Re: Accrediting Commission Report  
December 2012 Meeting  
(via email distribution)

December 19, 2012

Dear ACCET and Other Colleagues:

This letter is presented as an update on the actions undertaken by the ACCET Accrediting Commission at the December 2012 meeting. A summary of all final actions, referenced by institution, a summary of statistics for all actions relative to the various classifications of review, and the policy/documentation revisions, previously posted and referenced herein, will be available to view and download from the ACCET website (www.accet.org). A synopsis of the Commission’s actions on ACCET policies undertaken at the December 2012 meeting is included herein, with final approved documents found under Documents and Forms and, in the case of Documents 11 and 18.IEP, a further opportunity for a call for comment.

As a reminder, the Commission’s Standards and Policy Review Committee (SPRC) reviews specific policies that have been identified for review and revision to address governmental regulatory requirements, issues of concern arising from its reviews, and patterns of good practices, in addition to an ongoing review of policies that have not been subject to review for a period of five years. This report is posted on the website under Commission Reports.

Final Approval

1. Document 5 – Guidelines for the Utilization of External Consultants in the Accreditation Process

As part of the five-year review, changes were made to clarify ACCET’s position relative to the utilization of external consultants in the Accreditation Process and the rationale for requiring all communications between an institution and ACCET to be with the primary contact person of the institution and not with an external consultant. Whether or not an external consultant is utilized, the institution must demonstrate an embedded and broadly-based knowledge of ACCET standards, policies, and practices essential for accreditation status.


To be consistent with federal requirements, changes were made to the sections on “Show Cause” and “Notifications” to explicitly state that: (a) the Executive Committee (and not the Commission Chair) is authorized to issue an institution a show cause directive when the Commission is not in session; (b) various notice of Commission actions will be provided to appropriate accrediting agencies consistent with longstanding practice; and (c) expanded notice of voluntary withdrawal of accreditation by institution(s) will be made available to include the public by means of the ACCET website.
3. Document 13 – Bylaws

Changes were made to the Bylaws, Section 8.2.1 – Nominating Committee, to include: (a) allowing the Chair, with the advice and consent of the Commission to appoint the two non-commission members on the Nominating Committee; (b) identifying that the Nominating Committee will convene during the Commission Meeting immediately preceding the annual membership meeting; (c) modifying the deadlines for soliciting nominations from the membership and communicating the final slate of nominees to ensure ample notice to the membership; and (d) other minor editing.

4. Document 18.IEP – Satisfactory Progress (IEPs)

In response to concerns expressed by institutions offering Intensive English Programs (IEPs), changes were made to the section entitled “Progression through Academic Proficiency Levels”. As revised, the section now states: “Academic proficiency levels are defined in accordance with sound educational standards and practice for Intensive English Programs (e.g. beginner, intermediate, advanced) and nuances thereof (pre-intermediate, upper intermediate, etc.). Students must demonstrate normal progress through academic levels in a sequential manner (e.g. intermediate follows beginner, etc.). Levels may be repeated, based on a sound written and well-documented rationale established by the institution, provided that the student’s maximum cumulative total length of the language training is no more than 36 months. A documented learning plan must be prepared by the institution and provided to those learners who are required to repeat a level.”

5. Document 25 – Policy for New, Revised, and Existing Programs/Courses

Changes were made for purposes of clarity and consistency, including: (a) changing the document name from Policy on New and Revised Programs/Courses to Policy on New, Revised, and Existing Programs/Courses to reflect the full scope of the policy; (b) clarifying what documents are required for a complete program application; (c) requesting that partial program applications identify the site(s) where the new or revised program will be offered; (d) modifying the examples of a change in the instructional delivery format/methodology or an additional delivery method added to the program; (d) streamlining the partial program applications required for: (i) a change in the instructional delivery format/methodology or an additional delivery method added to the program and (ii) offering an already-approved program at an additional location that is out of the general market area of the site(s) previously approved to offer the program; and (e) identifying the types of program changes which do not require ACCET approval or processing fees, provided the changes are not made in conjunction with other substantive program modifications.

6. Document 25.OAD – Application for Occupational Associate Degree Program

In preparation for the transition of program applications to the Accreditation Management System, changes were made to align the three program applications (Document 25.1, Document 25.OAD, and 25.IDL), including the following changes to Document 25.OAD: (a) revised the order of the items to be consistent with the other program applications; (b) edited the language of Items 1 and 7; (c) requested, as an exhibit, the sites where the program will be offered; (d) expanded the instructions relative to the exhibits required to be submitted with the application, (e) requested a needs analysis, consistent with other program applications; (f) simplified item 12 and directed Title IV institutions to also complete and submit Document 25.9 – Application for Review of Clock Hour-to-Credit Hour Conversion based on Work Outside of Class, if applicable; and (f) directed institutions making application for programs with an externship/internship component to submit the new ACCET Document 25.8 – Externship/Internship Component to a New or Revised Program, instead of referring them to Document 25 to identify the additional required information.
7. Document 25.IDL – Application for Interactive Distance Learning Program

In preparation for the transition of program applications to the Accreditation Management System, changes were made to align the three program applications, including the following proposed changes to Document 25.IDL: (a) revised the order of the items to be consistent with the other program applications; (b) edited the language of Items 1, 4, 5, 7; (c) expanded the instructions relative to the exhibits required to be submitted with the application; (e) requested a needs analysis, consistent with other program applications; (f) simplified item 12 and directed Title IV institutions to also complete and submit Document 25.9 – Application for Review of Clock Hour-to-Credit Hour Conversion based on Work Outside of Class, if applicable; and (g) directed institutions making application for programs with an externship/internship component to submit the new ACCET Document 25.8 – Externship/Internship Component to a New or Revised Program, instead of referring them to Document 25 to identify the additional required information.

8. Document 25.1 – Application for New or Revised Program/Course and Document 25.2 – Checklist for Application for New or Reviewed Program/Course

In preparation for the transition of program applications to the Accreditation Management System, changes were made to align the three program applications, including the following proposed changes to Document 25.1: (a) merged Document 25.1 and Document 25.2; (b) edited the language of Items 4 and 5; (c) requested, as an exhibit, the sites where the program will be offered; (d) expanded the instructions relative to the exhibits required to be submitted for complete program applications and partial program applications; (e) simplified item 11 and directed Title IV institutions to also complete and submit Document 25.9 – Application for Review of Clock Hour-to-Credit Hour Conversion based on Work Outside of Class, if applicable; and (f) directed institutions making application for programs with an externship/internship component to submit the new ACCET Document 25.8 – Externship/Internship Component to a New or Revised Program.

9. Document 25.7 – Admissions Standards and Criteria

Changes were made relative to vocational institutions admitting applicants who do not possess a high school diploma or GED equivalency to reflect recent changes to federal Title IV regulations regarding ability-to-benefit.

10. Document 25.8 – Externship/Internship Component of a New or Revised Program

Previously, the instructions for program applications directed institutions to “Refer to ACCET Document 25 – Policy on Approval of New or Revised Programs for additional information required for a program that includes an externship/internship”. For easier reference, a new document was approved which lists the additional information (as identified in Document 25) to be submitted with an application for a program with an externship/internship component.

11. Document 25.11 – Clock Hour to Credit Hour Conversion

A change was made to renumber this document (from 25.8 to 25.11), because of the addition of Document 25.8 - Externship/Internship Component of a New or Revised Program.

12. Document 26 – Review and Approval of Additional Locations

To be consistent with federal requirements and current practice, changes were made to require the Executive Committee of the Accrediting Commission to determine whether to grant appropriate
approvals to operate new additional locations, including new branches, auxiliary classrooms, and classroom extensions.

13. Document 28 – Completion and Placement Policy

Changes were made for purposes of clarity, including: (a) refining the definition of training-related employment, with examples; and (b) making minor edits.


Changes were made to the instructions for completing Document 28.1 – Completion and Placement Statistics, including: (a) updating Document 28.1 at least quarterly, consistent with longstanding policy in Document 28 – Completion and Placement Policy; (b) deleting the name/title of placement staff and signatures; (c) clarifying enrollee transfers; and (d) including a definition of training-related employment, consistent with Document 28.

15. Document 49 - Policy and Procedure for Processing Complaints Initiated Against ACCET Accredited Institutions

Changes were made to identify the circumstances under which a complaint may be closed with partial merit. The policy states: “A complaint closed with partial merit is one in which: (1) only some of the original allegations were found to have merit and/or (2) the allegation(s) found with merit is relatively minor in nature and impact”.


As part of the five-year review, changes were made to: (a) clarify that students are to refer to the institution’s written complaint procedure and pursue this process first; (b) advise students that complaints will only be processed by ACCET if they involve ACCET standards and policies; (c) clarify what information is to be provided by the complainants, consistent with Document 49 – Policies and Procedures for Processing Complaints Initiated Against ACCET Accredited Institutions.

17. Commission Code of Conduct Policy

Consistent with federal requirements relative to Public Members serving on the Commission and/or committees of the Commission, the following addition was made to the Attestation of the Code of Conduct to be signed annually by Commissioners and those serving on committees of the Commission, including Appeals Panels: “I hereby affirm that I have read and understand the definition of a Public Member and if serving in this capacity on the Commission or committee of the Commission, I will immediately notify the Chair of the Commission if I no longer meets this definition.” Access to the full policy statement can be found at the ACCET website under Documents and Forms.

18. ACCET Record Retention Policy

The following ACCET internal policies were merged into a single policy: (a) ACCET Record Retention Policy and (b) Retention of School Files. Additionally, changes were made to require numerous records of ACCET member institutions to be maintained for ten years or two accreditation review cycles, whichever is less, including: (a) Applications for Accreditation, (b) ASERs/BASERs, (c) team reports/responses, (d) Quality Assurance Visit reports/responses, (e) special
reviews/responses, (f) interim reports and staff reports, (g) applications for substantive changes, (h) requests for special consideration, and (i) other correspondence.

19. Annual Reports and Monitoring Changes in Enrollment

To be consistent with federal requirements, modifications were made to the review process of the Commission’s Growth Monitoring Committee in monitoring significant enrollment growth annually reported by institutions in ACCET Document 12.b – Annual Report and Enrollment Statistics. Changes included: (a) defining significant growth as at least a 20% change in enrollment and/or participant clock hours in the current year compared to the previous year; (b) deleting revenue changes from review by the Growth Monitoring Committee; and (c) modifying what will be included in the comparative analysis referred to and reviewed by the Committee.

Thank you for your continued commitment and responsiveness to our ongoing efforts to refine and strengthen the ACCET standards, policies, and practices, as well as those mandated through regulatory requirements on the agency’s continued recognition by the U.S. Department of Education. Please visit the ACCET website for more information and contact the office if we can be of assistance. Wishing you all a joyous holiday season.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Roger J. Williams
Executive Director