

Policy on the Development and Review of Commission Policies, Procedures, and Statements

To fulfill its mission of accreditation of institutions of higher education, the Commission develops policies and procedures to give form and substance to its work. From time to time, the Commission also approves statements explicating and clarifying matters important to accreditation.

The most fundamental policy of the Commission is its *Standards for Accreditation*. These establish minimum criteria for institutional quality and define the universe of institutions eligible for accreditation by the Commission. The *Standards* also provide the basis for institutions to improve their quality and increase their effectiveness.

Other policies developed and approved by the Commission are related to:

- The elucidation and application of the *Standards*; and
- Fulfilling the requirements of the Higher Education Act and otherwise acting in the public interest as a reliable authority on educational quality.

The Commission also develops procedures to assure the orderly application of its policies. Most of these procedural statements concern how the decennial evaluation and other institutional reviews are carried out in a way that is both consistent with Commission policy and respectful of institutional differences. Procedures are also developed for the consideration of institutions seeking accreditation through the Commission's candidacy process and other matters of Commission functioning.

From time to time, the Commission also approves statements on matters related to accreditation. Some of these statements are designed to ensure broad public understanding of the Commission and its work, as with the Mission Statement. Other statements articulate common expectations of good practice; some are jointly developed by the seven regional accrediting commissions, thus assuring reasonable commonality in important fundamentals of quality assurance while respecting regional differences.

As an organization dedicated to self-regulation of educational quality and effectiveness, the Commission is committed to the participation of its member institutions and other communities of interest having the appropriate opportunity for participation and comment during the development and application of policies. This commitment, applied to the Commission's most fundamental policy, is articulated in its Policy on the Revision and Review of the Standards for Accreditation. In the development of policies that directly affect the expectations for accredited and candidate institutions, the Commission regularly seeks input and comment from affected institutions and other relevant publics.

The Commission's procedures are regularly evaluated by institutional participants, with comment sought on their improvement.

Finally, the Commission will review each of its policies and statements at least once every ten years, reaffirming those policies which are durable and useful, and seeking institutional comment on those policies for which significant changes are proposed. In addition, existing policies will be reviewed when there are changes in the Standards, in legal requirements, or in other circumstances which warrant their review.

In addition, per federal regulation, if the Commission determines, at any point during its systematic program of review, that it needs to make changes to its policies, the Commission will initiate action within 12 months to make the changes and will complete that action within a reasonable period of time. As with other changes in Commission policies, such changes will be undertaken with appropriate notice to affiliated institutions and interested others, providing an opportunity to comment on any proposed changes, and taking into account timely and relevant comments.

Through its publications and other means, the Commission makes its policies, procedures, and statements known to affiliated institutions and interested others.

September 2001
April 2007