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## Policy on Monitoring Institutional Performance

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June 2025

### Background

Accreditation is one of the most powerful levers available to influence change and to recognize and ensure value in higher education. It highlights outcomes that matter: degree completion, transfer to four-year institutions, readiness for work and community roles, and economic mobility for every student. The accreditation process also provides a formalized mechanism to reinforce to the campus community the necessity of making data-informed decisions to improve student outcomes.

ACCJC's Accreditation Standards consider an institution's continuous quality improvement efforts around the critical elements of student learning, student achievement, and closure of learning gaps. These standards provide a framework for best practices that lead to achievement of the institution's mission, and promote student success, academic quality, institutional integrity, and excellence.

An accredited status from an institutional accreditor enables an institution to qualify for federal grants and contracts, to distribute federal financial aid to its students, and to allow students' credits to be easily transferred to other accredited institutions.

In its mission to advance quality education, the Commission's responsibility is to determine whether an institution is in compliance with Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies (together Commission's Standards), and to assist institutions, through established procedures, in the improvement of quality.

### Commission Monitoring of Institutional Performance

ACCJC's accreditation processes and reporting cycles support member institutions in all their accreditation efforts and provide the opportunity for the Commission to monitor continuous improvement. Through the Commission's ongoing monitoring approaches and in accordance with the *Policy on Commission Actions on Institutions*, the Commission may at any time request a Special Report to verify ongoing compliance with Commission Standards and will take immediate action if it identifies noncompliance with the Commission's Standards.

**Comprehensive Review:** The cycle begins with a comprehensive review for reaffirmation of accreditation every eight years to determine whether an institution continues to meet ACCJC's expectations and is engaged in sustainable efforts to improve educational quality and institutional effectiveness.

**Follow Up Reports:** The Commission may require a Follow-Up Report when it identifies noncompliance with Standards through the comprehensive review process. In a Follow-Up Report, the institution provides narrative analysis and evidence that describes the resolution of deficiencies and demonstrates compliance with Standards. The Commission may also require a Follow-Up Peer Review Team to visit the institution as part of the verification process.

**Midterm Reporting (4<sup>th</sup> year of cycle):** Each institution must submit a Midterm Report four years after the reaffirmation of accreditation. The Midterm Report keeps the Commission apprised of an institution's continuous improvement activities. In the Midterm Report, the institution provides an update on how it has integrated improvement plans arising from self-evaluation and how it addresses work accomplished in response to the improvement recommendations affirmed by the Commission in its Action Letter. The institution must also reflect on actions it has taken to improve institutional performance related to student learning outcomes and institution-set standards, as well as reflect on fiscal health indicators (if applicable).

**Annual Reporting (every year):** In accordance with federal regulations, the Commission applies a set of annual monitoring and evaluation approaches that assess an institution's continued compliance with the Commission's Standards and takes into account institutional strengths and stability<sup>1</sup>. The Commission is required to consider the information it collects in its evaluation of institutions and decision-making processes and holds institutions accountable to their respective missions. To that end, ACCJC requires institutions to complete an Annual Report and an Annual Fiscal Report each year.

Through established processes, the Commission will place institutions that appear to be at risk of noncompliance with the Commission's Standards on enhanced monitoring status. Enhanced monitoring status is used by the Commission to express any concerns to the institution. Enhanced monitoring provides opportunity for the institution to share more information to the Commission and provides time to address the concerns and report on institutional progress in a timely manner. ACCJC supports institutions on enhanced monitoring through increased communications and additional reporting requirements. Information from the annual monitoring reports may be provided to peer review teams for inclusion in the comprehensive review process.

The [Annual Report](#) collects institutions' self-reported data for the prior three academic years to monitor headcount growth or decline (including growth or decline in distance and correspondence education) and institutions' performance against their self-set standards and stretch goals for key indicators of student achievement over a rolling three-year period. These key indicators include, but are not limited to course completion, degree/certificate completion, licensing examination pass rates, job placement rates, and transfers to four-year institutions.

Headcount enrollment increases will be considered significant if they represent a one-year increase of 50% or more. If headcount enrollments are significant, then the Commission will begin to monitor the enrollments of programs impacting the overall institutional increase.<sup>2</sup>

The [Annual Fiscal Report](#) collects institution's self-reported data to monitor key indicators of fiscal health such as primary reserve ratio (i.e., unrestricted fund balance reserve), net operating revenue ratio, surpluses or deficits, salary and benefit percentages, enrollment declines, audit findings, and other financial assessments. As with the Annual Report, the Annual Fiscal Report considers a rolling three-year period; institutions provide data for the most recently concluded fiscal year and two prior fiscal years.

**Ongoing Reporting on Substantive Changes:** The U.S. Department of Education requires accrediting agencies to have adequate policies and procedures to ensure substantive changes

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<sup>1</sup> 34 CFR § 602.19

<sup>2</sup> 34 CFR § 602.19(d)

to the educational mission or programs of the institution do not compromise the capacity of the institution to continue to meet the Commission's Standards. Guided by ACCJC's Substantive Change Policy, and further detailed in the Substantive Change Manual, the Commission must approve certain institutional changes before they are implemented such as changes in location, programs, and degrees offered.

### **Responsibility of the Institution**

It is the responsibility of the institution to complete all required reports, including but not limited to comprehensive reports, midterm reports, annual reports, special reports and other monitoring reports, as well as report any substantive changes in a timely manner. In addition, institutions must respond to inquiries requiring additional information and must inform the Commission of any circumstance that significantly impacts the institution's operational, academic and student services, or fiscal strength and stability or its compliance with the Commission's Standards.

*Adopted June 2014; Revised January 2020; Revised June 2025*

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