

Policy on Commission Practices on Policy Review

June 2021

Background

The Commission regularly reviews its policies. Policy review ensures that they are aligned with federal regulations and current trends in higher education, as well as appropriately reflect the values of the Commission. As described in the bylaws of the Commission, ACCJC has policies dealing with the manner in which it conducts its business (operational policies) and policies concerning relations with and activities of member institutions (institutional policies).

Impetus to create, revise, or eliminate a policy may stem from emerging issues in higher education, issues that ACCJC member institutions raise, changes in the U.S. Department of Education regulations or Congressional legislation, changes in the Commission's processes or practice, or revision and consolidation of other existing policies. The need for the Commission to develop, review or revise policy may be identified by the Commission's President, Vice Presidents, input from the field, public comment, or through Commission discussion, including discussion of Commission committees.

General Procedures for Institutional Policies

The Policy Committee, working with appropriate staff, oversees the development of new policies and changes to existing policies. Commission procedures generally provide that proposed institutional policy changes and/or new policies be considered by the Commission during its open session in a two-meeting process. At the first meeting, policy changes and/or new policies are discussed, and modifications are made as appropriate (first reading). These policies are then widely circulated to ACCJC's member institutions and other interested parties for review and comment before presentation at the next scheduled Commission meeting for second reading and adoption.

Following a first reading, proposed revisions to policies shall be posted on the ACCJC website with an invitation for members to send comments to the ACCJC office. Comments from the field are collected during a specified review period, the length of which allows for those comments to be reviewed by Commission staff and the Policy Committee. Relevant comments shall be brought forward for consideration by the Commission when taking final action. Attendees at open sessions are provided the opportunity to address the Commission in accordance with the Commission *Policy on Public Access to Commission Meetings*.

The Commission can make institutional policy changes outside the normal two-meeting process under exceptional or time sensitive circumstances, when changes are needed in order to align with federal regulations, or for other extenuating circumstances. If the Commission makes these changes between regularly scheduled meetings, the changes shall be communicated to the field, including the reason for immediate action by the Commission.

General Procedures for Operational Policies

The Commission may also adopt, amend, or repeal policies that deal with the internal operation of the ACCJC and its staff. Operational policies refer to practices and protocols internal to the operation of the agency and do not impact member institutions or their review process. Action on such operational policies may take place at any Commission meeting, in closed session, and do not require two readings.

Edits to Existing Policies

The need to edit an existing operational or institutional policy arises from time to time. When a policy is edited, a notation of the month and year is added to the policy heading. Edits to correct inputting errors, such as punctuation and spelling, may be completed at any time and are effective when made. Edits to improve readability and clarity without altering the meaning of policy language will be presented to the Policy Committee and included in the Policy Committee's report at the next Commission meeting. These edits will be effective upon posting of the changes on the ACCJC website after the Commission meeting.

Edits to policy required for full compliance with federal or state regulations will be presented to the Policy Committee. Upon approval by the Committee, the edited policy will be presented to the Commission for review and adoption. Upon approval by the Commission, the policy will be disseminated to the field and added to the ACCJC website.

New or Revised Policies

When a new or revised policy is needed, the Commission's staff will prepare the new or revised version for consideration by the Policy Committee. The Policy Committee may make additional changes as deemed necessary. The Policy Committee, upon approval of the new or revised policy, then forwards the policy to the Commission for review and action during the open session agenda noting whether it is a first or second read.

The Policy Committee will forward proposed changes to operational policies to the Commission for review and adoption during the Commission's Board of Directors closed session meeting. The policy becomes effective upon adoption by the Commission.

Deleted Policies

Some policies may outlive their usefulness and need to be eliminated. A policy recommended for deletion will be placed on the Commission's open session agenda. If the Commission approves deletion of the policy, then the field is notified of the removal of the policy and referred to replacement policies, if applicable. Appropriate changes are made to the ACCJC website.

Adopted April 2000; Edited October 2006, Revised November 2012; Revised June 2021

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