

ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR COMMUNITY AND JUNIOR COLLEGES
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

POLICY ON COMMISSION ACTIONS ON INSTITUTIONS

(Adopted January 1977; Revised January 1979, January 1991, June 1998;
Edited July 2002; Revised June 2003; Edited August 2004, January 2006)

Policy

Institutions applying for candidacy or initial accreditation and accredited institutions undergoing periodic evaluation will be reviewed by the Accrediting Commission. The Commission will examine institutional evidence of student learning and achievement, the institutional self study report, the evaluation team report, and documents from previous evaluations to determine whether the institution complies with the Standards of Accreditation, Eligibility Requirements, and policies. The Commission will apply, as it deems appropriate, one of the actions listed in this policy.

In the case that a previously accredited institution cannot demonstrate that it meets Standards, Eligibility Requirements, and policies, the Commission will impose a sanction, as defined below. If the institution cannot document that it has come into compliance within a maximum of two years after receiving the initial sanction, the Commission will take adverse action. In keeping with the provisions of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, the Commission defines adverse actions for accredited institutions as termination of accreditation, denial, or termination for institutions seeking candidacy, and denial for institutions seeking initial accreditation.

Policy Elements

I. Actions on Institutions that are Applicants for Candidacy or extension of Candidacy

Grant candidacy. Candidacy is a pre-accreditation status granted to institutions that have successfully undergone eligibility review and demonstrate the ability and will to meet the standards of accreditation, eligibility requirements, and policies, within the two-year candidate period. Candidacy indicates that an institution has achieved initial recognition and is progressing toward accreditation. During candidacy the institution undertakes the necessary steps to reach demonstrable compliance with Commission standards. This includes an institutional self study and preparation of a self study report and visit. Candidate status may be extended for two years, for a total period not to exceed four years.

Extend candidacy. Candidacy is extended in response to a college request when the Commission determines that a candidate institution has made significant progress toward meeting the standards, eligibility requirements, and policies, and is convinced that the institution will meet all standards, eligibility requirements, and policies, if granted additional time to do so. Candidacy can be extended once for a two-year period. Four

years in candidate status is the maximum available.

Defer a decision on candidacy. A Commission decision on candidacy is postponed pending receipt of specified information from the institution.

Deny candidacy. Candidacy is denied when the Commission determines that the institution has not demonstrated that it meets or exceeds the standards, the eligibility requirements, and policies, within the specified time. The institution may reapply for candidacy by submitting a self study report after two years. Denial of candidacy may be subject to a request for review by the Commission and subsequent appeal to the Western Association of Schools and Colleges under the published policies and procedures of these two bodies.

Termination of candidacy. If, in the opinion of the Commission, an institution has not maintained its eligibility for candidacy or has failed to explain or correct deficiencies of which it has been given notice, the candidacy of the institution may be terminated. Termination may be subject to a request for review by the Commission and subsequent appeal to the Western Association of Schools and Colleges under the published policies and procedures of these two bodies.

II. Actions on Institutions that are Applicants for Initial Accreditation

Grant initial accreditation. The institution substantially meets or exceeds accreditation standards, eligibility requirements, and policies. Recommendations are directed toward strengthening the institution, not correcting situations where the institution fails to meet the standards, eligibility requirements, and policies. The institution is required to submit a Midterm Report in the third year of the six-year accreditation cycle. The institution must be fully evaluated again within a maximum of six years from the date of the Commission action granting initial accreditation.

Grant initial accreditation and request a Focused Midterm Report. The institution substantially meets or exceeds accreditation standards, eligibility requirements, and policies. Recommendations are directed toward strengthening the institution, not correcting situations where the institution fails to meet the standards, eligibility requirements, and policies. The Commission will specify the nature, purpose, and scope of the focus of this report. The institution is required to submit the Focused Midterm Report in the third year of the six-year accreditation cycle.

Grant initial accreditation and request a Focused Midterm Report and with a visit. The institution substantially meets or exceeds accreditation standards, eligibility requirements, and policies. Recommendations are directed toward strengthening the institution, not correcting situations where the institution fails to meet the standards, eligibility requirements, and policies. The Commission will specify the nature, purpose, and scope of the focus of this report and of the visit to be made. The institution is required to submit the Focused Midterm Report in the third year of the six-year accreditation cycle

to be followed by a visit.

Grant initial accreditation and request a Progress Report. The institution substantially meets or exceeds accreditation standards, eligibility requirements, and policies, but has recommendations on a small number of issues of some urgency which, if not addressed immediately, may threaten the ability of the institution to continue to meet accreditation standards, eligibility requirements, and policies. The institution is required to submit a Progress Report. The Commission will specify the nature, purpose, scope, and due date of the report to be submitted. The institution is also required to submit a Midterm Report in the third year of the six-year accreditation cycle.

Grant initial accreditation and request a Progress Report with a visit. The institution substantially meets or exceeds accreditation standards, eligibility requirements, and policies, but has recommendations on a small number of issues of some urgency which, if not addressed immediately, may threaten the ability of the institution to continue to meet accreditation standards, eligibility requirements, and policies. The Commission will specify the nature, purpose, scope, and due date of the report to be submitted and of the visit to be made. The institution is also required to submit a Midterm Report in the third year of the six-year accreditation cycle.

Extend candidacy. Candidacy can be extended at the Commission's discretion for two years. Rather than awarding initial accreditation, the Commission extends candidacy when it determines that a candidate institution has not yet met the standards, eligibility requirements, and policies, but has made significant progress toward doing so. The Commission must be convinced that the institution will meet all standards, eligibility requirements, and policies, if granted additional time. Four years in candidate status is the maximum available.

Defer a decision on accreditation. A Commission decision on accreditation is postponed pending receipt of specified additional information from the institution or to permit an institution to correct serious weaknesses and report to the Commission within a limited time. If the institution is a candidate for accreditation, candidacy continues during the period of deferment.

Deny accreditation. The Commission denies accreditation when an applicant institution fails to meet accreditation standards, eligibility requirements, and policies, within the maximum period allowed for a college to remain in candidacy. A denial is a final decision which is subject to a request for review by the Commission and subsequent appeal to the Western Association of Schools and Colleges under the published policies and procedures of these two bodies. In cases where the four-year limit on candidacy has been reached, the Commission may consider extending the limit in special circumstances. If an extension is not granted, the institution may not reapply for candidacy for at least two years.

III. Actions on Institutions that are Applicants for Reaffirmation of Accreditation

A. Actions that Reaffirm Accreditation

Reaffirm accreditation. The institution substantially meets or exceeds accreditation standards, eligibility requirements, and policies. Recommendations are directed toward strengthening the institution, not correcting situations where the institution fails to meet the standards, eligibility requirements, and policies. The institution is required to submit a Midterm Report in the third year of the six-year accreditation cycle.

Reaffirm accreditation, and request a Focused Midterm Report. The institution substantially meets or exceeds accreditation standards, eligibility requirements, and policies, but the Commission wishes to direct the institution's attention to a small number of the recommendations for special emphasis. The Commission will specify the nature, purpose, and scope of the focus of this report. The institution is required to submit the Focused Midterm Report in the third year of the six-year accreditation cycle.

Reaffirm accreditation, and request a Focused Midterm Report with a visit. The institution substantially meets or exceeds accreditation standards, eligibility requirements, and policies, but the Commission wishes to direct the institution's attention to a small number of the recommendations for special emphasis. The Commission will specify the nature, purpose, and scope of the focus of the report and of the visit to be made. The institution is required to submit the Focused Midterm Report in the third year of the six-year accreditation cycle.

Reaffirm accreditation, and request a Progress Report. The institution substantially meets or exceeds accreditation standards, eligibility requirements, and policies, but has recommendations on a small number of issues of some urgency which, if not addressed immediately, may threaten the ability of the institution to continue to meet accreditation standards, eligibility requirements, and policies. The Commission will specify the issues to be addressed and the due date of the report. Resolution of the issues is expected within a one- to two-year period. The institution is also required to submit a Midterm Report in the third year of the six-year accreditation cycle.

Reaffirm accreditation, and request a Progress Report with a visit. The institution substantially meets or exceeds accreditation standards, eligibility requirements, and policies, but has recommendations on a small number of issues of some urgency which, if not addressed immediately, may threaten the ability of the institution to continue to meet accreditation standards, eligibility requirements, and policies. The Commission will identify the issues to be addressed in the report, the due date of the report to be submitted, and specifics of the visit to be made. Resolution of the issues is expected within a one- to two-year period. The institution is also required to submit a Midterm Report in the third year of the six-year accreditation cycle.

B. Procedural Actions

Defer a decision on reaffirmation of accreditation. A Commission decision on accreditation is postponed pending receipt of specified additional information from the institution or to permit an institution to correct serious weaknesses and report to the Commission within six months or less. The response from the institution may be followed by a visit addressed primarily to the reasons for the decision. The Commission will specify the nature, purpose, and scope of the information to be submitted and of the visit to be made. The accredited status of the institution continues during the period of deferment.

C. Sanctions

Institutions are advised that the Commission is required by the U.S. Department of Education not to allow deficiencies to exist for more than a total of two years. Consequently, institutions may remain under sanction for a cumulative total of no more than two years. If concerns are not resolved within this period, the Commission will take action to terminate accreditation.

Issue Warning. When the Commission finds that an institution has pursued a course deviating from the Commission's eligibility requirements, standards, or policies to an extent that gives concern to the Commission, it may issue a warning to the institution to correct its deficiencies, refrain from certain activities, or initiate certain activities. The Commission will specify the time within which the institution must resolve these issues. During the warning period, the institution will be subject to reports and visits at a frequency to be determined by the Commission. The accredited status of the institution continues during the warning period; if warning is issued as a result of the institution's comprehensive review, reaffirmation is delayed during the period of warning.

Impose Probation. When an institution deviates significantly from the Commission's eligibility requirements, standards, or policies but not to such an extent as to warrant a show cause order or the termination of candidacy or accreditation, or fails to respond to conditions imposed upon it by the Commission, including a warning, the institution may be placed on probation. The Commission will specify the time within which the college must resolve deficiencies. During the probation period, the institution will be subject to reports and visits at a frequency to be determined by the Commission. The accredited status of the institution continues during the probation period; if probation is imposed as a result of the institution's comprehensive review, reaffirmation is delayed during the period of probation.

Order Show Cause. When the Commission finds an institution to be in substantial non-compliance with its eligibility requirements, standards, or policies, or when the institution has not responded to the conditions imposed by the Commission, the Commission may require the institution to show cause why its accreditation should not be withdrawn at the end of a stated period. In such cases, the burden of proof will rest

on the institution to demonstrate why its accreditation should be continued. The Commission will specify the time within which the institution must resolve deficiencies. If the loss of accreditation will likely cause an institution to close, during the show cause period, the institution must make preparations for closure according to the Commission's "Policy on Closing an Institution." While under a show cause order, the institution will be subject to reports and visits at a frequency to be determined by the Commission. The accredited status of the institution continues during the period of the show cause order; if show cause is ordered as a result of the institution's comprehensive review, reaffirmation is delayed during the show cause order.

D. Actions that Terminate Accreditation

Terminate Accreditation. If, in the judgment of the Commission, an institution has not satisfactorily explained or corrected matters of which it has been given notice, or has taken an action that has placed it significantly out of compliance with Commission standards, its accreditation may be terminated. The Commission will give the institution written reasons for its decision. Termination of accreditation is subject to a request for review and appeal under the applicable policies and procedures of the Commission and the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. The accredited status of the institution continues pending completion of any review and appeal process the institution may request. Otherwise, the institution's accreditation ends on the date when the time period permitting such a request expires. In such a case, the institution must complete again the entire accreditation process to qualify for candidacy.