
CRITERIA FOR ACCREDITATION

COMMISSION ON COLLEGES



Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
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Special Notes to the Reader

1. The Classification of Institutions

Each candidate and member institution of the Commission on Colleges is classified according to its highest level of degree offered. Within the institution's level, it may also offer diploma and certificate programs as long as such programs are at or below the level of the highest degree offered. The following classification is used: Level I—institutions offering associate degrees; Level II—institutions offering baccalaureate degrees; Level III—institutions offering master's degrees; Level IV—institutions offering master's and specialist degrees; Level V—institutions offering doctoral degrees in three or fewer major academic or professional disciplines; and Level VI—institutions offering doctoral degrees in four or more major academic or professional disciplines.

2. Requirements and advisory statements

Statements throughout the *Criteria for Accreditation* using the word "must" (or similar imperatives) are interpreted to mean that institutions are required to meet those specific criteria. The imperatives are indicated in **bold**. Statements with the word "should" are advisory and are not requirements.

Statements throughout the *Criteria* which are bolded and italicized are criteria mandated by the *1992 Higher Education Amendments*. Institutions participating in Title IV Programs are required to meet these criteria. If the federal government alters the regulations, the Commission will apply the criteria in accordance to changes in the regulations.

In its formal report to the Commission, a visiting committee writes a recommendation when it is the committee's professional judgement that an institution does not comply with a requirement of the *Criteria*.

An institution must respond in writing to each recommendation included in the committee's report. Because "should" statements are advisory, an institution is not required to address the committee's suggestions in its response to the Commission.

3. Application of the *Criteria*

When a visiting committee finds that an institution has failed to comply with a requirement of the *Criteria* which did not exist when the institution initiated its self study, the committee will write a recommendation citing the deficiency. However, the committee will also acknowledge, with appropriate narrative, that the requirement at issue is a new one. The Criteria and Reports Committees can then provide some transitional period for the institution to come into compliance and can track the institution's progress in doing so. During the transitional time period, action on accreditation would not be deferred or denied solely on the basis of failure to meet new requirements.

Substantive changes to the required statements of the *Criteria*, as adopted by the College Delegate Assembly during its Business Meeting in December 1997, are underlined.

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Principles and Philosophy of Accreditation

The Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools is the recognized regional accrediting body in the eleven U.S. Southern states (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia) and in Latin America for those institutions of higher education that award associate, baccalaureate, master's or doctoral degrees. The Commission on Colleges is the representative body of the College Delegate Assembly and is charged with carrying out the accreditation process. The College Delegate Assembly, which consists of one voting representative for each of approximately 800 member institutions, elects the 77-member Commission. The U.S. Secretary of Education recognizes accreditation by the Commission on Colleges in establishing eligibility of higher education institutions to participate in programs authorized under Title IV of the 1992 *Higher Education Amendments* and other federal programs.

Accreditation is concerned principally with the improvement of educational quality throughout the region and ensuring to the public that institutions meet established regional standards. Accreditation of an institution by the Commission on Colleges signifies that the institution has a purpose appropriate to higher education and has resources, programs and services sufficient to accomplish its purpose on a continuing basis.

Accreditation by the Commission on Colleges is the result of thorough and careful evaluation of the educational quality of the institution. This qualitative evaluation depends heavily on the collective professional judgment of the faculty and administrative staff of the institution during the self-study process, peer review by a visiting committee, and final evaluation by the Commission. Professional judgment in the peer review process goes beyond a simple compliance audit of the minimum requirements in the *Criteria* and provides for quality assurance in accreditation.

The task of accreditation is related to the traditional public philosophy of the United States—that a free people can and ought to govern themselves and that they best do so through a representative, flexible and responsive system. Accordingly, the purposes of accreditation can best be accomplished through a voluntary association of educational institutions.

There are many issues to be considered at the regional level that might not be resolved as effectively in a state or national association. This does not in any way limit cooperation and exchange of ideas with other regional and professional accrediting associations which are largely parallel in aims and functions.

Regional accrediting agencies accredit the total institution. The accreditation of professional schools, divisions, departments or programs within complex institutions may be provided by other accrediting organizations. However, it is the responsibility of the Commission on Colleges to evaluate the work of specialized schools, divisions, departments or programs, even though they are accredited by the appropriate professional agencies. It is the prerogative of the Commission to accept or reject the evaluations of such agencies.

The Commission on Colleges supports the right of an institution to pursue its established educational purpose; the right of faculty members to teach, investigate and publish freely; and the right of students to have opportunities for learning. However, the exercise of these rights **must** not interfere with the overriding obligation of the institution to offer its students a sound education

leading to recognized certificates or degrees. Thus, criteria and procedures for accreditation have been developed which are used in evaluating an institution's educational effectiveness, defined in the broadest sense to include not only instruction, but also effectiveness in research and public service where these are significant components of an institution's purpose.

Initially and periodically, each member institution is required to conduct a self-study, which is subsequently evaluated at the institution by a committee of peer educators. This requirement helps ensure that an institution meets established standards of quality and that it evaluates the extent to which its educational goals are being met. The successful fulfillment of this requirement, along with demonstrated compliance with the *Criteria for Accreditation* and the Conditions of Eligibility, results in initial accreditation or reaffirmation of accreditation.

The self-study program, begun by the Commission on Colleges in 1957, has proven successful in strengthening higher education in the South. Once each decade, an institution accredited by the Commission conducts a self-examination from which are formulated recommendations for future improvements. The studies involve participation by the faculty, administrative officers, staff, students and trustees in a close examination of the institution. At the culmination of the study, a visiting committee of peers from other institutions assesses the educational strength of the institution. The self-study and subsequent visiting committee evaluation rely on the qualitative judgment of professionals in the higher education community.

The Commission on Colleges is particularly concerned with follow-up procedures and often requires a progress report resulting from the self-study and committee visit. The Commission reserves the right, with due notification to institutions involved, to make special studies of and visits to member institutions when circumstances warrant.

Accreditation is specific to an institution, is based on conditions existing at the time of the most recent evaluation, and is not transferable. When an institution changes

the nature of its affiliation or its ownership, a substantive
change review is required. (See Commission policy and
procedure documents pertaining to substantive changes.)

The Commission's philosophy of accreditation pre-
cludes denial of membership to a degree-granting insti-
tution of higher education on any ground other than, in
the professional judgment of peer reviewers, failure to
conduct an acceptable self-study, failure to meet the
Conditions of Eligibility, failure to comply with the *Cri-
teria for Accreditation* established by the College Dele-
gate Assembly, or failure to comply with the policies
and procedures of the Commission. The Commission
on Colleges applies the *Criteria* uniformly to applicant,
candidate and member institutions regardless of type of
institution.

In accordance with the procedures described in the
Commission policy entitled "Appeals Procedures of the
College Delegate Assembly," when an institution has
grounds for appeal in the accreditation process, the
chief executive officer of the institution may submit to
the Executive Director a request for an appeal. The
Executive Director will then arrange for a hearing ac-
cording to established appeals procedures.

Institutional Commitment and Responsibilities in the Accreditation Process

The effectiveness of self-regulatory accreditation depends upon an institution's acceptance of certain responsibilities, including involvement in and commitment to the accreditation process. An institution **is required** to conduct a self-study at the interval specified by the Commission and, at the conclusion of the self-study, accept an honest and forthright peer assessment of institutional strengths and weaknesses. The Commission **requires** that the self-study assess every aspect of the institution; involve personnel from all segments of the institution, including faculty, staff, students, administration and governing boards; and provide a comprehensive analysis of the institution, identifying strengths and weaknesses. In addition, the Commission **requires** an adequate institutional follow-up plan to address issues identified in the self-study.

An institution **must** be committed to participation in the activities and decisions of the Commission. This commitment includes a willingness to participate in the decision-making processes of the Commission and adherence to all policies and procedures, including those for reporting changes within the institution. Only if institutions accept seriously the responsibilities of membership will the validity and vitality of the accreditation process be ensured.

An institution of higher education **is committed** to the search for knowledge and its dissemination. Integrity in the pursuit of knowledge **is expected** to govern the total environment of an institution. Each member institution **is responsible** for ensuring integrity in all operations dealing with its constituencies, in its relations with other member institutions, and in its accreditation activities with the Commission on Colleges. Each institution **must** provide the Commission access to all parts of its

operation and to complete and accurate information 1
about the institution's affairs, including reports of other 2
accrediting, licensing and auditing agencies. In the spir- 3
it of collegiality, institutions **are expected** to cooperate 4
fully during all aspects of the process of evaluation: 5
preparations for site visits, the site visit itself, and the 6
follow up to the site visit. Institutions **are also expect-** 7
ed to provide the Commission or its representatives with 8
information requested and to maintain an atmosphere of 9
openness and cooperation during evaluations, enabling 10
evaluators to perform their duties with maximum effi- 11
ciency and effectiveness. 12

*Each participating institution must be in compliance 13
with its program responsibilities under Title IV of the 14
1992 Higher Education Amendments. Failure to comply 15
with Title IV responsibilities will be considered when an 16
institution is reviewed for initial membership or contin- 17
ued accreditation. In reviewing an institution's compli- 18
ance with these program responsibilities, the Commission 19
will rely on documentation forwarded to it by the Secre- 20
tary of Education.* 21

Each institution seeking candidacy, membership or reaf- 22
firmation with the Commission on Colleges **must** docu- 23
ment its compliance with the Conditions of Eligibility as 24
outlined in Section 1.4. 25

1.2

Application of the *Criteria*

The Criteria for Accreditation applies to all institutional 26
programs and services wherever located or however deliv- 27
ered. It is designed to guide institutions in all stages of 28
membership from initial application through initial ac- 29
creditation or reaffirmation of accreditation. Compliance 30
with the *Criteria for Accreditation* is intended to help an 31
institution achieve overall effectiveness and to ensure the 32
quality of its educational programs. The Commission on 33
Colleges shall apply the *Criteria* to all applicant, candidate 34
and member institutions regardless of type of institution, 35

whether for-profit, not-for-profit, private or public. The Commission grants or reaffirms accreditation only to institutions which comply with the *Criteria*.

A institution **must** refrain from making a substantive change, defined as a significant modification in the nature or scope of an institution or its programs, except in accordance with the Commission's Substantive Change Policy for Accredited Institutions and its attendant procedures. All existing or planned activities **must** be reported according to the policies, procedures and guidelines of the Commission on Colleges and **must** be in compliance with the *Criteria*. If an institution fails to follow the procedures outlined in the above policy, its total accreditation will be placed in jeopardy.

The Commission on Colleges takes no position on collective bargaining agreements, neither encouraging nor discouraging them. When an institution's purpose, policies or procedures are modified by collective bargaining agreements, the modifications do not affect the application of the *Criteria*, the self-study, the evaluation, or the reporting processes. The impact of a collective bargaining agreement will be included in the accreditation process when appropriate. When accreditation-related recommendations or suggestions are sent to an institution, they are intended to strengthen the total institution, not to influence collective bargaining negotiations.

The Commission on Colleges maintains a policy and procedure for considering formal complaints regarding member or candidate institutions. (See Commission document "Complaint Policy.")

Each institution must have adequate procedures for addressing written student complaints.

The Commission evaluates not only compliance with specific criteria but also the effectiveness of the institution as a whole and the environment in which teaching and learning occurs. Assessment of the overall effectiveness of an institution derived through the peer evaluation process, rather than simple compliance with specific criteria, shall be an overriding factor in the Commission's determination of whether to confer, or to continue, the accredited status of an institution. While

peer evaluators representing the Commission must
apply professional judgment in assessing compliance
with the *Criteria* and assessing overall effectiveness,
the final interpretation of the *Criteria* rests with the
Commission.

1.3

Separately Accredited Units

Accreditation of an institution includes all of its units
wherever located. A unit of an institution may be sepa-
rately accredited if a significant portion of responsibili-
ty and decision-making authority for its educational
activities lies within the unit and not in other units of the
institution or system.

It is the responsibility of the Commission on Colleges
to determine, following consultation with the chief ex-
ecutive officer of the institution, whether the institution
will be considered for accreditation as a whole or
whether its units will be considered for separate accred-
itation, and how the evaluation will be conducted. A
unit of an institution or system is eligible for separate
accreditation if it is evident that it has a significant de-
gree of autonomy and possesses the attributes which
will enable it to comply with the requirements of the
Criteria for Accreditation. A unit **is required** to apply
for separate accreditation or to maintain separate mem-
bership if, in the judgment of the Commission, the unit
exercises this level of autonomy.

If an institution seeks separately accredited status for
one of its units, it **must** notify the Executive Director of
the Commission on Colleges of its intent and follow
procedures established by the Commission. In all
cases, the Commission on Colleges reserves the right to
determine the accreditation status of separate units of an
institution.

Conditions of Eligibility

Any institution seeking candidacy **must** document its compliance with each of the thirteen Conditions of Eligibility to be authorized initiation of a self-study, or to be awarded candidacy or candidacy renewal. In addition, the institution **must** provide evidence that it is capable of complying with all requirements of the *Criteria* and that it will be in compliance by the end of the period allowed for candidacy.

The Conditions of Eligibility are basic qualifications which an institution of higher education **must** meet to be accredited by the Commission on Colleges. They establish a threshold of development required of an institution seeking initial or continued accreditation by the Commission and reflect the Commission's basic expectations of candidate and member institutions. Compliance with the Conditions is not sufficient to warrant accreditation or reaffirmation of accreditation. Accredited institutions **must** also demonstrate compliance with the *Criteria for Accreditation* which holds institutions to appropriately higher standards of quality.

1. In obtaining or maintaining accreditation with the Commission on Colleges, an institution **agrees** to the following:

- a. That it will comply with the *Criteria for Accreditation* of the College Delegate Assembly consistent with the policies and procedures of the Commission on Colleges.
- b. That the Commission on Colleges, at its discretion, may make known to any agency or member of the public requiring such information, the nature of any action, positive or negative, regarding the institution's status with the Commission.
- c. That it will comply with Commission requests, directives, decisions and policies, and will make complete, accurate and honest disclosure. Failure to do so is sufficient reason, in and of itself, for the Commission to impose a sanction, or to deny or revoke candidacy or accreditation.

2. The institution **must** have formal authority from an appropriate government agency or agencies located within the geographic jurisdiction of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to award degrees.

3. The institution **must** have a governing board of at least five members, which has the authority and duty to ensure that the mission of the institution is implemented. The governing board **is** the legal body **responsible** for the institution. Evidence **must** be provided that the board is an active policy-making body for the institution. The board **is** ultimately **responsible** for ensuring that the financial resources of the institution are used to provide a sound educational program. The board **must** not be controlled by a minority of board members or by organizations or interests separate from the board. The presiding officer of the board **must** have no contractual, employment, or personal or familial financial interest in the institution. The majority of other voting members of the board **must** have no contractual, employment, or personal or familial financial interest in the institution.

The bylaws of the board or other legal documents **must** ensure appropriate continuity in the board membership, usually by staggered terms of adequate length. The bylaws or other legal documents **must** ensure the independence of the board. Amendment of the bylaws **must** occur only by vote of the board after reasonable deliberation.

In the case of military institutions authorized and operated by the federal government to award degrees, the Commission recognizes the unusual responsibility of the government and the military for the ultimate legal authority of the institution. If such a military institution is prohibited by the authorizing legislation from having a board with ultimate legal authority, it **must** have a public board in which neither the presiding officer nor a majority of the other members are civilian employees of the military or active/retired military. This board, consisting of at least five members, **must** have broad and significant influence upon the institution's programs and operations. The military institution **must** demonstrate

that there is appropriate continuity in the board membership and that its board, in policy and practice, is an active policy-making body for the institution. The board **must** ensure that the financial resources of the institution are used to provide a sound educational program. The board **must** not be controlled by a minority of board members or by organizations or interests separate from the board except as specified by the authorizing legislation. The presiding officer of the board **must** have no contractual, employment, or personal or familial financial interest in the institution. A majority of the other voting board members **must** have no contractual, employment, or personal or familial financial interest in the institution.

4. The institution **must** have a chief executive officer whose primary responsibility is to the institution. The chief executive officer **must** not be the presiding officer of the board.

5. The institution **must** be in operation and have students enrolled in degree programs at the time of the committee visit.

6. The institution **must** offer one or more degree programs based on at least two academic years at the associate level, at least four academic years at the baccalaureate level, or at least one academic year at the post-baccalaureate level. The institution may make arrangements for some instruction to be provided by other accredited institutions or entities through contracts or consortia. However, the institution itself **must** provide instruction for all coursework required for at least one degree program at each level at which it awards degrees. Any alternative approach to meeting this requirement **must** be approved by the Commission on Colleges. In all cases, the institution **must** be able to demonstrate that it evaluates all aspects of its educational program.

The institution's degree programs **must** be compatible with its stated purpose and based upon fields of study appropriate to higher education. Institutions may experiment in developing and defining new fields of study, but the Commission cannot evaluate for membership an institution that offers only programs which

represent fields of study that are outside of the expertise of the Commission's accredited institutions.

7. The institution **must** have a clearly defined, published statement of purpose appropriate to an institution of higher education.

8. The institution **must** have an appropriate plan, as well as a functioning planning and evaluation process, which identifies and integrates projected educational, physical and financial development, and incorporates procedures for program review and institutional improvement.

9. The institution **must** have published admission policies compatible with its stated purpose.

10. All undergraduate degree programs of the institution **must** include a substantial component of general education courses at the collegiate level. For degree completion in associate programs, the component **must** constitute a minimum of 15 semester hours or equivalent quarter hours and for baccalaureate programs, a minimum of 30 semester hours or equivalent quarter hours. The credit hours **must** be drawn from and include at least one course from each of the following areas: humanities/fine arts, social/behavioral sciences, and natural sciences/mathematics. The courses **must** be designed to ensure breadth of knowledge and **must not** be narrowly focused on those skills, techniques and procedures peculiar to a particular occupation or profession.

11. The number of full-time faculty members **must** be adequate to provide effective teaching, advising and scholarly or creative activity. In each major in a degree program, there **must** be at least one full-time faculty member with responsibility for supervision and coordination of the major. In those degree programs for which the institution does not identify a major, this requirement **applies** to a curricular area or concentration.

12. The institution **must** have sufficient learning resources or, through formal agreements or appropriate technology, ensure the provision of and ready access to adequate learning resources and services to support the courses, programs and degrees offered.

13. The institution **must** have an adequate financial

base to accomplish its purpose at an acceptable level of quality on a continuing basis. The institution **must** provide financial statements and related documents (as specified in Section 6.3.6) which accurately and appropriately represent the total operation of the institution.

Any institution, whether a part of a system or not, which is seeking initial candidacy for membership, candidacy renewal, or initial membership **must** include in its application separate institutional audits and management letters for its three most recent fiscal years, including that for the fiscal year ending immediately prior to the date of the submission of the application. Further, it **must** have available the audit and management letter for the most recent fiscal year ending immediately prior to any committee visit for candidacy, candidacy renewal, or initial membership. These audits **must** be conducted by independent certified public accountants or an appropriate governmental auditing agency. An applicant or candidate institution **must** not show an annual or cumulative operating deficit at any time during the application process or at any time during candidacy. Applicant and candidate military institutions authorized and operated by the federal government to award degrees **must** provide financial information, as shall be required by the Commission, from appropriate governmental agencies. This information **must** accurately represent the total operation of the institution and **must** be sufficient to demonstrate adequate financial support of programs and operations.

Initial Membership

An institution seeking initial membership (accreditation), in addition to fulfilling requirements outlined in the *Criteria*, **must** document its compliance with all Conditions of Eligibility and **have been** in operation — i.e., have, without interruption, enrolled students in degree programs — through at least one complete degree program cycle and have graduated at least one class at the level of the highest degree offered prior to action by the Commission on Colleges.

Representation of Status

An institution **must** be accurate in reporting to the public its status and relationship with the Commission. In catalogs, brochures and advertisements a member institution **must** describe its relationship with the Commission **only** according to the following statement:

(Name of institution) is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097; Telephone number 404-679-4501) to award (name specific degree levels).

For institutions in Candidacy status:

(Name of institution) is a Candidate for Accreditation with the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097; Telephone number 404-679-4501) to award (name specific degree levels).

No statement **may be made** about possible future accreditation status with the Commission on Colleges. The logo or seal of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools **must not** be used by the institution.

Institutional Purpose

An institution **must** have a clearly defined purpose or mission statement appropriate to collegiate education as well as to its own specific educational role. This statement **must** describe the institution and its characteristics and address the components of the institution and its operations. The official posture and practice of the institution **must** be consistent with its purpose statement. Appropriate publications **must** accurately cite the current statement of purpose.

The formulation of a statement of purpose represents a major educational decision. It should be developed through the efforts of the institution's faculty, administration and governing board. It **must** be approved by the governing board. An institution **must** study periodically its statement of purpose, considering internal changes as well as the changing responsibilities of the institution to its constituencies. The statement of purpose serves as the foundation for all institutional operations, programs and activities. Consequently, the institution **must** demonstrate that its planning and evaluation processes, educational programs, educational support services, financial and physical resources, and administrative processes are adequate and appropriate to fulfill its stated purpose.

Institutional Effectiveness

The concept of institutional effectiveness is at the heart of the Commission's philosophy of accreditation and is central to institutional programs and operations. It pervades the *Criteria for Accreditation*. This concept presumes that each member institution is engaged in an ongoing quest for quality and can demonstrate how well it fulfills its stated purpose. The quality and effectiveness of education provided by each member institution are major considerations in accreditation decisions. Although evaluation of educational quality and effectiveness is a difficult task requiring careful analysis and professional judgment, each member institution is expected to document quality and effectiveness by employing a comprehensive system of planning and evaluation in all major aspects of the institution.

The Commission advocates no single interpretation of the concept of institutional effectiveness. It does, however, expect each member institution to develop a broad-based system to determine institutional effectiveness appropriate to its own context and purpose, to use the purpose statement as the foundation of planning and evaluation, to employ a variety of assessment methods, and to demonstrate use of the results of the planning and evaluation process for the improvement of both educational programs and support activities. Educational quality will be judged finally by how effectively the institution achieves its established goals.

It is implicit in every requirement in the *Criteria for Accreditation* mandating a policy or procedure that the policy or procedure be in writing, be approved through appropriate institutional processes, be published in

appropriate institutional documents accessible to those
affected by the policy or procedure, and be implement-
ed and enforced by the institution.

3.1

Planning and Evaluation: Educational Programs

Educational activities of an institution include teach-
ing, research and public service. Planning and evalua-
tion for these activities **must** be systematic, broad
based, interrelated and appropriate to the institution.
The institution **must** define its expected educational re-
sults and describe its methods for analyzing the results.
The institution **must**

1. establish a clearly defined purpose appropriate
to collegiate education
2. formulate educational goals consistent with the
institution's purpose
3. develop and implement procedures to evaluate the
extent to which these educational goals are being
achieved
4. use the results of these evaluations to improve ed-
ucational programs, services and operations.

The institution **must** develop guidelines and proce-
dures to evaluate educational effectiveness, including
the quality of student learning and of research and ser-
vice. This evaluation **must** encompass educational
goals at all academic levels and research and service
functions of the institution. The evaluation of academ-
ic programs should involve gathering and analyzing
both quantitative and qualitative data that demonstrate
student achievement.

Measures to evaluate academic programs and general
education may include the following: evaluation of in-
structional delivery; adequacy of facilities and equip-
ment; standardized tests; analysis of theses, portfolios,
and recitals; completion rates; results of admissions
tests for students applying to graduate or professional

schools; job placement rates; results of licensing examinations; evaluations by employers; follow-up studies of alumni; and performance of student transfers at receiving institutions. *The institution must evaluate its success with respect to student achievement in relation to purpose, including, as appropriate, consideration of course completion, state licensing examinations, and job placement rates.*

3.2

Planning and Evaluation: Administrative and Educational Support Services

In addition to providing evidence of planning and evaluation in its educational program, the institution **must** demonstrate planning and evaluation in its administrative and educational support services. For each administrative and educational support service unit, the institution **must**

1. establish a clearly defined purpose which supports the institution's purpose and goals
2. formulate goals which support the purpose of each unit
3. develop and implement procedures to evaluate the extent to which these goals are being achieved in each unit
4. use the results of the evaluations to improve administrative and educational support services.

Each unit, in its planning and evaluation processes, should consider internal and external factors and develop evaluation methods which will yield information useful to the planning processes of that unit.

Institutional Research

Institutional research **must be** an integral part of the institution's planning and evaluation process. It **must** be effective in collecting and analyzing data and disseminating results. An institution **must** regularly evaluate the effectiveness of its institutional research process and use its findings for the improvement of its process.

The institutional research process may be centralized or decentralized but should include the following activities: ongoing timely data collection, analysis and dissemination; use of external studies and reports; design and implementation of internal studies related to students, personnel, facilities, equipment, programs, services and fiscal resources; development of data bases suitable for longitudinal studies and statistical analyses; and related activities in support of planning, evaluation and management.

Institutions **must** assign administrative responsibility for conducting institutional research, allocate adequate resources, and allow access to relevant information.

Educational Program

The Commission expects each member institution to focus its resources and energies on the education of its students consistent with its purpose. Effectiveness in all educational programs, delivery systems, and support structures should be the primary goal of every institution. An effective institution of higher education demonstrates attention to curricular consistencies, pedagogical competence, student accomplishment, intellectual inquisitiveness, personal and professional development, ethical consciousness, academic freedom, faculty support, and an environment conducive to learning. It prepares its students to function in an increasingly diverse, complex and global society by imparting to them not only a mastery of a body of knowledge and technical skills but also by providing opportunities for them to develop enhanced communication skills and the ability to reason critically.

The principles of institutional effectiveness as outlined in Section III pertain to all academic programs and units of the institution. It is expected that each program or unit will establish goals which derive from and support the purpose of the institution, evaluate its success in achieving these goals, and demonstrate the use of the evaluation in making appropriate modifications in resources, programs and services.

It is implicit in every requirement in the *Criteria for Accreditation* mandating a policy or procedure that the policy or procedure be in writing, be approved through appropriate institutional processes, be published in appropriate institutional documents accessible to those affected by the policy or procedure, and be implemented and enforced by the institution.

General Requirements of the Educational Program

All aspects of the educational program **must** be clearly related to the purpose of the institution. The institution **must** provide a competent faculty, adequate library/learning resources, and appropriate computer resources, instructional materials/equipment and physical facilities. The student enrollment and financial resources of an institution **must** be sufficient to support an effective educational program.

In addition, the institution **must** ensure appropriate levels of student achievement and equivalent quality of programs regardless of method of instruction or location of program.

Undergraduate Program

4.2.1 Undergraduate Admission

General admission policies **must** be established by the governing board on recommendation of the administration. The board **is responsible** for deciding the size and character of the student body. Implementation of specific admission policies, however, **is the responsibility** of the administration and faculty of the institution. The unit responsible for administering the policies **must** be clearly identified. In those institutions in which various subdivisions maintain separate admission requirements, there **must** be institution-wide coordination of all admission policies and procedures.

Admission policies **must** be consistent with the educational purposes of the institution. They **must** include qualitative and quantitative requirements that identify students who demonstrate reasonable potential for success at the institution. An institution admitting

students with deficiencies in their preparation for collegiate study **must** offer appropriate developmental or remedial support to assist these students. Diagnostic testing should be an important element of a developmental or remedial program.

Each institution **must** regularly evaluate its admission policies. It **is the responsibility** of the institution to ensure that its recruiting activities and materials accurately and truthfully portray the institution.

To be admitted to degree programs, applicants **must** show evidence of high school graduation or other successful experiences which reasonably predict their ability to make satisfactory progress at the institution. Each institution **must** assess and justify the appropriateness of experiences offered in lieu of a high school diploma.

Procedures established for implementation of institutional admission policies **must** be followed in the admission of all students. The institution **must** provide evidence that it selects students whose interests and capabilities are consistent with the admission policies. An institution's admission and retention policies should not be compromised to maintain a desired enrollment.

An institution **must** clearly define and publish its policy on the admission of transfer students. The policy **must** include the following: the requirement for official transcripts of credits earned from all institutions of higher education previously attended; qualitative and quantitative criteria determining the acceptability of transfer work; criteria regarding the award of advanced standing, whether by credit earned at another institution, by advanced placement examinations, or through experiential learning; and conditions governing admission in good standing, admission on probation, and provisional admission.

Institutions which award credit based on advanced placement or other examinations; training provided by non-collegiate institutions, such as armed forces and service schools; professional certification; or experiential learning **must** meet the following conditions governing the award of such credit:

1. The amount of credit awarded is clearly stated and

is in accord with commonly accepted good practice in higher education.

2. Credit is awarded only in areas offered within the current curriculum of the institution, and is appropriately related to the student's educational programs.

3. Decisions regarding the awarding of credit and the determination of such credit are made by qualified faculty members at the institution, or according to procedures and standards approved by qualified faculty. The institution demonstrates that assessment procedures verify that the credit awarded is appropriate.

In awarding credit for prior experiential learning, the institution **must** (1) award credit only for documented learning which demonstrates achievement of all outcomes for specific courses in an approved degree program; (2) award credit only to matriculated students, identify such credit on the student's transcript as credit for prior experiential learning and, upon request from another institution, document how such learning was evaluated and the basis on which such credit was awarded; (3) ensure that credit for prior experiential learning does not duplicate credit already awarded or remaining courses planned for the student's academic program; (4) adopt, describe in appropriate institutional publications, implement and regularly review policies and procedures for awarding credit for experiential learning; and (5) clearly describe, and establish the validity of, the evaluation process and criteria for awarding credit for prior experiential learning.

The institution **must** inform transfer students of the amount of credit which will transfer, preferably prior to their enrollment, but at least prior to the end of the first academic term in which they are enrolled.

Coursework transferred or accepted for credit toward an undergraduate degree **must** represent collegiate coursework relevant to the degree, with course content and level of instruction resulting in student competencies at least equivalent to those of students enrolled in the institution's own undergraduate degree programs. In assessing and documenting equivalent learning and qualified faculty, an institution may use recognized guides

which aid in the evaluation for credit. Such guides include those published by the American Council on Education, the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, and the NAFSA: Association of International Educators.

There **must** be clearly defined policies regarding the academic dismissal, suspension and readmission of students. Readmission of students dismissed or suspended for academic reasons **must** be consistent with the academic policies of the institution.

4.2.2 Undergraduate Completion Requirements

In each degree program, there **must** be an appropriate sequence of courses leading to the degree. An institution **must** publish the requirements for each degree it awards. The requirements **must** be appropriate to the degree offered and **must** specify the total credits, the number and distribution of general education credits, the number of credits to be earned in the major or area of concentration, the number of electives, standards for satisfactory progress, and other degree requirements.

Undergraduate degree programs **must** contain a basic core of general education courses. A minimum of 15 semester hours for associate programs and a minimum of 30 semester hours for baccalaureate programs **are required** for degree completion. The core **must** include at least one course from each of the following areas: humanities/fine arts, social/behavioral sciences, and natural sciences/mathematics.

The institution **must** demonstrate that its graduates of degree programs are competent in reading, writing, oral communication, fundamental mathematical skills and the basic use of computers.

An institution **must** clearly define what is meant by a major or an area of concentration and **must** state the number of credits required for each. An adequate number of hours with appropriate prerequisites **must** be required in courses above the elementary level.

For degree completion, at least 25 percent of semester credit hours, or the equivalent quarter hours, **must** be

earned through instruction by the institution awarding the degree.

All courses, other than those identified by the institution as developmental/remedial, offered by an institution for credit **must** be acceptable as requirements or electives applicable to at least one of its own degree or certificate programs or **must** be clearly identified on transcripts as not applicable to any of the institution's own degree or certificate programs.

4.2.3 Undergraduate Curriculum

Curricula **must** be directly related and appropriate to the purpose and goals of the institution and the diplomas, certificates or degrees awarded; to the ability and preparation of the students admitted; and to the financial and instructional resources of the institution.

The institution **must** have a clearly defined process by which the curriculum is established, reviewed and evaluated. This process **must** recognize the various roles of the faculty, the administration and the governing board.

For each major in a degree program, the institution **must** assign responsibility for program coordination, as well as for curriculum development and review, to persons academically qualified in the field. At least one full-time faculty member with appropriate credentials, as defined in Section 4.8.2, **must** have primary teaching assignment in the major. In those degree programs for which the institution does not identify a major, the above requirements apply to a curricular area or a concentration.

The governing board **must** be responsible for approving the number and types of degrees; the number and nature of departments, divisions, schools or colleges through which the curriculum is administered; and the extent to which the institution should offer distance learning programs.

The administration and faculty **must** be responsible for the development of academic programs recommended to the governing board. They **are also responsible** for implementing and monitoring the general curriculum policy and the academic programs approved by

the board. There should be an institution-wide process to coordinate programmatic and curricular changes.

The institution should avoid the unwarranted proliferation of course offerings and degree programs. The development of new educational programs should be considered only after the institution has completed a needs assessment and has identified resources to support the programs. The institution should proceed only after careful review by appropriate faculty and administrative bodies, approval by the governing board, and any necessary review and approval by state or other agencies.

Curricula intended to provide basic preparation for students who will subsequently transfer to another institution **must** be designed to consider the institutions to which these students transfer. Associate and baccalaureate degree-granting institutions should work cooperatively to develop articulation agreements. The agreements should be evaluated periodically to ensure an equitable and efficient transfer of students. “Inverted,” “two plus two” and similar programs **must** include an adequate amount of advanced coursework in the subject field.

Institutions which enter into programmatic partnerships with secondary schools which result in the award of college credit, such as technical and dual enrollment programs, **must** ensure that the credit awarded is at the collegiate level and is in compliance with the *Criteria* and with Section IV in particular. Partnerships **must** be evaluated regularly by the participating institution of higher education. The participating institution **must** assume full responsibility for the academic quality and integrity of partnerships as measured by the *Criteria*.

4.2.4 Undergraduate Instruction

Instructional techniques and policies **must** be in accord with the purpose of the institution and be appropriate to the specific goals of an individual course. Instruction **must** be evaluated regularly and the results used to ensure quality instruction.

Students **must** be provided written information about the goals and requirements of each course, the nature of

the course content, and the methods of evaluation to be employed. Methods of instruction **must** be appropriate to the goals of each course and the capabilities of the students. Experimentation with methods to improve instruction **must** be adequately supported and critically evaluated.

An institution **must** use a variety of means to evaluate student performance. The evaluation **must** reflect concern for quality and properly discern levels of student performance. *An institution must publish its grading policies and its grading practices must be consistent with policy.*

The institution **must** evaluate the effectiveness of its instructional program by a variety of techniques, which may include the following: use of standardized tests and comprehensive examinations, assessment of the performance of graduates in advanced programs or employment, and sampling of the opinions of former students.

Courses offered in non-traditional formats, e.g., concentrated or abbreviated time periods, **must** be designed to ensure an opportunity for preparation, reflection and analysis concerning the subject matter. At least one calendar week of reflection and analysis should be provided to students for each semester hour, or equivalent quarter hours, of undergraduate credit awarded. The institution **must** demonstrate that students completing these programs or courses have acquired equivalent levels of knowledge and competencies to those acquired in traditional formats.

Effective instruction depends largely upon the maintenance of an environment conducive to study and learning. Therefore, an institution of higher education **must** provide for its students a learning environment in which scholarly and creative achievement is encouraged.

In certain professional, vocational and technical programs (for example, allied health programs), clinical and other affiliations with outside agencies may be necessary. In all such cases, learning experiences for which credit is awarded **must** be under the ultimate control and supervision of the educational institution.

The institution **must** demonstrate that an effective

relationship exists between curricular content and current practices in the field of specialization. *An institution must demonstrate that program length, clock hours or credit hours, and tuition and fee charges are appropriate for the degrees and credentials it offers.*

4.2.5 Academic Advising of Undergraduate Students

Each institution **must** conduct a systematic, effective program of undergraduate academic advising. A qualified advisor should be assigned early in the student's program and should recognize the individuality of students and their particular needs and goals. Advisors should be proficient in using data to help determine students' major fields of interest, should have access to each advisee's records, and should have appropriate training or background and experience to carry out their responsibilities effectively. An institution **must** ensure that the number of advisees assigned to faculty or professional staff is reasonable.

An effective orientation program **must** be made available to all full- and part-time undergraduate students. Orientation and advisement programs **must** be evaluated regularly and used to enhance assistance to students.

4.3

Graduate Program

4.3.1 Initiation, Operation and Expansion of Graduate Programs

The administration and faculty **must** be responsible for the development of new academic programs recommended to the governing board. A graduate program **must** have curricula and resources substantially beyond those provided for an undergraduate program. Research, scholarly activity and/or advanced professional training **must** be included in graduate studies and supported by adequate resources. An institution **must** provide a competent and productive faculty, adequate library and learning resources, adequate computer and

laboratory facilities, and an appropriate administrative organization.

An undergraduate institution planning to initiate its first graduate program, a graduate institution planning to initiate a program at a degree level higher than that already approved, or a graduate institution planning to initiate a program at the same level but substantially different from those already approved **must** inform the Executive Director of the Commission on Colleges in advance of the admission of students. (See the Commission document, "Substantive Change Policy for Accredited Institutions.") The institution also **must** document that any necessary approval from state or other agencies has been secured.

Before an institution moves from baccalaureate to graduate status, or attempts to expand the number of its graduate programs at the same level, it **must** demonstrate that it has conducted a thorough assessment of needs, market and environmental factors, and resource requirements and financial implications for the institution. (See Commission document "Substantive Change Policy for Accredited Institutions.")

Institutions **must** maintain strong educational programs at the master's and/or baccalaureate levels before attempting doctoral programs, or **must** justify their departure from the requirement. Free-standing graduate and professional schools are exempted from this requirement. However, they **must** demonstrate not only the strength of their individual programs, but also that students admitted have met undergraduate requirements specified for the program.

4.3.2 Graduate Admission

An institution **must** establish qualitative and quantitative requirements which result in the admission of students whose educational preparation indicates the potential for a high level of performance. Admission criteria typically include an appropriate baccalaureate degree. In cases where the baccalaureate degree is not required, the institution **must** demonstrate that the student has adequate educational preparation to complete the graduate

program. Admission procedures **must** include the requirement that an applicant submit, as part of the formal application process, official undergraduate transcripts of credit earned from all institutions of higher education previously attended; and other appropriate documents, such as official reports on nationally recognized aptitude tests and evaluations by professionals in the field as to the readiness of an applicant for graduate work. When possible, an interview with the applicant should also be arranged. Admission criteria for all graduate programs **must** be published.

Coursework transferred or accepted for credit toward a graduate degree **must** represent graduate course work relevant to the degree, with course content and level of instruction resulting in student competencies at least equivalent to those of students enrolled in the institution's own graduate degree programs. In assessing and documenting equivalent learning and qualified faculty, institutions may use recognized guides which aid in the evaluation for credit. Such guides include those published by the American Council on Education, the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, and the NAFSA: Association of International Education.

Graduate credit **must** not be awarded for portfolio-based experiential learning which occurs prior to the matriculation into a graduate program and which has not been under the supervision of the institution. This limitation on the award of credit for experiential learning does not preclude practices such as internships and field experiences that are an integral part of a graduate program and are conducted under the supervision of the institution. In those exceptional individual cases, however, an institution may award graduate credit for portfolio-based experiential learning which occurs prior to the student's matriculation into a graduate program. Justification for an exception **must** include adequate documentation that the institution: (a) awards credit only for documented learning which ties the prior experience to the theories and data of the relevant academic field; (b) awards credit only to a matriculated student, identifies

such credit on the student's transcript as credit for prior experiential learning, and is prepared, upon request from another institution, to document how such learning was evaluated and the basis on which such credit was awarded; (c) takes steps to ensure that credit for prior experiential learning does not duplicate credit already awarded for courses in the student's academic program; (d) adopts, describes in appropriate institutional publications, implements, and regularly reviews policies and procedures for awarding credit for experiential learning; and (e) clearly describes, and establishes the validity of, the evaluation process and criteria for awarding credit for prior experiential learning.

Separate admission criteria **must** be formulated for each level of graduate work offered. Policies **must** clearly define probation or conditional admission, if any, including the requirements for conditional admission and how long a student may remain in that status.

Admission criteria for each graduate program **must** be established with representation by the faculty responsible for instruction in that program. An institution **must** publish both the general criteria for admission and any special admission criteria for individual programs. It **must** regularly evaluate its admission policies.

4.3.3 Graduate Completion Requirements

General completion requirements for graduate degrees offered by an institution **must** be determined by the faculty or an appropriate body representing the faculty. Policies governing these requirements **must** include the following: the specified period of time for degree completion, requirements governing residency, thesis and dissertation requirements (when applicable), the minimum number of credit hours required for the degree, the minimum acceptable grade-point average, standards for satisfactory academic progress, the level of academic progress at which the student should apply for candidacy, and the types of qualifying and exit examinations the candidate must pass. These requirements, along with any others developed by the institution, **must** be published and distributed to all incoming graduate students

and be appropriate to the degree and program being offered. If individual academic units develop special completion requirements for their graduate programs, these requirements **must** be published in the official catalog.

All courses offered by an institution for credit **must** be acceptable as requirements or electives applicable to at least one of its own degree or certificate programs or **must** be clearly identified on transcripts as not applicable to any of the institution's own degree or certificate programs.

4.3.4 Graduate Curriculum

An institution offering graduate work **must** be able to demonstrate that it maintains a substantial difference between undergraduate and graduate instruction. Graduate study **must** be at a level of complexity and specialization that extends the knowledge and intellectual maturity of the student. It **must** require graduate students to analyze, explore, question, reconsider and synthesize old and new knowledge and skills. The graduate curriculum **must** afford the depth of education, the specialized skills, and the sense of creative independence that will allow the graduate to practice in and contribute to a profession or field of scholarship. Combined instruction of graduate and undergraduate students, if permitted at all, **must** be structured to ensure appropriate attention to both groups.

The curricular offerings **must** be clearly and accurately described in published materials. Curricula **must** be directly related and appropriate to the purpose and goals of the institution and the degree program, and to the financial and instructional resources of the institution.

The institution **must** have a clearly defined process by which the curriculum is established, reviewed and evaluated. The faculty and administration **are responsible** for implementing and monitoring the general curriculum policy and the academic programs approved by the board. There should be an institution-wide process to coordinate programmatic and curricular changes.

The governing board **must** be responsible for approving

the number and types of degrees; the number and nature of departments, divisions, schools or colleges through which the curriculum is administered; and the extent to which the institution should offer distance learning programs.

An institution **must** make a distinction between a course of study leading to the master's or specialist degree and a course of study leading to the doctorate.

A program leading to a master's or to a specialist degree **must** be the equivalent of at least one year of full-time graduate study. A master's or a specialist degree **must** provide the following: an understanding of research and the manner in which research is conducted; an understanding of the subject matter, literature, theory and methodology of the discipline; an association with resident faculty sufficient to permit their individual evaluation of the candidate's capabilities; and demonstrated means of certifying the knowledge and skills the candidate has acquired. A non-research-oriented professional master's degree **requires** an understanding of the accepted professional practices in the field. The institution **must** demonstrate that an effective relationship exists between curricular content and current practices in the field of specialization. *The institution must demonstrate that program length, credit hours, and tuition and fees are appropriate for its master's and specialist degrees and any other credential it offers.*

A doctoral degree program **must** be of sufficient duration to provide for substantial mastery of the subject matter, theory, literature, research and methodology of a significant part of the field, including any language or other skills necessary to its pursuit, and independent research as evidenced by a doctoral dissertation. A substantial period of residence **must** be included to provide student access to a wide range of support facilities, including a research library, cultural events and other occasions for intellectual growth associated with campus life, significant faculty/student interaction, opportunities for student exposure to and engagement with cognate disciplines and research scholars working in those disciplines, and significant peer interaction among graduate

students. It should provide the opportunity for a mentoring apprentice relationship between faculty and students as well as adequate time for in-depth faculty evaluation of students. For appropriate professional programs, a project may be substituted for the research dissertation. In such cases, the institution **must** demonstrate a substantial level of competency appropriate to a doctoral degree. There **must** be appropriate and regular means for determining candidacy and the fulfillment of degree requirements. The institution **must** demonstrate that an effective relationship exists between curricular content and current practices in the field of specialization. *The institution must demonstrate that program length, credit hours, and tuition and fees are appropriate for its doctoral degrees.*

The institution **must** conduct frequent systematic evaluations of graduate curricula offerings and program requirements. An institution **must** integrate research with instruction. Follow up of students is one method of testing the effectiveness of the graduate curriculum.

4.3.5 Graduate Instruction

The effectiveness of a graduate program depends largely on the scholarly stimulation obtained when a group of students interacts with faculty in complementary specialties. For this reason, graduate faculty members should be productive, creative scholars readily accessible to their students. The institution **must** provide an environment which supports and encourages scholarly interaction and accessibility among the faculty and students consistent with the qualitative intent of the *Criteria*.

Instructional methods and delivery systems **must** provide students with the opportunity to achieve the stated objectives of a course or program. Students **must** be informed of the goals and requirements of each course, the nature of the course content, and the methods of evaluation to be employed. Methods of instruction **must** be appropriate for students at the specified level of graduate study. Experimentation with

methods to improve instruction **must** be adequately supported and critically evaluated.

The institution **must** use a variety of means to evaluate student performance. This evaluation **must** reflect concern for quality and properly discern levels of student performance. *An institution must publish its grading policies, and its grading practices must be consistent with policy.*

Courses offered in non-traditional formats, e.g., concentrated or abbreviated time periods, **must** be designed to ensure an opportunity for preparation, reflection and analysis concerning the subject matter. At least one calendar week of reflection and analysis should be provided to students for each semester hour, or equivalent quarter hours, of graduate credit awarded. The institution **must** demonstrate that students completing these programs or courses have acquired equivalent levels of knowledge and competencies to those acquired in traditional formats.

There **must** be provision for assigning students to their advisors or directors, appointing their graduate committees, and monitoring their academic progress.

There **must** be frequent, systematic evaluation of graduate instruction and, if appropriate, revision of the instructional process based on the results of this evaluation. Information gained from the follow up of current or former students is one method of testing the effectiveness of graduate instruction.

4.3.6 Academic Advising of Graduate Students

Each institution **must** conduct a systematic, effective program of graduate academic advising. A qualified advisor should be assigned early in the student's program and should recognize the individuality of students and their particular needs and goals. Advisors should be proficient in using data to help determine students' major fields of interest, should have access to each advisee's records, and should have appropriate training or background and experience to carry out their responsibilities effectively. An institution **must** ensure that the number of advisees assigned to faculty or professional staff is reasonable.

An effective orientation program **must** be made available to all full- and part-time graduate students. Orientation and advisement programs **must** be evaluated regularly and used to enhance effective assistance to students.

4.4

Publications

The content and design of publications produced and distributed by an institution **must** be accurate and consistent in describing the institution and rigorously adhere to principles of good educational practice.

An institution **must** make available to students and the public accurate, current catalogs or other official publications containing the following information: entrance requirements and procedures; admissions criteria and policies, including the admission of transfer students; rules of conduct; academic calendar; degree completion requirements; full-time faculty and degrees held; costs and financial obligations; refund policies; and other items relative to attending the institution or withdrawing from it. (See Commission document "Institutional Advertising, Student Recruitment and Representation of Accredited Status.")

4.5

Distance Learning Programs

The Commission recognizes the legitimacy of distance learning, such as that conveyed through off-campus classroom programs, external degree programs, branch campuses, correspondence courses, and various programs using electronically-based instruction offered geographically distant from the main campus. An institution **must** formulate clear and explicit goals for its distance learning programs and demonstrate that they are consistent with the institution's stated purpose. Further,

an institution **must** demonstrate that it achieves these goals and that its distance learning programs are effective and comply with all applicable *Criteria*. (See Commission policy statement “Distance Education: Definitions and Principles.”)

4.6

Continuing Education, Outreach and Service Programs

The demands placed on individuals in today’s society require many to engage in life-long education. Most institutions of higher education have incorporated into their purpose an extension and public service component to provide for life-long learning opportunities. These opportunities are often referred to as continuing education, extension education, outreach, or public and community service programs. Such programs may be credit or non-credit, may be offered on or off campus, and may be offered through a variety of delivery systems.

Continuing education and outreach and service programs **must** be clearly related to the purpose of the institution. All continuing education programs, both credit and non-credit, **must** be evaluated regularly.

All continuing education and outreach and service programs offered for credit **must** comply with the requirements of the *Criteria*, and with Section IV in particular.

For non-credit continuing education programs, the institution should follow national guidelines for the recording of Continuing Education Units. (See Commission on Colleges’ document *C.E.U.: Guidelines and Criteria*.) For outreach and service programs, an institution **must** provide the resources and services necessary to support the programs and **must** evaluate the programs regularly.

An institution planning to initiate, through continuing education or outreach programs, a degree program **must** inform the Executive Director of the Commission on Colleges in advance of program implementation. (See

Commission document “Substantive Change Policy for Accredited Institutions.”)

An institution **must** not award academic credit for work taken on a non-credit basis without appropriate documentation that the non-credit coursework is equivalent to a designated credit experience. In such cases, the institution **must** document that the credit awarded for non-credit coursework represents collegiate coursework relevant to the degree, with course content and level of instruction resulting in student competencies equivalent to those of students in the institution’s own degree programs; and coursework taught by faculty members qualified to teach at the appropriate degree level. All credit-bearing continuing education courses and activities **must** comply with the requirements of the *Criteria*.

4.7

Student Records

The institution **must** have adequate student records for both credit and non-credit courses. Official student academic records for credit and non-credit courses should be maintained and stored in one central office at the institution. Complete back-up files, such as facsimiles, microfilm or electronic data banks, should be maintained continually, one set of which should be stored in a secure area outside the records office, preferably in a different building or at an off-site location. The institution **must** take all steps necessary to ensure the security of its student records, including storage in a secure vault or fireproof cabinet. Since computer generated and stored records present unique security problems, the institution should have in place special security measures to protect and back up the data.

The institution **must** have policies concerning what constitutes the permanent record of each student, as well as policies concerning retention and disposal of records. It **must** establish and publish information-release policies

which respect the rights of individual privacy, the confidentiality of records, and the best interests of the student and institution.

4.8

Faculty

The selection, development and retention of a competent faculty at all academic levels is of major importance to the educational quality of an institution. The commitment of faculty to institutional purposes determines in large measure the effectiveness of the total educational program. An institution **must** provide evidence that it has employed faculty members qualified to accomplish its purpose. Because of the importance of the faculty, the Commission on Colleges and its committees will give special attention to all criteria pertaining to faculty during institutional evaluations.

4.8.1 Selection of Faculty

An institution **must** show that it has an orderly process for recruiting and appointing its faculty. This process will normally involve developing a pool of qualified candidates and interviewing those who appear to be best qualified. Institutions are encouraged to recruit and select faculty with highest degrees earned from a broad representation of institutions. Recruitment and appointment procedures **must** be described in the faculty handbook or other published documents.

It is **expected** that an institution will employ faculty members whose highest earned degree presented as the credential qualifying the faculty member to teach at the institution is from a regionally accredited institution. If an institution employs a faculty member whose highest earned degree is from a non-regionally accredited institution within the United States or an institution outside the United States, the institution **must** show evidence that the faculty member has appropriate academic preparation.

Institutions **must** ensure that each faculty member employed is proficient in oral and written communication in the language in which assigned courses will be taught.

4.8.2 Academic and Professional Preparation

For the purpose of applying the *Criteria*, a full-time faculty member is one whose major employment is with the institution, whose primary assignment is in teaching and/or research, and whose employment is based on a contract for full-time employees.

Both full-time and part-time faculty **must** meet the following criteria for academic and professional preparation.

4.8.2.1 Associate

In an associate degree program, full-time and part-time faculty members teaching credit courses in the following areas: humanities/fine arts; social/behavioral sciences; and natural sciences/mathematics **must** have completed at least 18 graduate semester hours in the teaching discipline and hold at least a master's degree, or hold the minimum of a master's degree with a major in the teaching discipline. In exceptional cases, outstanding professional experience and demonstrated contributions to the teaching discipline may be presented in lieu of formal academic preparation in the above areas. Such cases **must** be justified by the institution on an individual basis.

The Commission encourages interdisciplinary courses and recognizes that appropriate credentials for teaching may vary. The institution **must** document and justify the academic and professional preparation of faculty members teaching in such courses or programs.

Each full-time and part-time faculty member teaching courses in professional, occupational and technical areas other than physical activities courses that are components of associate degree programs designed for college transfer, or from which substantial numbers of students transfer to senior institutions, **must** have completed at least 18 graduate semester hours in the

teaching discipline and hold at least a master's degree, or hold the minimum of the master's degree with a major in the teaching discipline.

Each full-time and part-time faculty member teaching credit courses in professional, occupational and technical areas that are components of associate degree programs not usually resulting in college transfer, or in the continuation of students in senior institutions, **must** possess appropriate academic preparation or academic preparation coupled with work experience. The minimum academic degree for faculty teaching in professional, occupational and technical areas **must** be at the same level at which the faculty member is teaching. The typical combination is a baccalaureate degree with appropriate work experience.

In exceptional cases, outstanding professional experience and demonstrated contributions to the teaching discipline may be presented in lieu of formal academic preparation for faculty members teaching both transfer and non-transfer courses in these areas. Such cases **must** be justified by the institution on an individual basis.

It **is the responsibility** of the institution to keep on file for all full-time and part-time faculty members documentation of academic preparation, such as official transcripts and, if appropriate for demonstrating competency, official documentation of professional and work experience, technical and performance competency, records of publications, certifications and other qualifications.

Non-degree diploma or certificate occupational courses are typically taught by faculty members with some college or specialized training, but with an emphasis on competence gained through work experience. While competency requirements may vary, they should be clearly defined by each institution. In all cases, faculty members **must** have special competence in the fields in which they teach. It **is the responsibility** of the institution to keep on file documentation of work experience, certifications and other qualifications if these are to substitute for or supplement formal academic preparation.

Faculty members who teach basic computation and

communication skills in non-degree occupational programs **must** have a baccalaureate degree and, ideally, should have work or other experience which helps them relate these skills to the occupational field.

Faculty members who teach adult basic education courses below the collegiate level **must** have a baccalaureate degree, and also should have attributes or experiences which help them relate to the particular needs of the adults they teach.

Faculty members who teach in remedial programs **must** hold a baccalaureate degree in a discipline related to their teaching assignment and have either teaching experience in a discipline related to their assignment or graduate training in remedial education.

4.8.2.2 Baccalaureate

Each full-time and part-time faculty member teaching credit courses leading toward the baccalaureate degree, other than physical education activities courses, **must** have completed at least 18 graduate semester hours in the teaching discipline and hold at least a master's degree, or hold the minimum of a master's degree with a major in the teaching discipline. In exceptional cases, outstanding professional experience and demonstrated contributions to the teaching discipline may be presented in lieu of formal academic preparation. Such cases **must** be justified by the institution on an individual basis.

The Commission encourages interdisciplinary courses and recognizes that appropriate credentials for teaching may vary. The institution **must** document and justify the academic and professional preparation of faculty members teaching in such courses or programs.

It is the responsibility of the institution to keep on file for all full-time and part-time faculty members documentation of academic preparation, such as official transcripts and, if appropriate for demonstrating competence, official documentation of professional and work experience, technical and performance competency, records of publications, certifications and other qualifications.

At least 25 percent of the discipline course hours in

each undergraduate major **must** be taught by faculty members holding the terminal degree, usually the earned doctorate, in that discipline. In some disciplines, the master's degree in the discipline may be considered the terminal degree, such as the M.F.A., the M.S.W., and the M.L.S.; in others, a master's degree in the discipline, coupled with a doctoral degree in a related discipline, is considered appropriate. However, it is the **responsibility** of the institution to justify the master's degree, or master's in the teaching discipline coupled with a related doctorate, as the terminal degree for faculty members teaching in these disciplines. The above requirement also **applies** to each major offered through distance learning, including those offered at branches or other sites.

Faculty members who teach in remedial programs **must** hold a baccalaureate degree in a discipline related to their teaching assignment and have either teaching experience in a discipline related to their assignment or graduate training in remedial education.

4.8.2.3 Graduate

Institutions offering either master's or specialist degrees **must** demonstrate a high level of faculty competence in teaching and scholarship. Institutions offering doctoral degrees **must** demonstrate the research capability of faculty members teaching in these programs. Eligibility requirements for faculty members teaching graduate courses **must** be clearly defined and publicized.

All institutions **must** have adequate resources to attract and retain a qualified faculty, especially in the disciplines in which doctoral programs are offered. Faculty members responsible for the direction of doctoral research **must** be experienced in directing independent study. In addition, those engaged in graduate teaching should demonstrate, by their involvement in institutional activities, their commitment to the academic community, the institution they serve, their students, and their academic disciplines.

Each faculty member teaching courses at the master's and specialist degree level **must** hold the terminal degree,

usually the earned doctorate, in the teaching discipline 1
or a related discipline. In some instances, the master's 2
degree in the discipline may be considered the terminal 3
degree, such as the M.F.A., the M.S.W., and the M.L.S.; 4
in others, a master's degree in the discipline coupled 5
with a doctoral degree in a related discipline is consid- 6
ered appropriate. It is the **responsibility** of the in- 7
stitution to justify the master's degree, or master's in the 8
teaching discipline coupled with a related doctorate, as 9
the terminal degree for faculty members teaching in 10
those disciplines. All faculty members teaching courses 11
at the doctoral degree level **must** hold the earned doc- 12
torate in the teaching discipline or a related discipline. 13

The Commission recognizes that in unusual cases in- 14
stitutions may appropriately include as graduate faculty 15
members those who have demonstrated exceptional 16
scholarly or creative activity, or professional experi- 17
ence, but who may not possess the required academic 18
credentials. There also may be an occasion when a new 19
graduate discipline is in its formative stage in higher 20
education and there are no faculty members available 21
with academic credentials in the discipline. In either 22
case, when an institution presents evidence of compe- 23
tence or academic credentials other than the doctorate 24
in the discipline for its graduate faculty, it **must** justify 25
the employment of such faculty. 26

The Commission encourages interdisciplinary cours- 27
es and recognizes that appropriate credentials for teach- 28
ing may vary. The institution **must** document and just- 29
ify the academic and professional preparation of 30
faculty members teaching in such courses or programs. 31

It is the **responsibility** of the institution to keep on 32
file, for all full-time and part-time faculty members 33
teaching graduate courses, documentation of academic 34
preparation, such as official transcripts and, if appropri- 35
ate for demonstrating competence, official documenta- 36
tion of professional and work experience, technical and 37
performance competency, records of publications, and 38
certifications and other qualifications. 39

An effective graduate program depends on the schol- 40
arly interaction of faculty. The appropriate number of 41

faculty members to adequately support a program varies according to discipline and the scope of the program. However, for each graduate degree program, an institution **must** employ at least four qualified full-time faculty members whose responsibilities include teaching in the program. All policies and regulations affecting graduate curricula, as well as requirements leading to graduate credit, certification and degrees, should be formulated by the graduate faculty or an appointed or elected group representing that faculty.

4.8.2.4 Distance Learning Programs/Activities

Institutions offering courses for credit through distance learning activities and programs **must** meet all criteria related to faculty. Whether through direct contact or other appropriate means, institutions offering distance learning programs **must** provide students with structured access to and interaction with full-time faculty members.

4.8.3 Part-Time Faculty

The number of full-time faculty members **must** be adequate to provide effective teaching, advising and scholarly or creative activity, and be appropriate to participate in curriculum development, policy making, institutional planning and governance. The employment of part-time faculty members can provide expertise to enhance the educational effectiveness of an institution but the number of part-time faculty members **must** be properly limited. Part-time faculty members teaching courses for credit **must** meet the same requirements for professional, experiential and scholarly preparation as their full-time counterparts teaching in the same disciplines.

Each institution **must** establish and publish comprehensive policies concerning the employment of part-time faculty members. It **must** also provide for appropriate orientation, supervision and evaluation of all part-time faculty members. Procedures to ensure student access to part-time faculty members **must** be clearly stated and publicized.

**4.8.4 Graduate
Teaching Assistants**

The employment of graduate teaching assistants is a well-established practice in higher education, but should be carefully monitored. An institution **must** avoid heavy dependence on graduate teaching assistants to conduct classroom instruction. Each institution employing graduate teaching assistants **must** provide a published set of guidelines for institution-wide graduate assistantship administration, including appointment criteria, remuneration, rights and responsibilities, evaluation and reappointment.

Graduate teaching assistants who have primary responsibility for teaching a course for credit and/or for assigning final grades for such a course, and whose professional and scholarly preparation does not satisfy the provisions of Section 4.8.2 **must** have earned at least 18 graduate semester hours in their teaching discipline, be under the direct supervision of a faculty member experienced in the teaching discipline, receive regular in-service training and be evaluated regularly.

The above requirements do not apply to graduate teaching assistants engaged in assignments such as assisting in laboratory sessions, teaching physical education activities, attending or helping prepare lectures, grading papers, keeping class records, and conducting discussion groups.

Institutions **may appoint** graduate teaching assistants for whom English is a second language **only** when a test of spoken English, or other reliable evidence of the applicant's proficiency in oral and written communication, indicates that the appointment is appropriate.

Institutions employing graduate teaching assistants **must** provide a structure for administrative oversight at a level above that of the individual academic units to ensure conformity with institutional policies and procedures.

**4.8.5 Faculty
Compensation**

An institution should provide adequate salaries and benefits to attract and retain able faculty members. The institution should also provide a retirement plan, to which it contributes a reasonable percentage of the

cost, and a plan for adequate insurance coverage. Salary increases **must** be based on clearly stated criteria.

**4.8.6 Academic
Freedom and
Professional
Security**

Faculty and students **must** be free to examine all pertinent data, question assumptions, be guided by the evidence of scholarly research, and teach and study the substance of a given discipline. Institutions may endorse particular religious or philosophical beliefs, or specific social principles as they relate to the institutional statement of purpose. Such beliefs and principles may influence the curriculum and the selection of students, faculty and staff. Nevertheless, institutions of higher education exist to further the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge.

An institution **must** adopt and distribute to all faculty members a statement of the principles of academic freedom as established by the governing board, ensuring freedom in teaching, research and publication. Institutional policies **must** set forth the requirement for faculty members to carry out their duties in a professional, ethical and collegial manner that enhances the purpose of the institution. Although tenure policy is not mandated, each institution **must** provide contracts, letters of appointment, or similar documents to faculty members clearly describing the terms and conditions of their employment. All policies regarding employment, as established by the governing board, **must** be published and distributed to the faculty. If the institution uses faculty ranks and tenure, the policies and procedures for promotion, for awarding tenure, for providing adequate notice on non-renewal of a probationary appointment, and for termination of appointments, including those for cause, **must** be clearly set forth in the faculty handbook or other official publication. Termination and non-renewal procedures **must** contain adequate safeguards for protection of academic freedom.

**4.8.7 Professional
Growth**

An institution **must** provide faculty members the opportunity to continue their professional development throughout their careers and **must** demonstrate that such development occurs. Among the means of

accomplishing this goal are leaves of absence for study and research, additional graduate work in the discipline, participation in professional meetings, and in-service training such as instruction in computer usage. The general tone and policies of an institution **must** make it clear that individual faculty members are to take the initiative in promoting their own growth as teachers, scholars and, especially in professional and occupational fields, practitioners.

4.8.8 The Role of the Faculty and Its Committees

Primary responsibility for the quality of the educational program **must** reside with the faculty. The extent of the participation and jurisdiction of the faculty in academic affairs **must** be clearly set forth and published. Much of their business will normally be conducted through such structures as committees, councils, and senates, operating within the broad policies determined by the administration and governing board.

4.8.9 Faculty Loads

An institution **must** provide a faculty of adequate size to support its purpose. It **must** have procedures for the equitable and reasonable assignment of faculty responsibilities—including classroom instruction, academic advising, committee membership, guidance of student organizations, and research and service to the public. The institution should have policies to protect faculty members from assuming or being assigned internal or external responsibilities which might encroach upon the quality or the quantity of the work they are employed to perform for the institution. The calculation of instructional loads should take into account such factors as number of preparations, number of students taught, nature of the subject, and help available from secretaries and teaching assistants.

4.8.10 Criteria and Procedures for Evaluation

An institution **must** conduct periodic evaluations of the performance of individual faculty members. The evaluation **must** include a statement of the criteria

against which the performance of each faculty member will be measured. The criteria **must** be consistent with the purpose and goals of the institution and be made known to all concerned. The institution **must** demonstrate that it uses the results of this evaluation for improvement of the faculty and its educational program.

4.9

Consortial Relationships and Contractual Agreements

The Commission on Colleges recognizes the right of a member institution to enter into consortial relationships and contractual agreements for the purpose of offering credit courses or programs. However, the Commission reserves the right to prohibit the use of its accreditation to authenticate credit courses or programs offered through such relationships. A member institution which enters into such consortial relationships or contractual agreements **must** have sufficient control of relationships/agreements so as to maintain compliance with the *Criteria* when offering educational programs through such arrangements. All consortia and contracts **must** be evaluated regularly.

If an institution plans to participate in consortial relationships or enter into contractual agreements for educational programs, it **must** follow reporting policies and procedures related to substantive change. (See the Commission's substantive change procedure on the initiation of a consortium or of contractual arrangements.)

4.9.1 Consortial Relationships

A member institution seeking to participate in a consortium degree or certificate program **must** enter into such a relationship only with regionally accredited institutions offering degrees or certificates at the same level. Exceptions **must** be approved by the Commission in advance of the formation of or participation in the consortium.

The member institution **must** maintain the quality of all courses/programs offered through the consortium. Educational courses/programs offered through a consortial relationship **must** be related to the teaching purpose of the institution and comply with the *Criteria*.

**4.9.2 Contractual
Agreements**

Educational services and programs offered through a contractual agreement with another institution or organization **must** support the purpose of the institution. The member institution **must** maintain the quality of programs/courses offered through the contract and ensure ongoing compliance with the *Criteria*. (See Commission document "Guidelines for Contractual Relationships with Non-Regionally Accredited Institutions.")

If an institution enters into a teach-out agreement with another institution, it must submit the agreement to the Commission for approval. (See Commission policy "Teach-Out agreements.")

Educational Support Services

An effective institution of higher education ensures that its educational programs are complemented by well-rounded support structures that stimulate the mind and encourage the total growth and development of students. A vital ingredient in this kind of support is student and faculty access to library and learning resources that not only support the educational program and appropriate research activities but also provide broad exposure to various disciplines, cultures and ways of understanding. An effective program of student development services, appropriate within the institutional context, is also integral to a sound educational experience.

The principles of institutional effectiveness as outlined in Section III pertain to all educational support services of the institution. It is expected that each program or unit will establish goals which derive from and support the purpose of the institution, evaluate its success in achieving these goals, and demonstrate the use of the evaluation in making appropriate modifications in resources, programs and services.

It is implicit in every requirement in the *Criteria for Accreditation* mandating a policy or procedure that the policy or procedure be in writing, be approved through appropriate institutional processes, be published in appropriate institutional documents accessible to those affected by the policy or procedure, and be implemented and enforced by the institution.

Library and Other Learning Resources

5.1.1 Purpose and Scope

Because adequate library and other learning resources and services **are essential** to teaching and learning, each institution **must** ensure that they are available to all faculty members and enrolled students wherever the programs or courses are located and however they are delivered. Each institution **must** develop a purpose statement for its library and other learning resource services. The library and other learning resources **must** be evaluated regularly and systematically to ensure that they are meeting the needs of their users and are supporting the programs and purpose of the institution.

The scope of library and other learning resources, the types of services, and the variety of print and non-print and electronic media depend on the purpose of the institution. Learning resources and services **must** be adequate to support the needs of users. The size of collections and the amount of money spent on resources and services do not ensure adequacy. Of more importance are the quality, relevance, accessibility, availability and delivery of resources and services, and their actual use by students, regardless of location. These considerations **must** be taken into account in evaluating the effectiveness of library and learning resource support. Priorities for acquiring materials and establishing services **must** be determined with the needs of the users in mind.

5.1.2 Services

Each institution **must** ensure that all students and faculty members have access to a broad range of learning resources to support its purpose and programs at both primary and distance learning sites. Basic library services **must** include an orientation program designed to teach new users how to access bibliographic information and other learning resources. Any one of a variety of methods, or a combination of them, may be used for this purpose: formal instruction, lectures, library guides

and user aids, self-paced instruction and computer-assisted instruction. Emphasis should be placed on the variety of contemporary technologies used for accessing learning resources. Libraries and learning resource centers **must** provide students with opportunities to learn how to access information in different formats so that they can continue life-long learning. Librarians **must** work cooperatively with faculty members and other information providers in assisting students to use resource materials effectively.

Libraries and learning resource centers should provide point-of-use instruction, personal assistance in conducting library research, and traditional reference services. This should be consistent with the goal of helping students develop information literacy—the ability to locate, evaluate, and use information to become independent life-long learners. Adequate hours **must** be maintained to ensure accessibility to users. Professional assistance should be available at convenient locations during library hours.

Library collections **must** be cataloged and organized in an orderly, easily accessible arrangement following national bibliographical standards and conventions. Students and faculty **must** be provided convenient, effective access to library resources needed in their programs. Convenient, effective access to electronic bibliographic databases, whether on-site or remote, **must** be provided when necessary to support the academic programs.

Libraries and other learning resource centers **must** have adequate physical facilities to house, service and make library collections easily available; modern equipment in good condition for using print and non-print materials; provision for interlibrary loan services designed to ensure timely delivery of materials; and an efficient and appropriate circulation system. Libraries should provide electronic access to materials available within their own system and electronic bibliographic access to materials available elsewhere.

5.1.3 Library Collections

Institutions **must** provide access to essential references and specialized program resources for each instructional location. Access to the library collection **must** be sufficient to support the educational, research and public service programs of the institution. The collections of print and non-print materials **must** be well organized. Institutions offering graduate work **must** provide library resources substantially beyond those required for baccalaureate programs. Librarians, teaching faculty and researchers **must** share in the development of collections, and the institution **must** establish policies defining their involvement.

Each library or learning resource center **must** have a policy governing resource material selection and elimination, and should have a procedure providing for the preservation, replacement or removal of deteriorating materials in the collection.

5.1.4 Information Technology

Although access to learning resources is traditionally gained through a library or learning resource center, a wide variety of contemporary technologies can be used to access learning resource materials. Institutions should supplement their traditional library with access to electronic information. Where appropriate, institutions should use technology to expand access to information for users at remote sites, such as extension centers, branch campuses, laboratories, clinical sites or students' homes. The institution **must** provide evidence that it is incorporating technological advances into its library and other learning resource operations.

5.1.5 Cooperative Agreements

Cooperative agreements with other libraries and agencies should be considered to enhance the resources and services available to an institution's students and faculty members. However, these agreements **must** not be used by institutions to avoid responsibility for providing adequate and readily accessible library resources and services. Cooperative agreements **must** be formalized and regularly evaluated.

5.1.6 Staff

Libraries and other learning resources **must** be adequately staffed by professionals who hold graduate degrees in library science or in related fields such as learning resources or information technology. In exceptional cases, outstanding professional experience and demonstrated competence may substitute for this academic preparation; however, in such cases, the institution **must** justify the exceptions on an individual basis. Because professional or technical training in specialized areas is increasingly important in meeting user needs, professionals with specialized non-library degrees may be employed, where appropriate, to supervise these areas.

The number of library support staff members **must** be adequate. Qualifications or skills needed for these support positions should be defined by the institution.

Organizational relationships, both external and internal to the library, should be clearly specified. Institutional policies concerning faculty status, salary and contractual security for library personnel **must** be clearly defined and made known to all personnel at the time of employment.

5.1.7 Library/Learning Resources for Distance Learning Activities

For distance learning activities, an institution **must** ensure the provision of and ready access to adequate library/learning resources and services to support the courses, programs and degrees offered. The institution **must** own the library/learning resources, provide access to electronic information available through existing technologies, or provide them through formal agreements. Such agreements should include the use of books and other materials. The institution **must** assign responsibility for providing library/learning resources and services and for ensuring continued access to them at each site.

When formal agreements are established for the provision of library resources and services, they **must** ensure access to library resources pertinent to the programs offered by the institution and include provision for services and resources which support the institution's

specific programs—in the field of study and at the degree level offered.

5.2

Instructional Support

To support its curriculum, each institution **must** provide a variety of facilities and instructional support services (e.g., educational equipment and specialized facilities such as laboratories, audiovisual and duplicating services, and learning skills centers) which are organized and administered so as to provide easy access for faculty and student users. They **must** be adequate to allow fulfillment of the institutional purpose and contribute to the effectiveness of learning. These requirements **apply** to all programs wherever located or however delivered.

5.3

Information Technology Resources and Systems

Information technology resources and systems are essential components in higher education. An institution **must** provide evidence that it is incorporating technological advances into its operations.

Information technology resources **must** support the planning function and the educational program component of the institution at appropriate levels. These resources include computer hardware and software, databases, communication networks, and a trained technical and user services staff.

Although the diversity of educational programs and goals will be a major determining factor in the selection of information technology resources by an institution, there must be a reasonable infusion of information technology into the curricula so that students exit with the

fundamental knowledge and basic ability to use these resources in everyday life and in future occupations. Institutions **must** provide the means by which students may acquire basic competencies in the use of computers and related information technology resources. A reliable data network should be available so that students, faculty and staff may become accustomed to electronic communication and familiar with accessing national and global information resources. There **must** be provisions for ongoing training of faculty and staff members so that they may make skillful use of appropriate application software. These requirements **apply** to all programs wherever located or delivered.

Policies for the allocation and use of information technology resources **must** be clearly stated and consistent with an institution's purpose and goals. These policies **must** be evaluated regularly to ensure that academic and administrative needs are adequately addressed. Appropriate security measures **must** be installed and monitored to protect the confidentiality and integrity of academic systems, administrative systems, and institutional networks. There should be a clearly defined program for maintaining and replacing equipment and software so that they remain consistent with current technology.

5.4

Student Development Services

5.4.1 Scope and Accountability

Student development services **are essential** to the achievement of the educational goals of the institution and should contribute to the cultural, social, moral, intellectual and physical development of students. To ensure effectiveness, the institution **must** develop goals for the student services program consistent with student needs and with the purpose of the institution. Appropriate student development services **must** be provided for distance learning programs as well as on-campus programs.

The institution **must** clearly designate an administrative unit responsible for planning and implementing student development services. Appropriate policies and procedures for student development programs and services **must** be established.

Student development services should be given organizational status commensurate with other major administrative areas within the institution. These services **must** be staffed by individuals who have academic preparation and experience consistent with their assignments. In exceptional cases, outstanding professional experience and demonstrated competence may substitute for academic preparation. Exceptional cases **must** be justified by the institution on an individual basis. Student development services and programs **must** be evaluated regularly.

5.4.2 Resources

Human, physical, financial and equipment resources for student development services **must** be adequate to support the goals of the institution. Staff development, should be related to the goals of the student development program and should be designed to enhance staff competencies and awareness of current theory and practice.

5.4.3 Programs and Services

5.4.3.1 Counseling and Career Development. Each institution should provide personal counseling services for students, as well as a career development program. An effective career development program should include career information and planning, placement services, career counseling, testing services and follow-up activities. There should be clearly specified policies regarding the use of career development services by students, alumni and employers.

5.4.3.2 Student Government, Student Activities and Publications. The institution **must** develop a statement of the student's role and participation in institutional decision-making.

The institution **must** have an activities program appropriate to its purpose and encompassing student interests.

The institution **must** develop policies and procedures governing the supervisory role of the institution over student activities.

Student publications can contribute to the establishment and maintenance of an atmosphere of responsible discussion. When student publications or other media exist, the institution **must** provide a clearly written statement of the institution's responsibilities regarding them.

5.4.3.3 Student Behavior. The institution **must** publish a statement of student rights and responsibilities and make it available to the campus community. The jurisdiction of judicial bodies (administrative, faculty and student), the disciplinary responsibilities of institutional officials, and all disciplinary procedures **must** be clearly defined and broadly distributed.

5.4.3.4 Residence Halls. If an institution has residence halls, it **must** develop policies and procedures governing them and **must** take reasonable precautions to provide a healthful, safe and secure living environment for the residents. The learning environment in the residence halls **must** support the educational mission of the institution. An adequate staff organization should be given responsibility for the administration of the residence hall system. The staff should have sufficient academic training and experience to enhance the learning environment in the residence halls.

5.4.3.5 Student Financial Aid. The institution should provide an effective program of financial aid consistent with its purpose and reflecting the needs of its students. Effective program administration should include counseling students on the efficient use of their total financial resources. There **must** be provision for institution-wide coordination of all financial aid awards.

All funds for financial aid programs **must** be audited in compliance with all federal and state requirements.

An institution participating in Title IV programs must comply with the regulations in the student loan programs as established under Title IV of the 1992 Higher Education Amendments. Excessive default rates

in the student loan program may be cause for conducting a special evaluation.

5.4.3.6 Health Services. An institution **must** provide access to an effective program of health services and education consistent with its purpose and reflecting the needs of its constituents.

5.4.3.7 Intramural Athletics. Intramural sports programs contribute to the personal development of students and should be related to the total program of the institution. These programs should be directed and supervised by qualified personnel and should be appropriately funded.

5.5

Intercollegiate Athletics

5.5.1 Purpose

The intercollegiate athletics program **must** be operated in strict adherence to a written statement of goals and objectives which has been developed by the administration, in consultation with the athletic director, with appropriate input from the faculty, and which has been given official institutional approval. This statement **must** be in harmony with, and supportive of, the institutional purpose and should include explicit reference to the academic success, physical and emotional well-being, and social development of student athletes. The intercollegiate athletics program **must** be evaluated regularly and systematically to ensure that it is an integral part of the education of athletes and is in keeping with the educational purpose of the institution. Evaluation of the athletics program **must** be undertaken as part of the self-study conducted in connection with initial accreditation or reaffirmation of accreditation.

5.5.2 Administrative Oversight

The administration **must** control the athletics program and contribute to its direction with appropriate participation by faculty and students and oversight by the governing board. Ultimate responsibility for that control **must** rest with the chief executive officer. It is **essential** that responsibilities for the conduct of the athletics program and for its oversight be explicitly defined and clearly understood by those involved.

5.5.3 Financial Control

All fiscal matters pertaining to the athletics program **must** be controlled by the administration, with ultimate responsibility resting with the chief executive officer. If external units (alumni organizations or foundations) raise or expend funds for athletic purposes, all such financial activities **must** be approved by the administration, and all such units **shall be required** to submit independent audits. The administration of scholarships, grants-in-aid, loans and student employment **must** be included in the institution's regular planning, budgeting, accounting and auditing procedures. All income, from whatever source, and expenditures for the athletics program **must** have appropriate oversight by an office of the institution that is independent of the athletics program. All such income and expenditures **must** also be appropriately audited.

5.5.4 Academic Program

Institutions **must** have clearly stated written policies pertaining to the recruitment, admission, financial aid, and continuing eligibility of athletes and, with faculty participation, **must** annually monitor compliance with those policies. The implementation of academic, admission and financial aid policies **must** be the responsibility of administrators and faculty not connected with the athletics program. If there are special admissions for athletes, they **must** be consistent with the institutional policy on special admissions for other students and be under the control of regular academic policies and procedures. Academic policies governing maintenance of academic good standing and fulfillment of curricular requirements **must** be the same for athletes as for other students.

Administrative Processes

The Commission on Colleges expects a member institution to have governance and administrative structures appropriate to higher education and have financial and physical assets adequate to support the purpose of the institution. Stability and security are crucial to institutional well being, as are effective resource procurement, deployment and accountability. Academic self-governance, a time-honored value, implies broad participation in policy-making and implementation. Planning for and garnering necessary support are also integral to the accomplishment of institutional purpose.

The principles of institutional effectiveness as outlined in Section III pertain to the governance, organization, administration and financial/physical management of the institution. It is expected that each office, function, or unit will establish goals which derive from and support the purpose of the institution, evaluate its success in achieving these goals, and use the evaluation in making appropriate modifications in resources, programs and services.

It is implicit in every requirement in the *Criteria for Accreditation* mandating a policy or procedure that the policy or procedure be in writing, be approved through appropriate institutional processes, be published in appropriate institutional documents accessible to those affected by the policy or procedure, and be implemented and enforced by the institution.

Organization and Administration

The administration of an institution of higher education **has the responsibility** for bringing together its various resources and allocating them effectively to accomplish institutional goals. Although the organizational pattern is important to an institution's development and affects the morale of its faculty, an identical pattern of organization for all member institutions is neither required nor expected.

6.1.1 Descriptive Titles and Terms

The name of an institution, the titles of chief administrators, the designations of administrative and academic divisions, the terms used to describe academic offerings and programs, and the names of degrees awarded **must** be accurate, descriptive and appropriate.

6.1.2 Governing Board

Although titles and functions vary, the governing board **is** the legal body **responsible** for the institution and for policy making. A military institution authorized and operated by the federal government to award degrees and prohibited by authorizing legislation from having a board with ultimate legal authority **must** have a public board which, in policy and practice, carries out the normal functions of a board as described in these criteria. Except under clearly defined circumstances, board action **must** result from a decision of the whole, and no individual member or committee can take official action for the board unless authorized to do so.

The duties and responsibilities of the governing board **must** be clearly defined in an official document. This document **must** also specify the following: the number of members, length of service, rotation policies, organization and committee structure, and frequency of meetings. There **must** be appropriate continuity in the board membership, usually provided by staggered terms of adequate length. In addition, the document should include

provisions governing the removal of a board member from office. A board member **may be** dismissed **only** for cause and by procedures involving due process.

The responsibilities of the governing board **must** include the following functions: establishing broad institutional policies, securing financial resources to support adequately the institutional goals, and selecting the chief executive officer. In addition, the governing board **must** have in place proper procedures to ensure that it is adequately informed about the financial condition and stability of the institution. The board **must** not be subject to undue pressure from political, religious or other external bodies. Furthermore, it should protect the administration from similar pressures.

There **must** be a clear distinction, in writing and in practice, between the policy-making functions of the governing board and the responsibility of the administration and faculty to administer and implement policy. General institutional policies should originate within the board or should be approved by the board upon recommendation of the administration. Once these have become official policies, the administration should implement them within a broad framework established by the board.

**6.1.3 Advisory
Committees**

Whenever lay advisory committees are used by institutions, these committees should be active and their role and function clearly defined.

**6.1.4 Official
Policies**

The institution **must** publish official documents which contain, but are not limited to, the following information: the duties and responsibilities of administrative officers, the patterns of institutional organization, the role of the faculty in institutional governance, statements governing tenure or employment security, statements governing due process, and other institutional policies and procedures that affect the faculty and other personnel.

**6.1.5 Administrative
Organization**

The administrative organization **must** reflect the purpose and philosophy of the institution and enable each functional unit to perform its particular responsibilities as defined by the stated purpose of the institution.

Administrative responsibility and authority for all educational offerings and functions of the institution **must** be clearly identified, and each institution **must** develop, publish and make available an organizational chart clearly delineating lines of responsibility and authority.

The duties of the chief executive officer, and of other administrative officials directly responsible to the chief executive, **must** be clearly defined and made known to faculty and staff. Administrative officers **must** possess credentials, experience and/or demonstrated competence appropriate to their areas of responsibility. The effectiveness of all administrators, including the chief executive officer, **must** be evaluated periodically.

6.2

Institutional Advancement

Each institution should have a program of institutional advancement, which may include development and fund raising, institutional relations and alumni affairs. If there is an advancement program, it **must** be directly related to the purpose of the institution. Qualified persons should be responsible for administration of the program.

**6.2.1 Alumni
Affairs**

The relationship between the institution and its alumni should be one that encourages former students to continue to participate in the development of the institution. It should also assist in the evaluation of institutional effectiveness. Institutions are encouraged to maintain up-to-date records on the location of former students and to employ periodic surveys.

**6.2.2 Fund
Raising**

All fund raising **must** be related to the purpose of the institution. All aspects of fund raising **must** be incorporated into the planning process and evaluated regularly. An institution **must** develop policies and procedures for fund raising and ensure that such policies are appropriately disseminated and followed.

6.3

Financial Resources

**6.3.1 Financial
Resources**

Because the financial resources of an institution influence the quality of its educational program, each institution **must** possess sufficient financial resources to support all of its programs. The recent financial history of the institution **must** also demonstrate the financial stability essential to its successful operation. The adequacy of financial resources will be judged in relation to the basic purpose of the institution, the scope of its programs, and its number of students.

**6.3.2 Organization
for the Administration
of Financial Resources**

All business and financial functions of the institution should be centralized under a chief business officer reporting to the chief executive officer. The organization of the business office **must** be consistent with the purpose of the institution, the size of the institution, and the volume of transactions of a business or financial nature. The most important functions typically performed by the business office include assistance to the chief executive officer in preparation and control of the institutional budget; establishment and operation of an appropriate system of accounting and financial reporting; supervision of the operation and maintenance of the physical plant; procurement of supplies and equipment; control of inventories; financial oversight of auxiliary enterprises; receipt, custody and disbursement of institutional funds; maintenance of personnel records; and administration of personnel policies governing the staff.

The chief executive officer **must** report regularly to the governing board on the financial and business operations of the institution.

The chief business officer should have experience or training in handling educational business affairs sufficient to enable the business office to serve the educational goals of the institution and assist in furthering its stated purpose.

6.3.3 Budget Planning

The budget is a statement of estimated income and expenditures for a fixed period of time, usually the fiscal year of the institution. An institution **must** prepare an appropriately detailed annual budget. Its preparation and execution **must** be preceded by sound educational planning. It follows that the instructional budget should be substantively developed by academic officers or deans, working cooperatively with department heads, appropriate members of the faculty and administration, and representatives of the business office. Procedures for budget planning **must** be evaluated regularly.

Similarly, budgets for other areas should be developed after consultation with appropriate officers of the institution. The business officer may assist in assembling and compiling the budget requests, preparing income estimates, and advising the chief executive officer in the determination of budgetary allocations. The budget **is presented** by the chief executive officer through proper channels to the governing board for final approval. In reviewing the budget, the governing board should focus on matters of broad policy and normally should not concern itself with details.

6.3.4 Budget Control

After the budget has been approved by the chief executive officer and adopted by the governing board, a system of control **must** be established. This ensures that the budgetary plans of the governing board and the chief executive officer will be implemented. The business officer **must** render interim budget statements on a periodic basis to department heads for their guidance in

staying within budgetary allocations. Budgetary control is an administrative function, not a board function.

Necessary budget revisions **must** be made when actual conditions require such change and **must** be communicated to those affected within the institution.

**6.3.5 The Relation
of an Institution
to External
Budgetary
Control**

No outside or superimposed agency should exercise specific and detailed control over the financial affairs of an institution. Once funds have been appropriated, creating a budget, establishing priorities, and controlling expenditures **become the responsibility** of the institution—operating under the jurisdiction of the governing board and subject to its policies. Enforcement of budgetary law is imperative; however, the educational function of an institution **must** not be controlled through the use of budgetary techniques or controls by financial officials outside the institution.

**6.3.6 Accounting,
Reporting
and Auditing**

An institution **must** adopt an accounting system that follows generally accepted principles of institutional accounting as they appear in *College and University Business Administration*, published by the National Association of College and University Business Officers. Proprietary institutions and certain public institutions mandated by law to follow a different system are exceptions to the requirement. Institutions exempted from use of the required accounting system **must** arrange to provide comparable information. All proprietary institutions **must** provide revenue/expenditure reports consistent with NACUBO/AICPA publications, either independently certified in the audit report or included as supplemental data in the audit report. Balance sheets may continue to follow the conventional for-profit format, if desired.

The chief business officer **is responsible** for preparing financial reports for appropriate institutional officials, board officers and outside agencies. Periodic written reports to the chief executive officer of the institution **are essential**.

An annual fiscal year audit **must** be made by independent certified public accountants, or an appropriate government auditing agency, employing as a guide for institutions under the jurisdiction of the Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB), *Audits of Not-For-Profit Organizations*, published by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA), or, for institutions under the jurisdiction of the Government Accounting Standards Board (GASB), *Audits of Colleges and Universities*, also published by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA), or, in the case of for-profit institutions, conducted in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles.

If an institution is subject to Statement of Financial Accounting Standard (SFAS) No. 117 and elects to use the single column "Corporate" Statement of Financial Position in its report, it **must** provide an additional Statement of Financial Position using one of the four highest levels of disaggregation illustrated in F.A.R.M. These levels are the Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB) Net Asset Class Disaggregation, Operating/Capital Disaggregation, Managed Asset Group Disaggregation, and AICPA Audit Guide Funds Group Disaggregation. The additional statement **must** be included either in the audit report as an audited supplemental schedule or independently certified if not included in the audit report.

A for-profit institution and its corporate parent, if any, **must** add to their audit report a separate schedule indicating the disposition of profits, including detailed information on corporate income taxes paid, both state and federal, and on dividends distributed to stockholders.

A public institution included in a statewide or systemwide audited financial report, for which a separate institutional audit report is not available for the fiscal year ending immediately prior to the committee visit, **must** have available, in lieu of audited financial statements, a Standard Review Report in accordance with AICPA Professional Standards AR 100.35 to include current funds expenditure classifications and amounts in accordance with generally accepted principles of

institutional accounting, and the institution's current fund balance sheet. Institutions in this category **must** provide either a separate or a consolidated balance sheet.

The auditors **must** not be directly connected with the institution either personally or professionally.

An effective program of internal auditing and financial control **must** be maintained to complement the accounting system and the annual external audit. However, in those cases in which a public institution's financial report is included as part of a comprehensive certified state or system financial report and a separate annual audited report is not available, the institution **must** have an established procedure to ensure the effectiveness of internal controls.

6.3.7 Purchasing and Inventory Control

An institution **must** maintain proper control over purchasing and inventory management. The administration and governing board should protect responsible purchasing officials from the improper pressures of external political or business interests. A logical adjunct of the purchasing function is a system of well-organized storerooms such as those for physical plant, library and office and laboratory supplies, as well as an inventory system appropriate to safeguard the institution from loss of equipment.

6.3.8 Refund Policy

The institution **must** adhere to a published policy and procedure for refunding fees and charges to students who withdraw from enrollment. The policy and procedure **must** be in keeping with generally accepted refund practices in the higher education community, applicable to all students, and clearly stated in appropriate official publications.

6.3.9 Cashiering

There **must** be a suitable organization and adequate procedures for the management of all funds belonging to the institution.

The cashiering function should be centralized in the business office, and there **must** be a carefully developed system for the receipt, deposit and safeguarding of institutional funds.

All persons handling institutional funds **must** be adequately bonded.

6.3.10 Investment Management

The institution **must** have a written statement of its investment policies and guidelines approved by the board. The policies and guidelines should set forth the investment goals of the institution, conditions governing the granting or withholding of investment discretion, a description of authorized and prohibited transactions, and the criteria to be used for performance measurement of both short- and long-term investments.

Members of the governing board should be aware of their fiduciary responsibility for the institution and their responsibility for securing maximum investment returns consistent with the approved investment policy. They should avoid involvement in conflict of interest situations. Investment policies and guidelines **must** be evaluated regularly.

6.3.11 Risk Management and Insurance

The institution should have a comprehensive risk management program which includes risk evaluation, risk avoidance and insurance.

Adequate replacement protection for all physical facilities should be covered by appropriate levels of insurance or appropriate provisions for obtaining funds.

6.3.12 Auxiliary Enterprise

The institution may operate, or have contracted for operation, activities that may have a significant impact on the operation of the institution. These activities may include, but are not limited to, the following: bookstores, residence halls, food service operations, printing/duplicating services, child care and transportation services. These activities, when operated by or for the institution, **must** be documented and operated in a fiscally responsible manner.

Physical Resources

Physical resources, including buildings and equipment both on and off campus, **must** be adequate to serve the needs of the institution in relation to its stated purpose, programs and activities. The physical environment of the institution should contribute to an atmosphere for effective learning.

6.4.1 Space Management

Space allocated to any institutional function **must** be adequate for the effective conduct of that function.

6.4.2 Buildings, Grounds and Equipment Maintenance

An institution **must** have a plan for the upkeep of its property. At a minimum, the plan **must** address routine, preventative and deferred maintenance of buildings, equipment and grounds. Where appropriate, it should verify the estimated costs of maintenance as well as when and how it is to be performed. There should be a written schedule for regular maintenance activities and a written record of projects completed. The plan **must** be operational and evaluated annually.

6.4.3 Safety and Security

The institution **must** take reasonable steps to provide a healthful, safe and secure environment for all members of the campus community. Administrative responsibility for environmental health and safety programs **must** be assigned. A comprehensive safety plan **must** be developed, implemented and evaluated regularly. The plan should give special attention to the adequate provision and use of safety equipment in laboratories and other hazardous areas; to the modification of buildings, if necessary, for easy egress in the event of fire or other emergency; and to familiarizing all building occupants with emergency evacuation procedures.

**6.4.4 Facilities
Master Plan**

The institution **must** maintain a current written physical facilities master plan that provides for orderly development of the institution and relates it to other institutional planning efforts.

6.5

Externally Funded Grants and Contracts

Externally funded grants and contracts **must** be related to the stated purpose of the institution. The institution's policy on such grants and contracts **must** provide for an appropriate balance between grant and contract activity and instruction, and guarantee institutional control over the administration of research projects. The researcher's freedom to investigate and report results **must** be preserved. Research support from outside agencies should not undermine these basic research principles.

The institution **must** establish a clear policy concerning a faculty member's division of obligations between research and other academic activities. It **must** ensure that this policy is published in such documents as the faculty handbook and made known to all faculty members. Where applicable, the institution **must** develop policies regarding summer salaries paid from grant and contract funds, salary supplements paid from grants during the regular academic year, and fees for consultative services provided by faculty members. These policies **must** also be published and made known to the faculty.

In accepting funds from outside agencies, the institution **must** ensure that it maintains control over research and instruction. Because many agencies attach stringent regulations directing and limiting the activities for which they provide funding, the institution **must** safeguard control over its own activities.

Continuity of support for general institutional activities **must** not be endangered by acquisition of research

grants and contracts. Grants **must** be awarded and contracts **must** be made for specified periods of time. When the institution becomes even partially dependent upon such funds for faculty salaries and/or graduate student stipends, termination of grants and contracts can jeopardize an entire educational program. It is **also important** that an institution not become dependent upon indirect cost allowances from grants and contracts to support its regular operating budget.

6.6

Related Corporate Entities

Institutions are often associated with related separately-incorporated units, such as radio or television stations, athletic foundations, research foundations, scholarship foundations, hospitals, for-profit enterprises, press operations and publications, and insurance trusts. When an institution is reliant upon such an entity, or when a separately-incorporated or related entity is reliant upon the institution, documentation outlining the mutual relationship and benefits **must** be maintained by the institution. This documentation **must** include the following: a description of the separately-incorporated unit's activities; a statement demonstrating the manner in which the activities relate to the purpose of the institution; a current roster of board members of the unit, including institutional personnel and board members who have responsibilities with both the institution and the incorporated entity, whether they are additionally compensated by the entity or not; a copy of the separately incorporated unit's annual financial audit report for the most recently completed year; and copies of the charter and bylaws of the unit.

If such entities are reliant upon the institution for fulfillment of their purposes, the institution should ensure that they complement, rather than detract from, the institution's purpose, and that they are subject to proper

operating controls and risk-liability containment. The¹
institution should demonstrate the manner in which²
each related entity contributes to its effectiveness.³

An Addendum to the Criteria for Accreditation

Institutions participating in Title IV federal programs are responsible for complying with criteria mandated by the 1992 *Higher Education Amendments* and its subsequent 1998 revision and attending regulations. While most of the criteria have been incorporated into the 1998 edition of the *Criteria for Accreditation*, the Commission is also required to have standards that "effectively address the quality of the institution in the following areas: (1) recruiting practices; and (2) record of student complaints received by, or available to, the agency." {602.16 (1)}

Consequently, in addition to the statements in the *Criteria for Accreditation*, an institution participating in Title IV federal programs must comply with the following requirements:

1. Recruitment materials and presentations accurately represent the institution's practices and policies .
2. Each institution must have adequate procedures for addressing written student complaints (*currently in Criteria, page 7, lines 31-32*), and is responsible for demonstrating that it follows those procedures when resolving student complaints. (See Commission policy "The Review of Complaints Involving the Commission or Its Accredited Institutions.")

When evaluating an institution's compliance with the above criteria, visiting committees will review documentation presented by the institution that indicates that the institution's educational practices reflect their policies.

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