ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR COMMUNITY AND JUNIOR COLLEGES
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

Policy on Student and Public Complaints Against Institutions
(Adopted June 1972, Revised January 1984, January 1993; Edited October 1997;
Revised June 2001; Edited August 2007; Revised January 2013; Edited April 2013)

Accreditation by the Accrediting Commission of Community and Junior Colleges, Western
Association of Schools and Colleges is an expression of confidence that an institution is
satisfactorily achieving its objectives, and that it meets or exceeds the Commission's
Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards and abides by Commission policies. The
Commission is concerned with institutional integrity and with performance consistent with
Accreditation Standards and policies. While it cannot intervene in the internal procedures of
institutions or act as a regulatory body, the Commission can and does respond to complaints
regarding allegations of conditions at affiliated institutions that raise significant questions
about the institution's compliance with the Accreditation Standards expected of an accredited
institution.

The Commission does not consider allegations concerning the personal lives of individuals
connected with its affiliated institutions. It assumes no responsibility for adjudicating
isolated individual grievances between students, faculty, or members of the public and
individual institutions. The Commission will not act as a court of appeal in matters of
admission, granting or transfer of academic credit, grades, fees, student financial aid,
student discipline, collective bargaining, faculty appointments, promotion, tenure and
dismissals or similar matters.

The Commission requires that each accredited institution have in place student grievance and
public complaint policies and procedures that are reasonable, fairly administered, and well
publicized. A complainant filing a complaint with the Commission should demonstrate that a
serious effort has been made to pursue all review procedures provided by the institution.

Complaints are considered only when made in writing, when the complainant is clearly
identified, and the complainant's address is included. Substantial evidence should be
included in support of the allegation that the institution is in significant violation of the
Commission's Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies.
Such evidence should state relevant and provable facts.

When the Commission receives a complaint about a candidate or accredited institution, it
reviews that information to determine if it is relevant to the compliance of that institution
with Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Commission Standards and Commission policies.
If appropriate, such information may be referred to the institution and/or to the visiting team
next scheduled to evaluate the institution. The Commission at all times reserves the right to
request information of an affiliated institution and to visit that institution for purposes of
fact-finding, consistent with Commission policy. If Commission investigation yields credible
evidence that indicates a systemic problem that calls into question the institution's ability to
meet Commission Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards and Commission
policies, the Commission may invoke the sanctions provided for in policy.
Procedures

1. Within ten days of the receipt of a complaint it will be acknowledged in writing and initially reviewed by the staff of the Commission.

It is the complainant's responsibility to do the following:

a. State the complaint in the clearest possible terms.

b. Provide, in writing, a clear description of the evidence upon which the allegation is based.

c. Demonstrate that all remedies available at the institution (grievance procedures, appeals, hearings, etc.) have been exhausted. The complainant should describe what has been done in this regard.

d. Acknowledge awareness that Commission staff may send a copy of the complaint to the president of the institution.

e. Include name and address.

f. Sign the complaint.

2. Within ten days of the receipt of a complaint it will be acknowledged in writing and initially reviewed by the staff of the Commission. Individual complaints, whether acted upon or not by the Commission, will be retained in Commission files.

3. If the Commission staff finds the complaint to be not within the scope of Commission policies and jurisdiction, the complainant will be so notified.

4. If the complaint appears to be within the scope of Commission policies and jurisdiction, and is substantially documented, a copy of the complaint will be forwarded to the institution's chief executive, who will be asked to respond to complaint by addressing a letter and any supporting evidence to the Vice President of the Commission within thirty days.

5. The Commission staff will review the complaint, the response, and evidence submitted by the institution's president, and will determine one of the following:

a. That the complaint will not be processed further. The complainant will be so notified within ten days.

b. That the complaint has sufficient substance to warrant further investigation. If the Commission decides to investigate a complaint, it will inform the complainant of its decision to investigate at the same time it informs the institution of its intent to investigate.

6. As part of its investigation, the Commission may request information of the institution and may send representatives to visit that institution for purposes of fact-finding. The Commission may also request information of other agencies that accredit the institution or authorize it to operate, and of the U.S. Department of Education. If further investigation is warranted, the time to conduct the investigation may vary considerably depending on the circumstances and the nature of the complaint.

7. The Commission will prepare a Report of the Findings of the Complaint Investigation. Prior to the Commission's disposition of the complaint, the institution will have an
opportunity to respond in writing within thirty days to the findings of the investigation.

8. The Commission will consider the Complaint, the Report of the Findings of the Complaint Investigation, and any institutional response to the findings of the investigation in reaching a disposition on the Complaint. Although every effort will be made to expedite a decision, it is not possible to guarantee a specific time frame in which the process will be completed.

9. If the Commission's deliberations conclude that there is credible evidence that the institution is not meeting Accreditation Standards or complying with Commission policies, the Commission may (a) provide directives to the institution to take immediate corrective actions, or (b) invoke any of the sanctions provided for in policy. The Commission will also schedule appropriate monitoring of the institution's subsequent response, including calling for Special Reports and visits by Commission representatives.

10. The decision is final and will be communicated by the Vice President of the Commission to the institution and the complainant. If the complaint was referred to ACCJC by another agency, the Commission will provide that agency with copies of correspondence that state the outcome of the complaint within ten days of the Commission decision on the disposition of the complaint. The Commission will also provide the U.S. Department of Education notice of the disposition of any complaint that directly or indirectly affects an institution's eligibility for Title IV funds.

11. The Commission will keep a record of student and public complaints against member institutions. Commission staff will report to the Commission annually regarding the status and resolution of student and public complaints against member institutions. At the time of an institution's comprehensive evaluation, a summary of any complaints will be provided to the team chair for consideration by the evaluation team.
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Policy on Access to Commission Meetings
(Adopted June 1978; Revised January 2000; Edited June 2005; Revised January 2006; Edited August 2012, April 2013)

Background
The ACCJC holds meetings of the Commission for two purposes: to decide the accredited status of applicant and member institutions and to consider such organizational and policy matters as may come before it. When deliberating or acting upon matters that concern specific individuals or institutions, the Commission meets in Executive Closed Session. When deliberating or acting upon informational, organizational, or policy matters, the Commission meets in Public Session.

Policy
The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges supports and encourages the presence of members of the public at its meetings. The Commission also recognizes that it has the responsibility to consider actions on the accredited status of institutions and matters such as personnel actions in a confidential manner.

Policy Elements
I. Public Sessions of the Commission Meeting
   The President mails sends a preliminary agenda 30 days before each regular meeting of the Commission to the Chief Executive Officer and Accreditation Liaison Officer of all applicant, candidate, and accredited institutions with the request that the agenda be posted or otherwise publicized. The preliminary agenda is also posted on the Commission web page in advance of the meeting.

   Observers will be seated at the public sessions of Commission meetings as space allows. Anyone wishing to make a presentation or address the Commission must give advance notice to the President as outlined below and identify the agenda item that they wish to address. No reference to specific individuals or institutions shall be made in Public Session.

   Participation by observers at Commission meetings is limited to the following:
   A. Statements which address the Commission's agenda and which have been noted by the President in the agenda at the appropriate places. A written copy of all prepared remarks should be given to the President prior to the presentation. Requests to make statements should be made to the President, in writing, not less than 15 days before the Commission meeting.

   B. Requests to bring items to the attention of the Commission. Such requests should be made to the President, in writing, not less than 15 days before the Commission meeting.

   C. Brief comments on specific points in the Public Session agenda. These may be made at the end of the Commission discussion of the same topic upon recognition from the Chair. The Chair may invite participation at other times at his/her discretion.
In all cases, observers' statements shall be limited to five minutes but may be extended at the discretion of the Chair or vote of the Commission.

II. Executive Closed Sessions of the Commission

A. When the Commission is deliberating or acting upon matters that concern an institution, it will invite the Chief Executive Officer of the institution to meet with the Commission in Executive Closed Session. There is no requirement that the Chief Executive Officer attend the Commission meeting. If the Commission is considering institutional action as a result of an evaluation team visit and the Chief Executive Officer of the institution accepts the invitation to attend, the Chair of the evaluation team or designee is also invited to attend.

The institutional representative will be invited to make a brief presentation followed by questions by Commissioners. The Commission reserves the right to establish a time limit on and procedures for such presentations. If the institution wants to bring written material to the Commission's attention it should be submitted to the Commission no less than 15 days before the meeting. After the institutional representative is excused the evaluation Team Chair will be asked to respond to Commission questions. The Team Chair is then excused, and the Commission deliberations and decision are conducted in Executive Closed Session.

B. When the Commission is deliberating or acting upon matters that concern specific individuals, the Commission meets in Executive Closed Session. Requests to meet with members of the Commission about matters that concern specific individuals in Executive Session should be made to the President, in writing, not less than 15 days before the Commission meeting. Whenever possible, the President will arrange for a subcommittee of Commissioners to meet with the individuals preceding the Executive Session of the Commission to discuss the matters of concern. These Commissioners will report to the Commission as a whole and may recommend a presentation before the full Commission at an appropriate time.
The commissioners appeared to have written reports for:

15. Budget and Personnel Committee Report – Steve Kinsella
16. 2013-14 Budget

No materials were provided for guests for these financial items.