary visit to any new site prior to granting initial approval of the new non-campus site application.

Within 180 days from the effective date the Commission grants initial approval for the new additional location, an on-site visit will be conducted at the new site and the main campus. Prior to hosting the on-site visit, the new additional location must be in full operation with students attending. If the new additional location being considered is not in full operation with students attending within 180 days from the effective date of initial approval, initial approval of the new additional location will be rescinded. Initial approval will be revoked should the institution fail to host any required site visit within 180 days from the effective date of initial approval. The institution will then be placed on the next Commission agenda for consideration of adverse action and penalties may apply.

The visiting team (which may include a Commission representative) will verify that the information provided by the institution in its application is accurate and that the additional site has the personnel, facilities, and resources it claims to have. The team will consider the adequacy of the new site and its potential impact on the institution as a whole and will ensure that the institution continues to comply with the Standards, Criteria, Conditions, Policies, and procedures of the Commission. The approval

process shall include, but is not limited to, a thorough review of programs, financial resources, physical resources, and human resources (administration and management), of both the main campus and the new site. Affiliate campuses must meet, at a minimum, all Criteria of Standard Ten – Student Services and Activities.

The visiting team will submit a written report to the Chief Executive Officer within 30 days of the date that the site visit was concluded. A copy of the official team report will be transmitted to the institution. The institution must submit a response to all findings of non-compliance stated in the team report for receipt in the Council office within 30 days of the date that the report is transmitted from the Council office. The institution's response report, if required, must provide documentation that deficiencies or violations of the Standards, Criteria, and/or Conditions of Accreditation have been corrected. Identification of deficiencies documented during the visit may result in the institution being placed on status (Warning, Probation, or Show Cause Order) or losing its accreditation.

The Commission will review the application, the team report, and institutional response, if required, at its next meeting and will make a final decision on extending accreditation to include the new additional location. The effective date of approval of the new affiliate campus will be recorded as the date the Commission grants initial approval.

REFERENCE: ***Handbook of Accreditation: 2026 Edition*, (Public- Non-Public) pages 44**
See Definitions: Additional Location; Affiliate Campus; Affiliate Campus

GUIDELINES FOR SITE VISIT WAIVERS TO NEW ADDITIONAL LOCATIONS

All institutions establishing a fourth or more additional non-main location site may qualify for a waiver of the site visit requirement if specific conditions are satisfied. The institution may be exempt from a site visit after three locations have been established and if certain conditions are met. The waiver request should be included in the letter of intent for the planned new additional location and should address each of the established criteria below:

The institution has met the criteria established by the agency indicating sufficient capacity to add additional locations without individual prior approvals, including, at a minimum, satisfactory evidence of a system to ensure quality across a distributed enterprise that includes:

(1) Clearly identified academic control;
(2) Regular evaluation of the locations;
(3) Adequate faculty, resources, and academic and student support systems;
(4) Financial stability; and
(5) Long-range planning for expansion.

All institutions require a site visit within six months to each additional location if the institution:

(1) Is the new branch campus (within six months of approval by the Department of Education)
(2) Has **three or fewer** locations.
(3) Has not demonstrated to the agency's satisfaction that the additional location is meeting all of the agency's standards that apply to that additional location or
(4) Has been placed on warning, probation, or show cause by the agency or is subject to some limitation by the agency on its accreditation or preaccreditation status; Includes the addition of programs that represent a significant departure from the existing offerings of educational programs, or method of delivery from those that were offered or used when the agency last evaluated the institution.
(5) Has applied for approval of more than one additional location in a six-month period.

Note: As required by the U.S. Department of Education, COE must have an effective mechanism for conducting, at reasonable intervals, visits to a representative sample of additional locations. While an institution may qualify for a site visit waiver upon initial approval, COE reserves the right to require a site visit for any new additional location at the time of approval. COE conducts a specified number of unannounced site visits annually, and any site may be subject to a visit at any time.

REFERENCE: ***Handbook of Accreditation: 2026 Edition*****, (Public- Non-Public) pages 37, 44**

PROCEDURES REQUIRED FOR APPROVAL OF A CHANGE OF SCOPE:
Initial Associate Degree Program and New Occupational Area of Instruction

A change of scope is defined as any instance in which an institution departs significantly from its mission by seeking to offer its first applied associate degree program or regarding the occupational areas for which it offers preparation.

Institutions seeking change of scope approval must first submit to the Commission a letter of intent at least 30 days before submitting a Change in Programmatic Scope Application. Failure to provide advance notification may call into question the entire institution's accreditation. The institution must then submit the application to the Commission for initial approval at least 90 days prior to the date students will be in the new program.

The Commission may consider no more than two substantive changes requiring site visits at one time, whether initial or final approval. No new substantive change applications will be accepted until at least of the two pending applications receives final approval.

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. Also, institutions in candidate status are not permitted to apply for approval of substantive changes of any kind. Waivers of this policy may be granted when changes are mandated by the institution's local school district or state agency. (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.)

Upon receipt of a complete Change in Programmatic Scope application, the Chief Executive Officer Shall review the application and may request additional documentation. The Chief Executive Officer will submit the application to the Commission for review and action at its next meeting. The Commission reserves the right to require a preliminary visit to any new site prior to granting initial approval of the Change of Programmatic Scope application. The effective date of approval of the change of scope will be recorded as the date the Commission grants initial approval.

Within 180 days from the effective date the Commission or Chief Executive Officer grants initial approval for the change of scope (initial associate degree program or new occupational area of instruction), an on-site visit will be conducted at all locations where the instruction occurs. The cost of the on-site visit will be borne by the institution. The Chief Executive Officer will determine the amount of the deposit for the site visit. Prior to hosting the on-site visit, the institution must have fully implemented the change of scope and students must be enrolled in the program (s) described in the application. If the change of scope being considered is not in full operation with students attending within 180 days from the effective date of initial approval, initial approval will be rescinded. Initial approval will be revoked should the institution fail to host any required site visit within 180 days from the effective date of initial approval. The institution will then be placed on the next Commission agenda for consideration of adverse action and penalties may apply.

The visiting team (which may include a Commission representative) will verify the accuracy of information provided by the institution in its application, will consider the adequacy of the program's instruction and resources as well as its potential impact on the institution as a whole, and will ensure that the institution continues to comply with the Standards, Criteria, Conditions, Policies, and procedures of the Commission.

The visiting team will submit a written report to the Chief Executive Officer within 30 days of the date that the site visit was concluded. A copy of the official team report will be transmitted to the institution. The institution must submit a response to all items of concern stated in the team report for receipt in the Council office within 30 days of the date that the report is transmitted from the Council office. The institution's response report, if required, must provide documentation that deficiencies or violations of the Standards, Criteria, and/or Conditions of Accreditation have been corrected. Identification of deficiencies documented during the visit may result in the institution being placed on (Warning, Probation, or Show Cause Order) or losing its accreditation.

The Commission will review the application, the team report, and institutional response, if required, and its next meeting and will make a final decision on extending accreditation to include the change of scope.

Approval of Initial Associate Degree Program

The Council does not accredit institutions that offer degree credentials of any type other than the Applied Associate degree.

Institutions seeking approval to offer the initial (first) associate degree program must submit a New Associate Degree Program application simultaneously with the Change in Programmatic Scope application. Upon receipt of a completed New Associate Degree Program application, the Chief Executive Officer shall review the application and may request additional documentation. Associate degree programs must demonstrate compliance with all applicable Conditions, Standards, and Criteria specified in the Handbook of Accreditation. In exceptional cases, evidence of documented work experience and skills in the technical field may be considered instead of formal academic requirements for faculty members teaching associate degree coursework. (Refer to the latest edition of the Handbook of Accreditation for all criteria relating to faculty requirements for associate degree programs). The Chief Executive Officer will submit both applications to the Commission for review and action at its next meeting. The effective date of approval will be recorded as the date the Commission grants initial approval of the change of scope.

Approval of the Addition of New Occupational Area of Instruction

Institutions seeking approval to add a new occupational area for which instruction will be provided must submit a New Program application simultaneously with the Change in Programmatic Scope application. Upon receipt of a completed New Program application, the Chief Executive Officer shall review the application and may request additional documentation. The Chief Executive Officer will submit both applications to the Commission for review and action at its next meeting. The effective date of approval will be recorded as the date the Commission grants initial approval of the change of scope.

REFERENCE: ***Handbook of Accreditation: 2026 Edition*****, (Public- Non-Public) pages 37 and 42**

PROCEDURES REQUIRED FOR APPROVAL OF A NEW NON-DEGREE PROGRAM

The council defines an occupational education program as 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. New programs must be reported to and approved by the Commission no later than 90 working days prior to the implementation of the new program. Note the following items needed in the new program application:

(1) Name of program, CIP code, clock hours, and credit hours if applicable.

(2) Upload or complete all applicable documentation that is requested.

(3) Describe the program in identical terms (name, length, and description) in the application, on any state approvals that are required, and in your institution's catalog, syllabus, web site, and brochures.

(4) Be sure that all authorizing agency approvals, program syllabi, institutional catalog, brochures, Web site, etc. describe this program and each course within it in identical terms (name, length, and description).

Substantive changes of this type are reviewed by the staff. Approval of the change may be granted by the Chief Executive Officer, or the review and approval may be referred to the Commission for action. All changes approved by the Chief Executive Officer are subject to final approval by the Commission. The effective date of approval will be the date that the application is processed, unless the program application is being processed simultaneously with another application (new additional campus, change of scope, institutional distance education, etc.). In that case, the effective date will be the date of initial approval of the adjoining application.

Institutions that seek approval for the first (initial) program that includes a distance education mode of delivery requires a virtual visit within 180 days of the effective date of initial approval. The Commission must grant both initial approval of the application and final approval after the site visit has been performed.

REFERENCE: ***Handbook of Accreditation: 2026 Edition*****, (Public- Non-Public) pages 42**

PROCEDURES REQUIRED FOR APPROVAL OF A CHANGE IN EXISTING PROGRAM

The Council defines a change in an existing program previously approved by the Commission as:

(1) increases or decreases the length required for completion of the program and award of a credential, and/or
(2) changes the method of instructional delivery for the program.

These changes must be reported to and approved by the Commission no later than 90 working days prior to the change taking place. The process for review and approval differ depending on the degree to which the changes affect the length of a program and its method of delivery and are detailed below.

Substantive changes of this type are reviewed by the staff. Approval for the change may be granted by the Chief Executive Officer, or the review and approval may be referred to the Commission for action. All changes approved by the Chief Executive Officer are subject to final approval by the Commission. The effective date of approval will be the date all documentation was submitted to the Commission, unless the program application is being processed simultaneously with another application (new additional campus, change of scope, institutional distance education, etc.). In that case, the effective date will be the date of initial approval of the adjoining application.

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. Also, institutions in candidate status are not permitted to apply for approval of substantive changes of any kind. Waivers of this policy may be granted when changes are mandated by the institution's local school district or state agency. (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.)

Increase/Decrease in Length of Less than 25%

Changes made to programs that result in an increase or decrease of less than 25% of the total hours required for completion of the program and an award of a credential previously approved by the Commission must be reported to the Commission through an application.

The application requires the institution to report, course by course, the specific changes made in the curriculum and to submit copies of all applicable local, state, and/or federal level approvals (if required); an application fee; and other supporting documentation specified in the application.

Increase/Decrease in Length of 25% or More and Changes in Instructional Delivery Methods

Changes made to programs that result in an increase or decrease of greater than 25% of the total hours required for completion of the program and an award of a credential previously approved by the Commission, and those that change the method of instructional delivery for programs, are considered substantial in nature and must be reported to the Commission through an application.

One application is used to report changes in length and/or changes in delivery methods. The application requires the institution to report, course by course, the specific changes made in the curriculum and/or instructional delivery method (if applicable), and to submit copies of all applicable local, state, and/or federal level approvals, if required, an application fee, and other supporting documentation specified in the application.

-Substantive changes in length of programs (increases of 25% or more) are reviewed by the staff, but approval is granted only by the Commission.

If the program is to be delivered to any degree via distance education delivery methods, and the institution has not been previously approved to offer instruction via distance education, an application for approval of Institutional Distance Education **must** be submitted. (See section entitled "Procedures Required for Approval of Institutional Distance Education Delivery".) Institutional approval is required only once. Approval for changing the delivery mode of instruction will not be issued until the Institutional Distance Education application has been approved by the Commission. Exemption: Institutions offering Commission-approved distance education instruction prior to July 1, 2007, are not required to file the application for approval of Institutional Distance Education.

Institutions that seek approval for the first (initial) program that includes a distance education mode of delivery - AND is currently approved by the Commission, requires a virtual visit within 180 days of the effective date of initial approval. The Commission must grant both initial approval of the application and final approval after the site visit has been performed. (NOTE: Approval for initial programs with a distance education mode of delivery may require a physical site visit as well; therefore, a deposit for a physical site visit may be required by the Commission, per the *Handbook of Accreditation*.)

Approval for an institution's subsequent conversion of a currently-approved traditional program to a distance education program may be approved by the Chief Executive Officer or may be referred to the Commission for review and action. A virtual visit will follow within 180 days of initial approval. The Commission will grant final approval.

It is important to note, when considering changes to distance education delivery methods, that the Commission's eligibility requirements specify that institutions must utilize a campus-based instructional delivery system with at least 25% of the institution's total FTE being derived from enrollments in traditional programs.

Failure to implement approved substantive changes within 180 days of the effective date of initial approval will result in the revocation of the initial approval of the substantive change. Initial approval of the change may also be revoked if, when required, an institution fails to host a site visit. If this occurs, the institution will be placed on the next Commission agenda for consideration of adverse action and penalties may apply.

REFERENCE: *Handbook of Accreditation: 2026 Edition*, (Public- Non-Public) page 42

PROCEDURES REQUIRED FOR APPROVAL OF INSTITUTIONAL DISTANCE EDUCATION DELIVERY

Standard Two – Educational Programs, as presented in the *Handbook of Accreditation*, applies to all programs offered by member institutions regardless of their mode of delivery. The Council does not accredit institutions that offer instruction via correspondence education.

Institutions engaged in or investigating the possibility of offering instruction via distance education must maintain compliance with the Council's eligibility requirements and other conditions applicable to candidacy and accreditation as printed in the latest edition of the *Handbook of Accreditation*.

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. Also, institutions in candidate status are not permitted to apply for approval of substantive changes of any kind. Waivers of this policy may be granted when changes are mandated by the institution's local school district or state agency. (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.)

Contracts for instruction are common in programs offered via distance education. However, accredited institutions must maintain compliance with the Commission's conditions regarding contractual agreements. Further information on contractual arrangements may be found in the latest edition of the *Handbook of Accreditation* and in these *Policies and Rules of the Commission*.

Institutional Distance Education Approval

Applying for approval to begin distance education instruction involves completing an Institutional Distance Education application. The institutional distance education application must be accompanied by either the change in existing program application or the new program application. The application must be reported to and approved by the Commission no later than 90 working days prior to the change taking place. This application addresses applicable criteria in the Standards regarding technical infrastructure, timeliness of faculty responses to students, and privacy and security, among other concerns. Institutional Distance Education approval is required only once. The fee is due with submission of the application, per the *Handbook of Accreditation*.

Approval of Institutional Distance Education applications will require a virtual visit and may involve a physical site visit as well. Site visits will be conducted within 180 days after initial approval is granted. The effective date of approval for institutional distance education delivery will be recorded as the date the Commission grants initial approval.

Once an institution receives Institutional Distance Education approval, applications for programs with a distance education delivery method will be considered. Distance education program applications may be submitted in conjunction with the Institutional Distance Education application.

Distance Education Program Approval

To establish the first distance education program, the institutional distance education application must be accompanied by either the change in existing program application or the new program application. That application will be processed simultaneously with the institutional distance education application. Applications for additional distance education programs may be submitted once final approval for institutional distance education is granted.

50% Threshold Distance Education

After an institution has been approved to offer distance education it may offer distance education programs without further approval – unless and until an institution, during an award year, offers at least:

- 50 percent of a program through distance education
- enrolls at least 50 percent of its students through distance education
- offers at least 50 percent of its courses through distance education

For purposes of these calculations, a student is "enrolled in distance education" if the student enrolls in at least one course offered through distance education." Upon reaching the 50% threshold, the institution must submit for processing the "50% Threshold Distance Education Application."

REFERENCE: ***Handbook of Accreditation: 2026 Edition*****, (Public- Non-Public) page 42**

Special Requirements for Monitoring Institutional Shifts (FTE & Gross Revenue)

A. Full-Time Equivalent

COE monitors significant shifts in total Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) of candidate and accredited institutions by requiring reports from institutions when triggered increases/decreases occur. An institution must submit a formal notice to the Commission if the institution has an overall increase/decrease in FTE of 25% or more of an established baseline. The baseline for each twelve-month period is the FTE calculation reported in the most recent Annual Report. When an increase/decrease of 25% or more is achieved, a formal notice **must** be submitted to the Commission within 30 days. This notice **must** include the rationale for the increase/decrease as well as specific data on enrollment in all programs and for all campuses that experienced the significant shift with the total institutional FTE. Continued reporting of enrollment data by program will be required until the submission of the next institutional annual report.

B. Gross Revenue for Institutions

Additionally, COE considers shifts in gross revenue an indicator of institutional health. Non-public institutions that experience increases in gross revenue of 50% or more from the previous year (or a decrease in gross revenue of 25% or more) **must** submit a detailed explanation of the increase or decrease to the Commission along with a same day balance sheet prepared by an independent CPA that demonstrates the change. The explanation and same day balance sheet must be submitted to the Commission within 30 days after the experienced increase. An institution that fails to notify the Commission on a timely basis is subject to fees and penalties, per the *Handbook of Accreditation*.

In addition, if the institution is reporting a decrease of 25 % or more, the Commission may also ask the institution to submit a Financial Viability Compliance Plan covering past, current, and projected

enrollment by program, past, current and projected staffing levels. Monthly Revenue and Expenditures, Monthly Accounts Receivables and Payables. The Commission may also request the institution to submit an Institutional/Campus Conditional Teach-Out Plan. The Commission may also assess the following non-restrictive statuses to the institution. For an increase of 50% or more, the status ***"Growth Monitoring Increase in Gross Revenue".*** For a decrease of 25% or more, the status ***"Growth Monitoring for Decrease in Gross Revenue".***

REFERENCE: H*andbook of Accreditation: 2026 Edition,* (Public- Non-Public) page 52

PROCEDURES REQUIRED FOR APPROVAL OF A CHANGE IN MISSION OR OBJECTIVES

Institutions are expected to review their mission statements and educational objectives on an ongoing basis and to revise them, as appropriate, to ensure the effective delivery of educational programs. An editorial revision or re-wording of a mission statement that does not constitute a material change in mission is not considered a substantive change.

A substantive change in the established mission or objectives of an institution is one that fundamentally alters the character of the institution or its portfolio of academic programs or other mission-driven activities. An institution seeking to implement a substantive change in mission or educational objectives shall demonstrate that it has the capacity to support and sustain the proposed change.

A substantive change of mission or educational objectives may occur when other substantive changes (e.g., change of ownership, change of name, change of location, the addition of new programs or credentials, etc.) alter the original mission or educational objectives of the institution. A substantial change in mission or objectives requires Commission approval prior to implementation.

Any institution seeking a change in mission or objectives must first submit to the Commission a letter of intent at least 120 days before the projected implementation date of the change in mission or objectives. The letter of intent should include the current mission statement, the proposed mission statement, and a rationale for the change in mission. If the change in mission is deemed substantial, the institution must then submit a Substantial Change in Mission or Objectives Application to the Commission for approval at least 90 days prior to implementing the Change in mission or objectives.

Upon receipt of a completed Substantial Change in Mission or Objectives Application, the Chief Executive Officer shall review the application and may request additional documentation. The Chief Executive Officer will submit the application to the Commission for review and action at its next meeting. The Commission reserves the right to require a preliminary visit to any new site prior to granting initial approval of the Substantial Change in Mission or Objectives Application. The effective date of approval of the Change in Mission or Objectives will be recorded as the date the Commission grants initial approval. If Commission does not authorize a site visit with the change in mission or objectives, the approval will be considered final.

If a substantial change in mission or objectives occurs with the submission of another substantive change application (e.g., change of ownership, change of name, change of location, the addition of new programs or credentials, etc.) then the mission change will be processed in accordance with the other application. The institution must clearly articulate the intent to change the mission within the respective application including a statement of the current mission statement, the proposed mission statement, and a rationale for the change in mission.

CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENTS

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 officer for the institution.

A. Contracts for Recruiting and Consulting Services

An accredited institution that enters into a contract for recruiting or consulting services with any agency, corporation, institution, or individual must submit a copy of the contract and an official notification form to the Chief Executive Officer.

Each contract must include a conditional statement stipulating that the contract is not binding in the event that activities involved in the contract prevent the member school from complying with the Standards, Criteria, and Conditions adopted by the Council.

The Commission will review all submissions. The Commission may determine that a third-party review of applications and contracts be performed. In this case, a fee to cover the cost of the third-party review will apply, per the *Handbook of Accreditation*.

B. Contracts for Instruction

The Commission classifies contracts for instruction with external entities as substantive changes. External entities are defined as agencies, corporations, institutions, or individuals. These external entities may or may not be certified to participate in Title IV, HEA programs.

Accredited institutions that are eligible to participate in Title IV financial aid programs shall not contract more than 25% of the instruction of one or more of its programs with an external entity, whether or not that entity is certified to participate in Title IV, HEA programs.

An accredited institution that negotiates a contract for instruction with any external entity must submit an application and a copy of the contract to the Chief Executive Officer before entering into such an agreement.

All parties to such contracts must meet the Standards, Criteria, and Conditions adopted by the Council. Any off-campus instruction must maintain documentation that such activities are in compliance. Each contract must include a conditional statement stipulating that the contract is not binding in the event that any circumstances with the contractor prevent the member school from complying with the Standards, Criteria, and Conditions adopted by the Council.

An educational program to be taught under a contract must have state approval even though it is not intended to be taught at the main or other campuses. If the educational program to be taught under a contract is to be taught at a location that is not yet approved for the institution by the Commission, the institution must submit an application for a new Instructional Service Center designating the location of instruction. Initial approval of the Instructional Service Center application must be granted by the Commission before the institution's students may begin instruction at the new site.

The Chief Executive Officer will seek a third-party review for all applications and contracts submitted. (A fee to cover the cost of the third-party review will apply.) The Commission reserves the right to conduct an on-site visit to the institution or other sites that may be involved in the contract prior to granting approval. The Commission will then review the application, the contract, third-party comments, and site visit report (if required) and will make a decision whether or not to approve or deny the submission or to request additional information.

REFERENCE: H*andbook of Accreditation: 2026 Edition*, (Public- Non-Public) pages 40, 42, 54, 72

COMPLAINTS

COMPLAINT PROCEDURES OF THE COMMISSION

COE seeks to provide a complaint review process that is “timely, fair, and equitable” as is required by the Department of Education. COE reviews certified complaints regarding allegations of institutional conditions that raise significant questions about the institution’s compliance with the Accreditation Standards, Objectives, and Criteria.

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

A complaint may be defined as any formal notification provided to the Commission alleging violations of the Standards, Criteria, Conditions, Policies, and/or procedures of the Commission. A complaint may be brought against an institution by one or more parties, including students, instructors, administrators, state or federal agencies, employers, vendors, another institution, or others. A complaint may also take the form of a lien, lawsuit, disciplinary action, negative action by another accrediting body or a regulatory agency or board, or a decision of a criminal or civil court. Complaints that do not relate to the Commission’s Standards, Criteria, Conditions, Policies, and/or procedures are referred to the appropriate federal or state agency.

When a complainant is associated with an institution in some capacity and contacts the Commission in person or by telephone, the complainant is asked whether institutional grievance procedures have been followed. If not, it is recommended to the complainant that he or she do so prior to making a formal complaint to the Commission. The complainant is also told to submit the complaint in writing, through the COE website using the online Certified Complaint Form, to address the complaint specifically to the Commission, and to include any supporting documentation. The complaint must be signed and must provide the name, email address and mailing address of the complainant.

The Commission may review any oral or written complaint that alleges a safety or health problem at a candidate or accredited institution.

A. Complaints

The Commission, with the assistance of the Commission Review Committee reviews certified complaints (as documented on the Certified Complaint form) that allege non-compliant activities and practices regarding applicant, candidate, and accredited institutions. Complainants are sent an email describing the process and are directed to the online Certified Complaint form. The email also informs the complainant (when associated with the institution) that it is required that he or she has exhausted the grievance procedures of the institution prior to submitting the complaint. The complainant must return the Certified Complaint form proof of filing grievance with institution and any supporting documentation within 14 days of the email. COE makes every effort to comply with all Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) as well as Plain Language guidelines in order to make the site accessible to individuals with disabilities. If a complainant has difficulty submitting their complaint via the online form, they are directed to contact COE staff for assistance. The Compliance Director and Administrative Coordinator are tasked with accepting complaints, verifying that each submission aligns with the Commission’s criteria for review and sending the complaint to the institution for a response. They are responsible for addressing inquiries and play a critical role in managing correspondence between the institutions and complainants. The Administrative Coordinator assigns the complaint to members of the CRC for review, follows up on decisions and issues a decision letter within the required timeframe.

COE may accept anonymous complaints at its discretion. The institution will be required to respond only, if in the absence of the identity of the complainant, it can be determined that the allegations constitute a

possible violation of accreditation requirements. When the identity of the complainant is a material fact necessary to permit the institution a full and fair opportunity to respond or the lack of identity of the complainant makes it impossible to determine with reasonable certainty that a violation of COE accreditation standards, conditions, or criteria may have occurred, then the anonymity of the complainant may be a basis for dismissing the complaint. Anonymity may also prevent COE from communicating with a complainant and obtaining information that may be required in resolving the complaint. Complainants who file anonymously must ensure that all Personally Identifiable Information (PII) is redacted from any submitted documentation. COE makes every effort to conceal the complainant's identity but does not guarantee that the institution may not discover the identity based on the circumstances surrounding the complaint. The review by the CRC may also determine whether the anonymous complaint has merit. If it is deemed to have merit, the complaint will be processed in accordance with COE complaint procedures.

All complaints will be processed in accordance with COE's complaint procedures.

B. Grievance Certification

A Certified Complaint form link is sent along with the email to the complainant. This form is to be completed and attests either that all grievance procedures have been exhausted, or that grievance procedures have not been followed due to reasons stated on the form. The form is signed, dated, and submitted. Uncertified complaints will not be processed.

C. Institution Notification

After receiving any additional information as requested from the complainant that substantiates the allegations of the complainant, the complaint is sent to the institution requesting that a written reply be furnished to the Commission within 21 calendar days from the date of the letter. The standard form letter informs the institution that the complaint, if true, may be a serious violation of the Commission's Standards, Criteria, Conditions, Policies, and/or procedures and requires a reply with documentation demonstrating that (a) the complaint has been resolved, (b) the complaint has no merit and documentation is offered in support of this position, or (c) the complaint has merit and documentation is offered to support changes that will eliminate such complaints in the future. The institution is informed that the complaint, together with the institution's response and the complainant's comments on the response, will be taken to the Commission for review and appropriate action.

D. Comment on Institutional Response

A copy of the institutional response to the complaint received by the Council will be transmitted to the complainant for review. The complainant will have an opportunity to review and make comments on the institution's response. The comment on the institutional response should be submitted in writing by the complainant to the Council within 7 calendar days of the date the institutional response is transmitted to the complainant by the Council and may include supporting documentation. At this point, complainants have the option to withdraw their application if written is request received within 7 days.

E. Commission Review

The Commission has the ultimate responsibility for reviewing and rendering decisions on complaints and accomplishes this with the assistance of the Commission Review Committee (CRC). The Commission Review Committee is a standing committee of the Commission charged with the responsibility of reviewing institutional materials (which include complaints) and making recommendations to the full Commission. The Commission or the CRC make a preliminary determination of whether a complaint has merit or not and considers whether the institutional response to a complaint is adequate. After reviewing a complaint, the Commission Review Committee will make a recommendation to the Commission, within 21 days, which may include one or more of the following:

1. **Resolution of the Complaint:** A letter informs both the complainant and the institution that the Commission believes the matter to be resolved. The letter to the institution may contain a stern warning that a similar complaint in the future will cause the institution's accreditation to be in jeopardy. The resolution of the complaint may be a result of acting upon the merits of the complaint and the institutional response, or upon additional information obtained by staff and/or a special evaluation team.

2. **Deferral of Action for Additional Information:** The Commission or the Commission Review Committee may request additional information concerning the matter either from the institution, the complainant, or other sources including state, federal, or accreditation agencies.

3. **Deferral of Action for Site Visit:** The Commission or the Commission Review Committee may recommend that a focused review team visit the institution to obtain additional facts from the complainant, the institution, and/or other agencies.

4. **Placement of Institution on Conditional Status:** When it appears that serious violations of Standards, Criteria, Conditions, Policies, and/or procedures have occurred, the Commission or the Commission Review Committee may recommend an immediate issue of a Notification of Apparent Deficiency, or the Commission may place the institution on Probation Status, or issue a Show Cause Order, which gives the institution 30 calendar days to respond in writing. The notification sets forth (1) the Standard, Criterion, Condition, Policy, and/or procedure apparently violated; (2) the nature of the violation as it relates to the Standard, Criterion, Condition, Policy, and/or procedure; and (3) the evidence of the violation. The Commission may also place the institution on Warning Status. Notices of Probation, Warning, and Show Cause Order are sent to all appropriate state, federal, and accrediting agencies with a request for any additional information from them concerning the institution. (This process also informs the agencies of possible violations of federal or state law.)

5. **Removal of Conditional Status:** When the Commission or the Commission Review Committee receives documentation that the institution has complied with the requirements imposed upon it as a result of the complaint, then the Commission may act to remove the conditional status and letters are issued to appropriate state, federal, and accrediting agencies announcing this action. Depending on the nature of the situation and compliance requirements, the complainant may or may not be informed of this action.

6. **Severance of Its Relationship with the Institution:** For serious unethical conduct, the Commission may act to sever the Council's relationship with the institution by issuing a letter dropping the institution from accredited or candidate status. A copy of this letter is also sent to appropriate state, federal, and accrediting agencies. If the institution is an applicant for candidacy (having no actual candidate or accredited status with the Commission) and has been found to be in serious violation of Standards, Criteria, or Conditions, the Commission may sever its relationship by issuing a letter Denying the Application with Cause and copying this letter to the appropriate state, federal, and accrediting agencies.

F. Due Process and Privacy Rights

In all instances, the Commission recognizes the rights of Due Process, the rights of Privacy and Confidentiality, and the rights of Appeal. Complainants and/or institutions may request or be requested to appear before the Commission. Such appearances, however, are for purposes of obtaining information and are not adversarial; and, therefore, they do not bear the weight of law. Whenever there are indications to the contrary, the Council's general counsel advises the Commission as to next steps in dealing with the matter.

G. Third Parties

Although complainants may contact other agencies who in turn also submit copies of the complaint to the Commission, it is the position of the Commission to deal only with the complainant and the institution in resolving the matter. For this reason, third parties are not necessarily informed regarding the action of the Commission unless specifically requested to do so. However, any conditional status imposed upon an institution will result in certain agencies being notified as appropriate.

The Commission will not intervene on behalf of individuals in cases of disciplinary action or dismissal, or act as a court of appeals in such matters as admission, course grades, graduation, fees, financial aid, granting or transfer of academic credits, student discipline, collective bargaining, faculty appointments, promotion, tenure, dismissals, hiring or similar points of issue.

H. Legal Representation

When a complainant or member institution is represented by legal counsel, the attorney must allow the client to submit material on his/her own behalf in writing or the lawyer will deal directly with the Council's general counsel. The Commission staff does not communicate in oral or written form with attorneys on either side of an adversarial proceeding involving parties other than the Commission.

I. Commission Staff Perspective

The Commission's staff does not evaluate the merits of a complaint. What appears to be a frivolous or arbitrary complaint may be so due to the inability of the complainant to convey in words the serious nature of the allegations. Even when the complaint appears to be a hoax or is vindictive in nature, it is sent immediately to the institution for a response so that the institution can take whatever action is indicated. Whenever the Commission receives a written communication alleging improprieties of any kind on the part of a candidate or member institution, the Commission believes the school should know about it.

J. Issues of Serious Public Concern

The Commission and staff have a keen responsibility to recognize and act upon emergency complaints. When it appears that a complaint is of such magnitude or is of such a serious nature as to require immediate action, the complaint may be taken directly to the Commission Review Committee or the Commission for review and appropriate action. When the Commission nor the Commission Review Committee is not in session, the Chief Review Officer may act on behalf of the Commission in response to such an emergency situation. The Chief Review Officer has the authority to make decisions as listed in section E, Commission Review. Any decision made will be communicated within one week to the full commission for ratification. Such matters as front-page news stories involving alleged improprieties, for example, may require an immediate inquiry on the part of the Commission.

K. Complaints Against the Commission

COE reviews complaints against itself in a timely, fair, and equitable manner, and applies unbiased judgment to take follow-up action, as appropriate, based on the results of its review. If the Commission receives a formal written complaint from a school regarding a COE Commissioner or staff member, the Commissioner or staff member will be notified and given a copy of the complaint. The Commissioner or staff member will be given an opportunity to respond to the complaint; however, a response is optional. The complaint and any response will be reviewed by the Commission Review Committee in the absence of the individual against whom the complaint was lodged, to determine what, if any, action is appropriate or required.

If the Commission receives a formal written complaint about the agency itself, the complaint will be reviewed by Commission Review Committee to determine what, if any,

action is appropriate or required. The Commission Review Committee's decision will then be submitted to the full Commission for approval. All complaints will be reviewed within 30 days and a decision rendered no later than 90 days from the date of submission.

L. Timeliness of Complaint Process

The Commission processes all complaints alleging safety or health matters immediately upon receipt. Members of the Commission Review Committee provide a timely review and response and make recommendations for resolving the complaint or continuing the review. The Commission attempts to resolve all complaints within 70 days. However, if the Commission or Council staff requests additional documentation from either the complainant or the institution, additional time may be required for the resolution of the complaint.

REFERENCE: ***Handbook of Accreditation: 2026 Edition*****, (Public- Non-Public) pages 55, 59, 61, 77, 82**

REQUIREMENTS APPLICABLE TO THE COMMISSION

GUIDELINES FOR ACTION ON INSTITUTIONS WITH COHORT DEFAULT RATES THAT MEET TRIGGER LEVELS SPECIFIED BY THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Factors Considered to Establish Priorities

Number of years triggered (one, two, three or more)

Number of students in repayment who have defaulted

Completion, placement, and licensure exam pass rates

Record of actions taken by the Commission regarding the institution, including student complaints and placement on a status

Range of Actions Directed by the Commission

Submission of a written report to the Commission that includes the following:

- A copy of the institution's cohort default management plan
- A description of actions taken to reduce cohort default rate
- The status of any action taken by the U.S. Department of Education
- An explanation of student population served and any mitigating circumstances
- Evidence of educational program evaluation

- Attendance at a Commission workshop on student financial aid management

- Imposition of a focused review visit to evaluate compliance with the Standards, Criteria, and Conditions of the Council

- Placement on monitoring or violation status or termination of accreditation (i.e. deny, drop)

REFERENCE: ***Handbook of Accreditation: 2026 Edition*****, (Public- Non-Public) pages 35, 36, 57**

PUBLIC NOTICE REQUIREMENTS

A. Institutions being considered for candidate for accreditation, initial accreditation, reaffirmation of Accreditation, or transitioning (onboarding) institutions 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 qualification for status with the Commission. The notice is posted on the home 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 of the Council on Occupational Education, 7840 Roswell Road, Building 300, Suite 325, Atlanta, Georgia 30350, or submit their comments through the Council's website at (www.council.org). Persons making comments must provide their names and mailing addresses.

During the transition process, transitioning (onboarding) institutions must post the following statement on their website:

XXXXX College, 1234 Clairmont Road, Decatur, GA 30333 is a Transitioning Institution for accreditation with the Commission of the Council on Occupational Education. Persons wishing to make comments should either write to the President/CEO, Council on Occupational Education, 7840 Roswell Road, Bldg. 300, Suite 325, Atlanta, GA 30350, or submit their comments through the Council's website (www.council.org). Persons making comments must provide their names and mailing addresses.

B. Thirty days (30) prior to the Council on Occupational Commission conducting a review for the purpose of granting accreditation or preaccreditation, the agency will provide public notice of the upcoming evaluation. The notice will be posted on the agency's official website and include the names of institutions and the type of review being conducted by the Commission. In addition to public posting, this notice will be sent directly to appropriate parties including relevant state agencies, other recognized accrediting agencies, and the Secretary of Education. Finally, COE will provide an opportunity for third-party comments as a part of the review process. Written comments are accepted by students, staff, employers, and other members of the public. Instructions for submitting comments will be provided to all constituencies. If any comments are received, comments will be forwarded to the appropriate review committee.

NOTIFICATION OF ACCREDITING DECISIONS

A. The Council on Occupational Education will provide written notice of the following types of decisions to the Secretary, the appropriate State licensing or authorizing agency, the appropriate accrediting agencies, and public and entered into the Database Accredited Postsecondary Institution and Programs (DAPIP) and the Council accreditation system no later than 30 days after the Commission makes the decision:

(1) To award initial accreditation or candidacy to an institution.
(2) To reaffirm an institution's accreditation.

B. The Council on Occupational Education will provide written notice of a final decision of a probation or equivalent status or an initiated adverse action to the Secretary, the appropriate State licensing authorizing agency, and the appropriate accrediting agency, and will be entered into the Database Accredited Postsecondary Institutions and Programs (DAPIP) and the Council accreditation management system at the same time it notifies the institution of the decision and require the institution to disclose such an action within seven business days of receipt to all current and prospective students. The Council also requires the institution to provide proof of this notification to the Council within 10 business days of receipt of the letter

C. The Council on Occupational Education will provide written notice of the following types of decisions to the Secretary, the appropriate State licensing authorizing agency, and the appropriate accrediting agency, entered into the Database Accredited Postsecondary Institution and Programs (DAPIP) system and the Council accreditation management system at the same time it notifies the institution of the decision, but no later than 30 days after it reaches the following decisions:

(1) A final decision to deny, withdraw, or drop the accreditation or preaccreditation of an institution.
(2) A final decision to take any other adverse action, as defined by COE, not listed in (1).

D. The Council on Occupational Education will provide formal written notification to the public concerning institutions placed on probation, show cause order, denied, withdrawn or dropped from accreditation or pre-accreditation within one business day of its notice to the institution.

E. For final adverse decisions to include denial, withdrawal of or dropped from accreditation or preaccreditation, the Council on Occupational Education requires the institution to disclose the decision to current and prospective students within seven business days of receipt of the notification. The institution will be provided with an opportunity to offer comments within 20-calendar days of the notice to the institution about the final adverse action. Any actual comments received from the institution will be included in the brief statement from COE summarizing the reasons for the Commission's decision.

No later than 60 days after the decision, COE will provide a brief statement summarizing the reasons the Commission's decision that will include any comments provided form the institution about the decision to the Secretary, the appropriate State licensing or authorizing agency, and the public. COE will make available to the Secretary, the appropriate State licensing or authorizing agency and the public, evidence that the affected institution has been offered the opportunity to provide official comment and the institution's statement if one was provided.

F. The Council on Occupational Education notifies the Secretary, the appropriate State licensing or authorizing agency, the appropriate accrediting agencies, and upon request, the public if an accredited or preaccredited institution:

(1) Decides to withdraw voluntarily from accreditation or preaccreditation, within 10 business days of receiving notification from the institution that it is withdrawing from accreditation or preaccreditation; or
(2) Allows its accreditation or pre-accreditation to lapse, within 10 business days of the date in which accreditation or praccreditation lapses.

This decision will be entered into the Database Accredited Postsecondary Institutions and Programs (DAPIP) and Council accreditation management system.

REFERENCE: ***Handbook of Accreditation: 2026 Edition*****, (Public- Non-Public) pages 58, 59**

REVIEW OF ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

The Commission and staff conduct an annual and systematic review of its accreditation standards through feedback sought from its constituents and review of USDOE Federal Guidelines to determine if

1. the Standards used by the Commission are adequate for the evaluation of the quality of the education or training provided by its member institutions, and

2. the Standards are relevant to the educational or training needs of students.

The Commission seeks input from its member institutions as part of the institutional annual reporting process. Commissioners are also petitioned for their input in evaluating the Standards through a web survey.

Input is sought from members of the public and potential employers of graduates through a survey available on the Council's website. Potential employers are also solicited for their input during occupational advisory committee meetings conducted by institutions prior to hosting accreditation visiting teams.

State and federal authorities and other accrediting agencies are contacted annually to encourage their input in the evaluation of the Council's Standards. These groups are also directed to use the survey available through the Council's website.

The data collected from these efforts are reviewed each year by the Council Committee on Accreditation Standards and Conditions.

REFERENCE: ***Handbook of Accreditation: 2026 Edition*****, (Public- Non-Public) page 59**

NON-DISCRIMINATORY POLICY OF THE COUNCIL

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 Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Kirk A. 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 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

REFERENCE: ***Handbook of Accreditation: 2026 Edition*****, (Public- Non-Public) page 59**

CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

Purpose

The purpose of the Conflict-of-Interest and Confidentiality Policy is to protect the Council on Occupational Education's interest when it is carrying out its mission of assuring quality and integrity in career and technical education. This policy is intended to supplement but not replace any applicable state laws governing conflicts of interest or confidentiality applicable to the Council on Occupational Education as a non-profit corporation organized under the laws of the State of Georgia.

The Council Commission members are not elected or selected by the board or chief executive officer or any related, associated, or affiliated trade association, professional organization, or membership organization and are not staff of the related, associated or affiliated trade association, professional organization, or membership organization.

Conflict of Interest

No member of the board of commissioners of the Council on Occupational Education ("COE" or "the Council") or any of its evaluation team members, consultants, appeal board members, or administrative staff shall derive any personal profit or gain, directly or indirectly, by reason of his or her participation with the Council.

Each individual shall disclose to the Council any personal interest which he or she may have in any matter pending before the Council and shall refrain from participation in any decision on such matter. Any member of the Commission, evaluation team, or an appeal board who is an officer, board member, committee member, or staff of an institution that is accredited, a candidate for accreditation, or seeking accreditation from the Council shall identify his or her affiliation with the institution and shall not participate in any decision affecting that institution by the Council.

Confidentiality

The accreditation of occupational education institutions by the Commission is an activity requiring a high degree of trust, professional integrity, and confidentiality. All materials reviewed by the Commission in its role as the Board of Directors of COE or furnished to it, or to anyone with Commission-delegated powers, for the purpose of accreditation reviews or other Council business are considered confidential information. The contents of those materials and the actions taken by the Commission are to be disclosed in accordance with established communication protocols and notification procedures set forth in COE's governing documents and Section V.A.5. of the *Handbook of Accreditation*.

Annual Statements

Each member of the Commission, or administrative staff with Commission-delegated powers, shall annually sign a statement which affirms that such person

a. has received a copy of the Conflict-of-Interest and Confidentiality Policy,
b. has read and understands the policy, and
c. has agreed to comply with the policy.

Statements by Occurrence

Each member of evaluation teams, appeal boards, or consultants with Commission-delegated powers shall sign a statement upon the occurrence of the Commission assigning such powers, which affirms that such person:

a. has received a copy of the Conflict-of-Interest and Confidentiality Policy,
b. has read and understands the policy, and
c. has agreed to comply with the policy.

Violations of the Conflict-of-Interest and Confidentiality Policy

If the Commission has reasonable cause to believe that a Commissioner, committee member, appeal board member, evaluator, or administrative staff member has failed to disclose actual or possible conflicts of interest, it shall inform the individual of the basis for such belief and afford the individual an opportunity to explain the alleged failure to disclose.

If after hearing the response of the individual and undertaking such further investigation as may be warranted under the circumstances, the Commission determines that the individual has, in fact, failed to disclose an actual or possible conflict of interest or failed to abide by the Council's protocols on the confidentiality of institutional and/or Council information, it shall take appropriate action consistent with the *By-Laws of the Council on Occupational Education*.

REFERENCE: ***Handbook of Accreditation: 2026 Edition,*** **(Public- Non-Public) page 29**

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) POLICY

The Council on Occupational Education (COE) seeks to ensure that artificial intelligence (AI) tools and platforms are utilized by accredited and candidate institutions in an ethical, transparent, and secure manner and in compliance with all applicable policies and procedures and federal and state laws and regulations. COE recognizes the potential for AI as a tool for innovation in higher education and encourages its use toward optimizing efficiency. The purpose of this policy is to describe the expectations for use of AI for institutional representatives.

Institutions shall make every effort to ensure governance and use of AI tools and platforms are transparent, Considerate of a wide variety of stakeholders, and lawful. Institutions shall honor all applicable requirements for confidentiality, security, and privacy of data and information collected through AI tools. Institutions shall develop and adhere to institution-specific guidance, policy, procedures related to use of AI tools and platforms and may incorporate these principles into existing institutional data governance frameworks. COE expects that AI is utilized in a manner complies with all standards for accreditation, policy and procedures, and applicable law and federal regulatory requirements. Because data can be at risk, institutions should not input privileged, sensitive, or personal data into open AI tools and platforms. The use of AI should support human decision-making and actions, not to replace them. Artificial intelligence can support instruction, but in no way replace human instruction or student support services. When utilizing AI materials or systems, AI output should be included as part of a broader decision-making process. COE does not endorse any specific AI tools or platforms but will promote the use of closed, enterprise level, and secure AI tools and platforms.

The institution holds responsibility for the accuracy and integrity of all materials submitted to COE under the institution's name, including materials, the institution will ensure those materials, generated by AI. When using AI tools and platforms to develop accreditation materials, the institution will ensure those materials are conducive to Commission review, accurate, and readable, and in accordance with COE policy and procedures.

A. Institutions utilizing AI tools and platforms will develop institution-specific guidance, policy, procedures related to the governance of AI. These principles will address at least the following:
    1. Practices that ensure use of AI is lawful, safe, and secure;
    2. Practices to ensure that AI is regularly monitored, transparent, and accountable;
    3. Specific implications of the use of AI for various institutional constituencies, including students and faculty;
    4. Use of AI in instruction and by students in coursework;
    5. Institutional integrity and mechanisms for guarding against plagiarism;

B. The institutions will document institutional processes for monitoring and evaluating the use of AI tools and platforms to demonstrate continuous oversight of implementation. Ongoing evaluation practices will assist with identifying non-compliant AI tools and platforms and should prompt the documentation of their use.

C. The institution will provide ongoing training to encourage AI literacy and understanding of institutional policy.

Policies and Rules Applicable to
Accreditation Standards, Objectives, and Criteria

References for Policies and Rules stated in this section are provided for the specific sections where they appear in the *Handbook of Accreditation*. The subsections that follow are consistent with the order in which the topics appear in the *Handbook of Accreditation*.

STANDARD ONE: INSTITUTIONAL MISSION

Requirements for Institutional Advisory Committees

Accredited institutions are required to seek input and provide community involvement in maintaining a relevant mission for the institution.

Activities of the Institutional Advisory Committee

Following are suggestions based on best practices of accredited institutions for institutional advisory committee activities that prove to be most beneficial:

1. Annual evaluation of the institution's strategic plan (and documentation of the results of the committee's evaluation);
2. Review of financial resources as a basis for the written strategic plan;
3. Annual evaluation (and revision) of the institution's written plan for the operation, maintenance, and improvement of the physical plant;
4. Annual evaluation (and revision) of the institution's health and safety plan;
5. Review of the results of the annual evaluation of student services and offer recommendations for improvements to these services; and,
6. Validation of the planning for and implementation of new campuses and programs for the institution.

Persons to Involve on the Institutional Advisory Committee

Institutions with effective advisory committees find that involving persons from the following categories is instrumental in their success:

- Internal members: School directors, owners, department heads. These members must represent a minority of the institutional advisory committee membership.
- External members: Anyone whose business expertise may support the institution's mission and programs (e.g., business owners, manufacturing/service representatives, community leaders, financial/legal business representatives).

In the Council's experience, five to seven members categorized as 'external' seem to work best for most institutions. It is important to note, however, that the requirements stated in the *Handbook of Accreditation* regarding the numbers of members required are stated as minimums. Institutions may have as many members on their institutional advisory committees as they see fit, but the committee must have no less than three people, all of whom are external to the institution. (Committees larger than three members must maintain a majority of external members.)

Requirements Applicable to Institutional Advisory Committees

The *Handbook of Accreditation* lists specifics that apply to institutional advisory committees with regard to minimum numbers of external members and documentation of committee activities, to name a few. The information provided below is offered in addition to the criteria that direct this Standard. (See Standard One – Institutional Mission in the appropriate version of the *Handbook of Accreditation*.)

Same Committee Members/Dual Purposes

It is common for institutions to seek clarification on whether or not the institutional advisory committee can also serve in the role of an occupational advisory committee. It is possible for an institutional committee to serve as an occupational advisory committee if **all** of the following circumstances exist:

- The institution is a single-program institution and only requires one occupational advisory committee.
- The institution keeps separate minutes of institutional advisory and occupational advisory committee activities.
- Those who serve in an institutional advisory role also qualify to serve in an occupational advisory role. (See requirements for occupational advisory committees under Standard Two in the *Handbook of Accreditation*.)

Committee Meeting Attendance

Institutions frequently inquire about 'presence' of members during meetings of the institutional advisory committee. As stated in the *Handbook of Accreditation*, committees must be comprised of no less than three members all of whom are external to the institution. (Committees larger than three members must maintain a majority of external members.) During its meetings, the committee must document that at least three external members attend each meeting, with at least two members being physically present and one virtually present. This means that one member could attend the meeting via video conference, webinar, or teleconference. (Virtual attendance of members must be in synchronous format.)

The Commission acknowledges that there may be circumstances or instances that may prohibit an in-person meeting from taking place due to extenuating circumstances (e.g., significant distance, emergencies, weather-related risks, etc.). For these specific isolated cases, and on a case-by-case basis, the President and CEO can make an exception to conduct a virtual meeting. The institution will make the request via formal letter and still would still be responsible for demonstrating compliance with all required criteria.

Documentation Required/Recommended for Meetings

Minutes of each official meeting of a committee must be typed and include the following specific information:

1. Meeting specifics, such as the date and time meetings take place and the physical location of meetings
2. Names of attendees (committee members and others)
3. Names, titles, business addresses, and contact information for each member of the committee
4. Activities of the committee (highlights of their discussions)
5. Recommendations made by the committee

The Council also recommends institutions compile the following documentation as evidence of committee activities:

1. The meeting agenda
2. Handouts that may have been distributed during each meeting
3. The date and signature of the transcriber of meeting minutes

REFERENCE: ***Handbook of Accreditation: 2026 Edition*****, (Public- Non-Public) page 63**

STANDARD TWO: EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Requirements for Occupational Advisory Committees

Accredited institutions are required to seek the involvement of members within its community to ensure desirable, relevant, and current practices of each occupation are being taught.

Activities of Occupational Advisory Committees

The following occupational advisory committee activities prove to be most beneficial and validate:

1. Ethical recruiting activities for each program;
2. The congruency with the institution's mission and local employment needs;
3. Program objectives;
4. The appropriateness of instructional delivery methods (traditional, distance education);
5. Job placement and follow-up information at least annually to improve program effectiveness and program outcomes;
6. The level of instructional equipment and supplies funding to ensure quality occupational education; and,
7. Distance education courses are identical in quality, rigor, standards, and outcomes as those in traditional (bricks-and-mortar) programs, if applicable.

Also, these meetings provide an opportunity for the completion of Employer Program Verification forms by committee members who represent a company that may hire graduates.

Persons to Involve on Occupational Advisory Committee

Institutions with effective occupational advisory committees find that involving persons from the following categories is instrumental in their success:

- Internal members: School directors, owners, department heads, faculty, student body representatives. These members must represent a minority of the institutional advisory committee membership.
- External members: Anyone whose business expertise may support the institution's programs and its mission (e.g., occupational specialists who are practitioners, business owners, manufacturing/ service representatives, etc.).
- External members must, collectively, represent each service area where the program is taught. Institutions with multiple campuses even within the same state may find that student demographics and employment opportunities are very different from that of the main campus. In these instances, the institution must ensure that all relevant constituencies and circumstances are represented on the advisory committee for each program. (Institutions with multiple campuses within the same or multiple states may find that convening separate committees for each campus provides the most effective advisory committee feedback for its programs.)

Other Requirements Applicable to Occupational Advisory Committees

Same Committee Members/Dual Purposes

It is common for institutions to seek clarification on whether or not the members of one occupational advisory committee can also serve on another occupational advisory committee (e.g., a member on the practical nursing program committee serving on the committee for the certified nurse assistant program). It is possible for a committee member to serve on more than one program committee if **all** of the following circumstances exist:

- The committee member meets the requirements as stated in the *Handbook of Accreditation* for both programs (e.g., practical nursing and certified nurse assistant).
- The institution keeps separate minutes for each program's committee meetings.

Also, it is common for institutions to seek clarification on whether or not the institutional advisory committee can also serve in the role of an occupational advisory committee. See Standard One: Institutional Mission in this *Policies and Rules of the Commission* and in the *Handbook of Accreditation* for more information on this subject.

Committee Meeting Attendance

Institutions may convene their occupational advisory committees as often as deemed necessary but must convene each program's committee no less than once annually. This meeting must be conducted face-to-face.

As stated in the *Handbook of Accreditation,* occupational advisory committees must be comprised of at least three members external to the institution. At least two of the three external members must be physically present during the required face-to-face meeting. This means that one or more external members could attend the meeting via video conference, webinar, or teleconference. Virtual attendance of members must be in synchronous format.

The Commission acknowledges that there may be circumstances or instances that may prohibit an in-person meeting from taking place due to extenuating circumstances (e.g., significant distance, emergencies, weather-related risks, etc.). For these specific isolated cases, and on a case-by-case basis, the President and CEO can make an exception to conduct a virtual meeting. The institution will make the request via formal letter and still would still be responsible for demonstrating compliance with all required criteria.

Documentation Required/Recommended for Meetings

Minutes of each official meeting of a committee must be typed and include the following specific information:

1. Meeting specifics, such as the date and time meetings take place and the physical location of meetings
2. Names of attendees (committee members and others)
3. Contact information for each member of the committee (names, titles, business addresses, email address, telephone number)
4. Activities of the committee (highlights of their discussions)
5. Recommendations made by the committee

The Council also recommends institutions compile the following documentation to demonstrate committee activities:

1. The meeting agenda
2. Handouts that may have been distributed during each meeting
3. The date and signature of the transcriber of meeting minutes

Notification of Additional Student Charges Associated with Verification of Student Identity

A. Institutions that offer distance education, in any format, will have a written policy to notify students of any projected additional student charges associated with verification of student identity at the time of registration or enrollment.

REFERENCE: ***Handbook of Accreditation: Edition 2026*****, (Public- Non-Public) pages 57, 60, 62**

STANDARD THREE: PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Documenting ACCURACY of Student Achievement Data

Institutions frequently seek clarification on the types of documentation they should collect to document accuracy of data reported in the completion, placement, and licensure (CPL) form of the annual report. Documentation provides not only the basis for data reported in the CPL form of the annual report, it demonstrates that the institution is performing follow-up activities required in the Standards for accreditation and collecting the information required in each student file.

The following sections ARE NOT a comprehensive listing of all types of documentation that serve this purpose, but provide a general guide as to the kinds of documentation that should be present in student files. The more information an institution collects, and the more current the information is, the more likely that data accuracy can be verified and compliance with accreditation requirements can be confirmed.

Visiting teams will look for documentation in student files that indicates the institution's compliance with several accreditation Criteria. It is also the starting point for the verification processes used by visiting teams to confirm accuracy of reported data.

Completion Rate Data

Graduate Completers:

- Query results from institutional databases indicating completion of programs. Names of students, programs of study, grade information that indicates completion of required coursework, dates of completion, and types of credentials issued must be specified.
- Individual student reports generated from institutional databases that demonstrate the meeting of all program requirements and the conferring of credentials for program completion (certificates, diplomas, associate degrees).

Non-Graduate Completers:

- Follow-up questionnaires completed by former students who left their programs before earning a credential, but who secured employment in the field of training/related field of training. Questionnaires must specify dates of hire and positions for which former students were hired.
- Follow-up questionnaires completed by employers of non-graduate completers that confirm dates of hire and positions for which former students were hired.
- Postings on social media sites regarding those who secured employment in the field of training/related field of training.
- Copies of business licenses for those non-graduate completers who formed their own businesses in the field of training/related field of training. Advertisements for those businesses are good supplemental documents to collect, if possible.
- Email confirmation from former students regarding the securing of employment in the field of training/related field of training after having left programs without a credential.
- Rosters of telephone contacts made by employees of the institution with former students. Rosters must specify name of student, telephone number, program of study, date student left program without credential, date employment was secured, relative comments related to employment.

Placement Data for Graduate Completers and Non-Graduate Completers

- Follow-up questionnaires completed by former students (graduate or non-graduate completers) that confirm dates of hire and positions for which former students were hired.
- Follow-up questionnaires completed by employers of graduate and non-graduate completers that confirm dates of hire and positions for which former students were hired.
- Official confirmation letters from employers of students regarding dates of hire and positions in the field of training/related field of training. Letters must specify the name of the business, name of contact person, address of the business, telephone number, and signature of contact person.
- Postings on social media sites regarding employment secured in the field of training/related field of training.
- Copies of business licenses for those non-graduate completers who formed their own businesses in the field of training/related field of training. Advertisements for those businesses are good supplemental documents to collect, if possible.
- Email confirmation from employers or former students regarding the securing of employment in the field of training /related field of training after having left programs without a credential. Student name, positions, dates of hire, and telephone number must be specified.

Licensure Exam Pass Rate Data

- Official state/federal reports detailing licensure exam pass results. Student name and confirmation of exam pass/fail results must be specified.
- Official confirmation letters from employers of students regarding dates of hire and positions in the field of training/related field of training. The name of business, contact person, location of business, contact number, and signature of contact person must be specified.
- Email confirmation from former students regarding the results of licensure exams taken. Student name and dates of successful licensure exam test must be specified.
- Copies of industry licenses issued by state/federal agencies.

VERIFYING Student Achievement Data

Verification of student achievement data is a separate activity from documenting data reported in the annual report. The verification process (an auditing process) is conducted by members of COE visiting teams who search student files for evidence that

1. institutions are performing required follow up with former students and employers of students to collect outcomes data,
2. student files contain required information, and
3. data reported in the Annual Report is deemed to be accurate based on a random sampling of the data collected by institutions.

Team members commonly verify the accuracy of data by random selection of student files, which should contain accurate and up-to-date contact information for former students and their employers. Members most often call students and employers of students/former students to confirm program completion, employment, and licensure exam results.

The accreditation process requires that at least five positive verifications are secured in four categories: graduate completion, placement for graduate completers, placement for non-graduate completers, and licensure exam pass results.

In addition to calling state/federal agencies for licensure exam results, team members may verify accuracy of data reported for licensure exams by reviewing official state/federal reports of licensure exam results from those agencies.

When a team is unable to secure at least five positive verifications of data reported in COE annual reports and contained in student files, findings of non-compliance are cited in the official report of the team visit. The Commission frequently requires institutions to host a second, focused visit as a second attempt to secure positive verification of data. Repeated failure of an institution to provide data that is verifiable may be grounds for it to lose its status with the Council.

REFERENCE: ***Handbook of Accreditation: 2026 Edition,*** **pages (Public- Non-Public) 66, 67**

STANDARD SEVEN: FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Refund Policy

The *Handbook of Accreditation* states the following under Standard Seven - Financial Resources:

> The institution shall have a fair and equitable refund policy for the refund of tuition, fees, and other institutional charges in the event the institution cancels a class if a student does not enter or does not complete the period of enrollment for which the student has been charged. All of the following are elements of a fair and equitable plan:
>
> a. The institution's refund policy is included in official publications and uniformly administered.
> b. Refunds, when due, are be made without requiring a request from the student.
> c. Refunds, when due, are made within 45 days (1) of the last day of attendance if written notification of withdrawal has been provided to the institution by the student, or (2) from the date the institution terminates the student or determines withdrawal by the student.
> d. Retention of tuition and fees collected in advance for a student who does not commence class does not exceed $100.
> e. The institution complies with the refund policies adopted by the Commission unless a different policy or deviation is mandated by a non-public institution's licensing agency or a public institution's governing board and it is approved by the Commission.

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

1. Refunds for Classes Canceled by the Institution
   If tuition and fees are collected in advance of the start date of a program and the institution cancels the class, 100% of the tuition and fees collected must be refunded. The refund shall be made within 45 days of the planned start date.

2. Refunds for Students Who Withdraw on or Before the First Day of Class
   If tuition and fees are collected in advance of the start date of classes and the student does not begin classes or withdraws on the first day of classes, no more than $100 of the tuition and fees may be retained by the institution. Appropriate refunds for a student who does not begin classes shall be made within 45 days of the class start date.

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

4. Refunds for Students Enrolled in Professional Development, Continuing Education, or Limited Contract Instruction
   Institutions engaging in programs which are short-term must have a written policy or contract statement regarding whether or not fees and instructional charges are refundable.

5. Refunds for Withdrawal After Class Commences
   (a) Public Institutions
   The refund policy for students attending public institutions shall be consistent with the policy established by the institution's governing board.

(b) Non-Public Institutions

(1) Refund Policy for Programs Obligating Students for Periods of 12 Months or Less

The refund policy for students attending non-public institutions who incur a financial obligation for a period of 12 months or less shall be as follows:

(i) During the first 10% of the period of financial obligation, the institution shall refund at least 90% of the tuition.
(ii) After the first 10% of the period of financial obligation and until the end of the first 25% of the period of obligation, the institution shall refund at least 50% of the tuition.
(iii) After the first 25% of the period of financial obligation and until the end of the first 50% of the period of obligation, the institution shall refund at least 25% of the tuition.
(iv) After the first 50% of the period of financial obligation, the institution may retain all of the tuition.

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

Institutions with programs longer than 12 months that financially obligate the student for any period of time beyond 12 months shall release the student of the obligation to pay beyond the 12 months if the student withdraws during the first 12 months. The calculation of the refund for the unused portion of the first 12 months shall be based on section (b)(1) Non-Public Institutions above.

If the student withdraws during any subsequent period following the first 12 months, the student's refund for the unused portion of the tuition applicable to the period of withdrawal shall be based on section (b)(1) Non-Public Institutions above.

Deviations from the requirements of this section are permitted if they are (1) mandated by a non-public institution's licensing agency or a public institution's governing board and (2) approved by the Commission.

REFERENCE: ***Handbook of Accreditation: 2026 Edition*****, (Public- Non-Public) pages 73, 74, 75**

STANDARD TEN: STUDENT SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

Student Records

The Handbook of Accreditation states the following under Standard Ten - Student Services and Activities:

A. Records

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

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

3. Student records, including enrollment, financial, academic, and current educational progress as well as program completion, job placement and, if applicable, licensure exam pass rate status, are available at the institution. (Objective 10-1-g)

4. 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-g)

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

As referenced in item "5" above, the Collecting and Storing Personal Identifiable Information policy adopted by the Commission is as stated below.

Collecting and Storing Personally Identifiable Information (PII)

Personally identifiable information, or PII, was defined by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in May 2007 as:

"Information which can be used to distinguish or trace an individual's identity such as their name, social security number, biometric records, etc. alone, or when combined with other personal or identifying information which is linked or linkable to a specific individual, such as date and place of birth, mother's maiden name, etc."
Examples of PII include, but are not limited to:

- Contact Information
- Student ID
- Date of Birth
- Parent Names
- Social Security Number
- Alien Registration Number
- Biometric Records Bank Account Information
- Medical Records/Information
- Grade/Employment Information

Unauthorized access, use, or disclosure of sensitive PII harms affected individuals by exposing them to the possibility of identity theft and/or by publicly revealing information they otherwise would have kept private. PII breaches can expose organizations to a variety of financial and non-financial risks such as: investigations, lawsuits, fines, regulatory sanctions, and reputational damage.

Safeguarding PII refers to protecting PII from loss, theft or misuse while simultaneously supporting COE's or the institution's mission. The effective safeguarding of PII requires personnel to be diligent and proactive when processing and protecting this information.

COE expects all institutions to comply with federal privacy regulations spelled out in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, FERPA, regardless of whether the institution participates in Title IV / HEA act programs. The FERPA statute is found at 20 U.S.C. §1232g and the FERPA regulations are found at 34 CFR Part 99.

As for the collection and storage of PII, COE requires that all institutions have a FERPA policy and communicate it and provide notice to the individual regarding its collection, use, dissemination, and maintenance of PII. Institutions should only collect PII that is directly relevant and necessary to accomplish the specified purpose(s). PII should only be utilized by appropriate staff when directly relevant and necessary to accomplish the specified purpose(s). Institutions should protect PII through appropriate security safeguards against risks such as loss, unauthorized access or use, destruction, modification, or unintended or inappropriate disclosure. Institutions are encouraged to provide training to all employees and auditing the actual use of PII to demonstrate compliance with these principles and all applicable privacy laws and requirements.

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. 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.

Institutions can redact student PII by: (1) Manual Redaction which involves reviewing each document and physically blacking out or removing PII from documents. (2) Redaction Software which identifies and redacts PII based on predefined patterns or keywords. Please make sure to identify and remove all PII in submissions to COE and train your institutional staff on FERPA policies and the proper redaction techniques.

In any incidence if "spillage" (inadvertently or intentionally transmitting sensitive, protected, or confidential personal data to unsecure or unapproved environments), deleting or recalling the PII does not constitute sufficient remediation. Instead, remediation requires a formal response to address all potentially impacted people, and should include forensic identification, isolation, and eradication of the data from all affected systems, logs, and backups.

In the event of a data breach at a member institution, including spillage, a contingent liability has arisen. Until a thorough investigation has been completed, potential legal action taken against candidate and accredited institutions is not considered a violation of any Condition, Standard, Criterion, or procedure of the Commission.

All candidate and accredited institutions **must** notify the Commission within five working days of a data breach at your institution. The notice and attachment(s) **must** be transmitted to the Council office either in hard copy or via email to the President at Kirk.Nooks@council.org.

REFERENCE: ***Handbook of Accreditation: 2025 Edition*****, (Public- Non-Public) pages 80, 81, 82**

DEFINITIONS

Academic: classified as such if they have held a faculty role within the last 15 years.

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).

Additional Location: (1) A physical facility that is geographically separate from the main campus of the institution and within the same ownership structure of the institution, at which the institution offers at least 50 percent of an educational program. An additional location participates in the title IV, HEA programs only through the certification of the main campus.

(2) A Federal, State, or local penitentiary, prison, jail, reformatory, work farm, juvenile justice facility, or other similar correctional institution is considered to be an additional location even if a student receives instruction primarily through distance education or correspondence courses at that location.

Administration: The professional staff who provide formal leadership in an institution. The institutional administrative staff includes the chief administrator 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: 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, dropped from candidacy or accreditation.

Affiliate Campus: A physical facility that is geographically separate from the campus that (1) Operates under the same ownership (same governance, entity, proprietorship or partnership, or the same corporation) as the main campus; (2) Operates under the supervision of a full-time, on-site administrator who reports to the chief administrator at the main campus; (3) Bears the same name as the main campus and expands the name to clearly identify distinct locations; and (4) Complies with all educational requirements and operational policies of the main campus.

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

Apprenticeship Program-Standard: An occupational education program that provides related technical apprenticeship instruction offered by an institution with operational and curricular oversight of the program.

Apprenticeship Program-Independent: A partnership between public institutions and external organizations such as unions, trade associations, other professional organizations, or single employers to offer instruction for apprenticeship programs and the apprenticeship determination factors are the responsibility of the external organization rather than the institution

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.

Audited Financial Statement: The result of an official financial examination performed by an independent certified public accountant in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) and Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards (GAGAS).

To document compliance with Council Policies and Standards, audited financial statements must include, at a minimum, the following information:

1. Accountant's report
2. Balance sheet
3. Income statement
4. Statement of cash flow
5. Composite score (unrounded) as disclosed on a composite score worksheet included in the audit report using the formula approved by the U.S. Department of Education prepared by an independent CPA
6. Appropriate footnotes to the financial statements and other relevant disclosures
7. The name, licensing number, and licensing state of the CPA or firm responsible for preparing the audited financial statement

   (Procedural Note: Audited financial statements must be accompanied by a COE Financial Questionnaire.)

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 website – www.council.org.)

Affiliate Campus: A physical facility that is geographically separate from the main campus of the institution and within the same ownership structure of the institution, and that also (1) is approved by the Secretary as an affiliate campus; (2) is independent from the main campus, meaning the location – (i) is permanent in nature; (ii) offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized education credential; (iii) has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization; and (iv) has its own budgetary and hiring authority.

Budget: A financial plan that contains sufficient major categories of anticipated expenditures and expenses for a specific fiscal period based on a projected amount of funds and revenues.

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.

COE's Candidate status is limited to institutions that have met the eligibility requirements. Should COE deny accreditation to an institution that it has granted Candidate status to, COE may maintain the institution's Candidate status for currently enrolled students until the institution has had a reasonable time to complete the activities in its teach-out plan to assist students in transferring or completing their programs, but for no more than 120 days unless approved by the Commission for a good cause; and

COE may not move an accredited institution from accredited to Candidate status following the loss of accreditation. An institution that has lost its accredited status must wait at least one year before they can apply as a new candidate for accreditation. Institutions that participated in Title IV, HEA programs before the loss of accreditation are subject to the requirements of 34 CFR 600.11{c}.

All credits and degrees earned and issued by an institution holding approved Candidate status from COE are considered by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education to have received that credential from an accredited institution.

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.).

Change in Accreditors: 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 because 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.

Chief Administrator: The administrative head of an institution to whom has been delegated major responsibility for the direction, operation, and coordination of the institution's programs and activities. The chief administrator must be a full-time employee of the institution and must maintain his/her office on-site at the main campus. This is the person who will be the Commission's point of contact for all campuses of the institution. The administrative head in a military institution is a senior military officer or civilian employee.

CLEP (College-Level Examination Program): 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.)

COE Fellow: The Fellow will function as the liaisons for COE during the 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.

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

Community: A 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 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.

Contingent Liability: A potential liability that may exist in the future depending on the outcome of a past event (i.e., adverse tax court decisions, data breach, lawsuits, letter of credit required by the U.S. Department of Education, etc.). In audited financial statements, footnote disclosure is required of the circumstances for potential loss.

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 Definitions—Job Upgrade Training.)

Contractor/Consultant (Vendor): A company or individual who provides goods and/or services to an institution for an agreed upon price. Independent 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 email or traditional mail service and that employs print-based media, which may or may not be supplemented with video tape, CD Rom, 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).

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

Credit Hour (Federal Definition): Except as provided in 34 CFT 668.8(k) and (l), a credit hour is an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutionally established equivalency that reasonably approximates not less than (1) One hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out of class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or ten to twelve weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time; or (2) at least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph (1) of this definition for other academic activities as established by the institution including laboratory work, internships, practical, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

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

Default Management Plan: A written plan to address the institution's management of default rates pertaining to Title IV funds. The plan must include appropriate procedures for

1. conducting entrance interviews with all borrowers,
2. distributing written information that addresses provisions of the student loan program,
3. counseling on the part of the institution to provide guidance in debt management,
4. notifying lenders and guarantee agency regarding a student's change in status,
5. conducting exit interviews with students withdrawing or graduating from the institution,
6. communicating with the borrower during a grace period, and
7. conducting a systematic annual evaluation of its default management plan.

*Institutions that have requested, in writing, not to participate in Title IV, HEA programs, to COE, are exempt from this section.

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, DVDs, and CD-ROMs, if the cassettes, DVDs, 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.

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.

Employment Requirements: The certifications or licensures that may be required to secure employment in a specific position or within an occupational area.

Equipment Inventory: A detailed list of equipment including location, number of items, date of purchase, and purchase price and/or current value of each item. The list should include both instructional and non-instructional equipment.

External Budgeting: A budgeting process that occurs beyond the immediate control of the individual institution, and that generally addresses the overall requirements of a multi-institutional system.

External Members (on Institutional Advisory Committees): Official members of an institutional advisory committee who are not employees of the institution or corporation, who have no relation to employees of the institution (i.e., family members including parents, siblings and children), and who have no financial interest in the institution.

External Members (on Occupational Advisory Committees): Official members of an occupational advisory committee who are not employees of the institution or corporation, who have no relation to faculty in the given program (i.e., family members including parents, siblings and children), and who have no financial interest in the institution.

Faculty: Full- or part-time personnel of an institution who are responsible for providing instruction to students.

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.)

Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP): Requirements established by the American Accountants for use by auditors to prepare audited financial statements.

Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards (GAGAS): Requirements established by the federal government to be used by auditors and audit organizations when performing audits of government organizations, programs, activities, and functions and audits of government funds received by for-profit entities, non-profit organizations, and other non-government organizations.

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.

Independent Certified Public Accountant: A person who fulfills the following requirements: 1) has been certified by a state examining board as having fulfilled the requirements of state law pertaining to public accountants as evidence by current credentials which attest to their certification AND 2) has no business or family relationship with a COE candidate or accredited institution, its board members, or its owners.

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 no less than three persons, all of whom are external to the institution, who are knowledgeable of occupational education and employment needs of the community. (Committees larger than three members must maintain a majority of external members.)
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.

Internal Budgeting: A budgeting process that occurs primarily at the level of the individual institution and that addresses both instructional and non-instructional needs and daily operational requirements of the institution.

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 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 administrator and accreditation liaison officer are maintained and to which all additional locations are subordinate and accountable. The main campus must offer at least one approved occupational program and must maintain duplicates of all student records for additional locations.

Merger: Two or more accredited main campuses that merge into one campus; or, an accredited institution becoming an affiliate campus 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-Graduate Completer: A student who left the institution without a credential but 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. (See Definitions—Graduate and Completer.)

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 Program: A statement that specifies the knowledge, skills, and/or attitudes to be acquired by students through planned instructional activities.

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
4. How accomplishment will be measured

Occupational Advisory Committee: Occupational advisory committees, which are composed of at least three members external to the institution, must be appointed for each program taught by the institution. Their primary purpose is to ensure that desirable, relevant, and current practices of each occupation are being taught. An occupational advisory committee may also perform the functions of the institutional advisory committee if only one occupational advisory committee is required for the institution.

Occupational Area: A general term used to group programs of study that educate students in a variety of specific concentrations that are related to that term.

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 campus, 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.

A Prison Education Program (PEP): an occupational educational program specifically for confined or incarcerated individuals. A confined individual or incarcerated individual enrolled in an eligible prison education program may be eligible for Federal Financial Assistance under the Federal Pell Grant Program

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.

Pro Forma: A financial statement that is calculated using an accountant's discretion. It does not follow GAAP or GAGAS. Rather, calculations are computed according to the estimated relevance of certain events/conditions experienced by the company. Items that are typically included/excluded from an audited financial statement using GAAP may be represented differently in a pro forma statement, depending on what the accountant feels accurately represents the company's actual performance.
However, the Council requires that each pro forma statement submitted must include a balance sheet, an income statement, a cash flow statement, and notes and disclosures.

Public Institution: An institution that is created, operated, and controlled by a local, state, or federal governmental entity.

Publications: (e.g., the institution's website and other printed materials)—A website and other official informational documents which are made available through various media (hard copy or online) to provide the information specified below that must be readily available to students, prospective students, and other constituents:

a. The website and other official publication(s) must contain and accurately depict the following information:

1. The institutional mission
2. Admission requirements and procedures
3. Criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at other institutions. At minimum, this needs to include any types of institutions or sources from which the institution will not accept credits, and this information is available to prospective students prior to enrollment.
4. If the institution has established an articulation agreement with any institution in regard to their transfer of credit policy, and who to contact at the institution for more information.
5. Defined and published written criteria used to evaluate and award credit for prior learning experience including, but not limited to, service in the armed forces, paid or unpaid employment, or other demonstrated competency or learning.
6. Basic information on programs and courses, with any required sequences and frequency of course offerings explicitly stated
7. Program completion requirements, including length of time required to obtain certification of completion
8. Faculty (full-time and part-time listed separately) with degrees held and the conferring institution
9. A description of institutional facilities readily available for educational use
10. Rules and regulations for conduct
11. Tuition, fees, and other program costs
12. Opportunities and requirements for financial aid
13. Avocational programs/courses that are neither accredited by the Council, nor qualify students to receive Title IV financial aid (such as ESL programs)
14. Policies, procedures, and time frame for refunding fees and charges to students who withdraw from enrollment
15. National and/or state legal requirements for eligibility for licensure or entry into an occupation or profession for which education and training are offered
16. Any unique requirements for career paths or for employment and advancement opportunities in the profession or occupation described
17. The institution's grading system
18. The institution's academic/school calendar
19. The institution's attendance requirements
20. The street address and telephone number of each campus of the institution (main campus and each additional permanent site)
21. The institution's student grievance procedure which includes the Commission's mailing address, telephone number, and website address

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.")

1. The website is readily and publicly available to students, prospective students, and other constituents to provide current information as specified below:
2. The name of the institution exactly as approved by the Commission and the institution's authorizing agency
3. The name, email address, and telephone number of the institution's Chief Administrator
4. A list of programs that is consistent with those approved by the Commission and state/ federal agencies
5. Photos (if used) that accurately depict the institution's physical facilities and programs

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.)

Restated (Revised) Audit: A financial statement that has been re-issued by an independent certified public accountant in order to correct data and/or disclosures from the first statement issued that were not accurately represented or to include data and/or disclosures that did not appear in the first statement.
Restated audits submitted to the Commission must be clearly labeled as being restated, must provide a detailed list of data and/or disclosures that have been corrected and/or added since the last statement was submitted to the Commission, and must be prepared according to the guidelines of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants. Restated audits must continue to meet the Commission requirements for audited financial statements found in Standard Seven – Financial Resources.

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.

Self-Paced Instruction: An approach to instructional delivery where the student sets the pace of learning under the guidance and objectives set by faculty. Criteria for admissions/recruiting, program design, learning objectives, and instruction provided in any self-paced program must be consistent for every student enrolled. (See Criteria of Standard Two – Educational Programs.) In a self-paced program, it is a requirement that the student be given a maximum time parameter for completion of requirements for a specific course, series of courses, and/or the entire program, as established by the institution.
Qualified faculty must be present as facilitators/resources for students as they proceed through mastering the various subject matters in courses required for program completion. (See Criteria of Standard Eight – Human Resources.) Additionally, learning resources and student services and activities must be available to self-paced students as detailed in Standards Five and Ten. The length of self-paced programs as listed by the Commission must be shown in terms of average

length of time expected for completion of program requirements, unless a state or federal authorizing agency mandates otherwise. (The Commission does not use the terms 'self-paced instruction' and 'open-entry/open-exit scheduling' interchangeably.)

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.

Team Leader: The team leader is an experienced evaluator appointed by COE to oversee and guide the work of the evaluation team during the institutional visit. The team leader is responsible for ensuring the visit conducted in accordance with COE's policies and rules, coordinating team assignments, facilitating communication with the institution, and preparing and submitting the final team report. Team leaders are chosen based on their leadership skills, professional expertise and the ability to evaluate specific standards and criteria.

Team Member: A team member is an individual who is selected by COE to serve on an institutional evaluation team. Team members are responsible for reviewing assigned standards and criteria, verifying documentation, conducting interviews, and assessing the overall compliance of the institution. Team members are chosen based on their professional expertise and the ability to evaluate specific standards and criteria.

Third-Party Audit Certification: A certification process by which a Commission-selected independent certified public accountant thoroughly reviews all re-stated audited financial statements and other questionable statements submitted to the Commission for clarity, accuracy, and compliance with all Federal and Commission requirements governing the formal reporting of financial data.

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

Unannounced Focus Review Visit: An Unannounced Focus Review Visit is an evaluation conducted by an accreditation body without prior scheduling or notification to the institution to verify ongoing compliance with accreditation standards and criteria focusing on areas where previous evaluation have identified areas of deficiencies.

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.

Vocational English-as-a-Second-Language Program: See Vocational English-as-a-Second-Language Programs section of this manual.

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

Work-Based Ethics: Commonly-accepted values, moral principles, and standards of a workplace, industry, or occupation.

EPS 10 | VECTOR

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