



**ACCREDITING
COMMISSION
for COMMUNITY and
JUNIOR COLLEGES**

*Western Association
of Schools and Colleges*

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Date: January 24, 2014
Memo to: Chief Executive Officers, Accreditation Liaison Officers
From: Krista Johns, JD *KRJ*
Subject: January 2014 Commission Action on Eligibility Requirements and Accreditation Standards

We request that you publicize the information in this memo at your institution. Please note that comment is invited from the field on the first reading revisions to Eligibility Requirements and Accreditation Standards. Information about how to submit comment is also included here.

At its January 2014 meeting, the Commission approved for first reading revisions to Eligibility Requirements and Accreditation Standards from the Review of Accreditation Standards and Practices that began in November, 2011. The first reading approval opened a comment period that will extend through April 30, 2014. The first reading documents are attached with this memorandum and are also posted at www.accjc.org.

Three public hearings will be held during the comment period for presentation of oral and written input on the first reading revisions to Eligibility Requirements and Accreditation Standards. In addition, individuals are invited to provide written comment by using the Suggestion Form (attached and posted online).

Comments may be made in written, FAX, or email format and sent to one of the following addresses:

- Email: kjohns@accjc.org
- FAX: 415-506-0238
- Mail: ACCJC
10 Commercial Boulevard, Suite 204
Novato, CA 94949

The Commission invites comment on these revisions through April 30, 2014.

The following report provides helpful background information about the process and purpose of the Review of Accreditation Standards and Practices, and a summary of major changes reflected in the revisions to Eligibility Requirements and Accreditation Standards.

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Date: January 8, 2014

Memo to: Commissioners

From: John Nixon, Staff to Standards Review Committee

Subject: First Reading - Draft Revision of Standards

In 2011, the Commission initiated a comprehensive review of the Standards of Accreditation, expressing the intention of revising and improving the Standards to reflect current effective practice in higher education, public expectations for educational quality and transparency, and current Federal regulations. As summarized below, the Commission, led by its Evaluation and Planning Committee and Standards Review Committee, has concluded almost three years of study, discussion, and extensive solicitation of input from over 500 ACCJC constituent groups and individuals. Following a final review of draft revisions to the Standards by the Commission Committees in November, Commission staff prepared the draft revision of the Standards presented today for discussion and, with recommendation by the Commission Committees, approval as first reading. In addition, the Eligibility Requirements for Accreditation have been revised to reflect changes to the Standards, and that revised document also is presented today for first reading by the Commission.

Following Commission approval of the revised Standards and Eligibility Requirements as first readings, staff and the Commission will turn to the task of revising accreditation publications, including all manuals and guides that inform the processes and practices of accreditation, to align them with the revised Standards. That activity will coincide with review and potential revision of Commission processes and practices attendant to accreditation, about which the Commission also received considerable input from individuals and groups representing ACCJC member institutions. The Commission Development Workshop in March will focus on that review.

The following is a summary of the purpose for the review and revision of the Standards, as defined by the Commission, and a summary of that process, which led to the draft of revised Standards presented today. The major changes to the current Standards also are summarized.

Guiding Purpose and Background

The Commission last undertook a review of the 2004 Accreditation Standards and Practices during the years 2006 to 2008. The results of that review were published in *Quality Assurance: A Formative Review* (ACCJC publication, 2008). Since then, there have been significant changes in institutional practices, in the national regulatory environment, and in public expectations regarding educational quality and transparency. While the Commission believed the Accreditation Standards still largely reflected practices indicative of educational quality, it was an appropriate time to undertake another review.

The 2011 to 2013 review has been led by the Commission's Evaluation & Planning Committee, which designated a sub-committee, the Standards Review Committee, to coordinate the work. The Commission's goal was to adopt revised Standards and Practices in 2014.

The Commission asserted that the review would result in a revised set of Standards and accreditation practices that (1) promote institutional effectiveness with measurable outcomes; (2) define college responsibilities for supporting and demonstrating student achievement and attainment of learning outcomes and goals; (3) reflect current regulations and effective practices; and (4) are clear to member colleges and to the public. The review would also honor and align with the Commission's statement of purpose, found in Article I, Section 2 of the ACCJC Bylaws.

The Review of Accreditation Standards and Practices was launched in November 11, 2011, with an announcement to the field. The first phase of the review, taking input on the current Accreditation Standards and practices, concluded in October 2012, following a series of public hearings, workshops and meetings with task forces, and multiple calls for written input. In the end, more than 170 suggestions were received on form and format of the Standards, specific wording in the Standards, desired additions and deletions of various sections, and on accreditation practices.

Also as a part of its review, Commissioners undertook a study of higher education practices, developments in regional accreditation, and the manner in which the Accreditation Standards have supported institutional effectiveness, educational quality, and continuous quality improvement.

At its June 2013 meeting, the Commission reviewed a preliminary draft of revised Standards, based on Commission review and input from the field, and directed staff to solicit input on that draft from subject matter experts across the region.

For the solicitation of input on the preliminary draft from field experts, staff met with a number of groups, including ACCJC committees and task forces - General Education Committee, Distance Education Committee, Student Learning Outcomes Task Force, and Financial Review Task Force. Staff also met with a number of constituency groups representing member institutions, including PPEC, Hawai'i colleges, Accreditation Liaison Officers, California Community College Chief Executive Officers, Chief Instructional Officers, Chief Student Services Officers, Chief Human Relations Officers, Chief Business Officers, and the Academic Senate of the California Community Colleges. In addition, staff received input from individuals representing member institutions.

Using input from the field experts, Commission staff revised the preliminary draft of the Standards and presented that draft to the Evaluation and Planning and Standards Review Committees for their review in November. The draft presented to the Commission today reflects the final review and revision of the preliminary draft by the Commission Committees.

Summary of Major Changes

The draft revision of the Standards presented today reflects a number of changes incorporated

into the four Standards, including:

- Addition of a general introduction to the Standards.
- Reordering of sections within the Standards to reflect a more logical sequence.
- Addition of citation and requirements attendant to the baccalaureate degree.
- Elimination of a few sections considered to be too prescriptive.
- Reduction of redundancy.
- Clarification of intent for some sections.

The following is a summary of changes to specific components of the Standards:

Standard I

- The Standard now features three sections: Mission, Assuring Academic Quality and Institutional Effectiveness, and Institutional Integrity.
- The section on Mission has been expanded, reflecting the foundational role mission plays in defining a college.
- Academic Quality has been singled out as a subsection, and it contains expectations for defining and assessing student performance and completion outcomes.
- Institutional Integrity is now a separate section, containing existing and new expectations for integrity and honesty in actions, communications, and policies.

Standard II

- Standard II has two major sections: Instructional Programs, and Student Support and Library and Learning Resources.
- The Instructional Programs section delineates responsibilities and expectations for assuring academic quality, and it sets expectations for degree requirements, including general education.
- The section on Student Support and Library and Learning Resources defines expectations affecting co-curricular programs and athletics, and it defines expectations for academic advising and student pathways to completion.

Standard III

- The Standard maintains four sections: Human Resources, Physical Resources, Technology Resources, and Financial Resources.
- Under the Human Resources section, expectations are defined for qualifications of all personnel who have responsibility for academic quality.
- The section on Financial Resources remains largely unchanged from its last revision in 2012.

Standard IV

- The Standard now has four sections: Decision-Making Roles and Processes, Chief Executive Officer, Governing Board, and Multi-College Districts or Systems.
- The sections define specific expectations for delineation and distinction of roles and responsibilities in governance.
- The section on Multi-College Districts or Systems defines specific expectations for the functional relationship between a district or system and a college.