

GUIDELINES FOR THE UTILIZATION OF EXTERNAL CONSULTANTS IN THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS

The following guidelines are provided to assist an institution undergoing the process of ACCET accreditation to understand the perspective of the Accrediting Commission regarding the utilization of external consultants in the accreditation process.

Accreditation is a self-evaluation process requiring the institution, in collaboration with its faculty and staff, to conduct an internal review to analyze and verify that the institution is accomplishing its stated mission and objectives according to the established policies and procedures of the institution and applicable state, federal, and accrediting agencies. The process is designed to assist the faculty and staff to develop the knowledge and skills to enable them to continuously maintain and monitor quality throughout the institution.

It is important to recognize that during the process of becoming accredited, an institution must demonstrate to the Accrediting Commission that it is capable of offering quality programs and services to its students in accordance with ACCET standards, policies, and practices. The institution must show that these capabilities are intrinsic characteristics of the organization and of its personnel, independent of any external consultants.

Accordingly, ACCET's position on the use of external consultants is focused on the ability of an institution's faculty and staff to demonstrate an embedded, broadly-based knowledge of the standards, policies, and procedures that are essential foundational elements to accredited status, regardless of whether the institution uses an external consultant or not. Therefore, all communications between an institution and ACCET must be with the primary contact person at the institution and not with an external consultant.

It is recommended that external consultants not be present at the institution during any part of the on-site evaluation team visit. If the institution decides to have an external consultant present, the on-site examination team will communicate directly with the management and employees of the institution.

ACCET does not recommend specific individuals or consulting firms to any institution seeking external assistance.