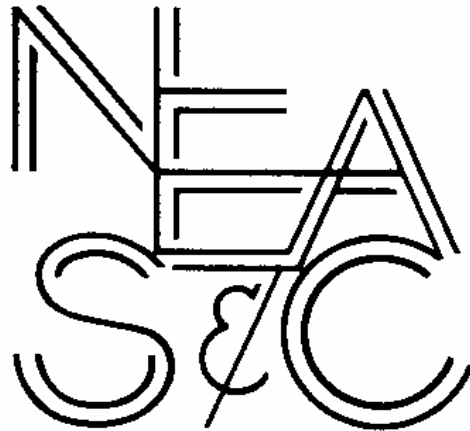


ACCREDITATION HANDBOOK



NON-DEGREE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION AT THE TECHNICAL OR CAREER LEVEL

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
PART I - GENERAL INFORMATION	0
Introduction	1
Mission	5
Institutional Accreditation - Its Purposes and the Commission	6
Standards of Membership.....	8
Eligibility Requirements.....	20
Initial or Decennial Accreditation – The Process.....	23
Review of Institutions within the Decennial Cycle - The Process	26
PART II – EVALUATION PROCEDURES	26
Evaluation Procedures	27
Guide for Chairpersons.....	38
Focused Visit Reviews	47
Instructions for Evaluators	50
Accreditation Decalogue for the Accreditation Team.....	56
Evaluator Experience Summary Form	57
Format for Focused Visit Reports	58
Visiting Team Options Following an On-Site Review for Candidate or Accredited Status	59
PART III – POLICY STATEMENTS	61
Accreditation and Collective Bargaining	62
Appeal of Adverse Action Affecting Institutional Accreditation or Candidate for Accreditation Status	63
Candidacy for Accreditation.....	67
Code of Good Practice in Accrediting Postsecondary Education	75
Commissioner Selection, Ethics and Responsibilities.....	77
Complaints Against Affiliated Institutions.....	79
Complaints Against the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions.....	82
Conflict of Interest.....	83
Considerations When Closing an Institution of Higher Education	84
Contractual Relationships with Non-Regionally Accredited Organizations.....	88

Default Rates in Title IV Student Loan Programs.....	92
Establishment of a Branch Campus.....	93
Ethical Practices	95
Evaluation and Accreditation of Proprietary Institutions.....	96
Evaluator and Commissioner Training.....	98
Evaluator Selection, Ethics and Responsibilities	99
External Budget Control.....	100
General Education Requirements in Specialized Programs	101
Innovation.....	102
Institutional Accreditation and Non-Traditional Study.....	103
Institutional Integrity and Academic Freedom.....	105
Institutional Performance with Respect to Student Achievement.....	106
Institutional Responsibilities in the Accreditation Process	107
Non-Discrimination.....	111
Notification of Actions Affecting the Accreditation Status of Affiliated Institutions	112
Periodic Review of Accredited Institutions.....	113
Postsecondary Educational Programs Conducted by Accredited or Candidate Institutions on Military Bases.....	114
Principles of Good Practice in Institutional Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Representation of Accredited Status	119
Provision of Information to the United States Department of Education	122
Public Disclosure of Information About Affiliated Institutions.....	123
Range and Meaning of Commission Actions Affecting Institutional Status	127
Records Maintenance Policy for the Commission	134
Reimbursement.....	135
Relationship Between General and Professional or Specialized Accrediting Agencies	136
Release of Accreditation Information	138
Role of the Generalist.....	139
Self-Study and Report Archiving for Accredited or Candidate Institutions	140
Show Cause Procedural Guide	141
Standards Review Policy.....	143

Substantive Change in Member and Affiliated Institutions	145
Sample Notification Letter ~ Failure to Report a Substantive Change	150
Teach-Out Agreements.....	151
Third-Party Comments During Comprehensive Evaluations.....	152
Transfer and Award of Academic Credit	156
Unofficial Observers of Visiting Committees.....	160

PART I - GENERAL INFORMATION

INTRODUCTION

This Accreditation Handbook is designed to assist those directly responsible for the organization and administration of the evaluation and accreditation of technical and career institutions of higher education, under the auspices of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges' Commission on Technical and Career Institutions.

Attention to procedural guides, described herein, by the president/CEO and those responsible for organizing and planning an institution's self-study is critical to the success of the evaluation process. The materials contained in this handbook should be of assistance to those appointed to serve as chairpersons or as members of visiting teams. Appropriate materials contained herein should be made available to those involved in the accreditation process. Any page or section of the Accreditation Handbook may be reproduced for use by an institution undergoing evaluation or by visiting team chairpersons for use by team members.

REGIONAL ACCREDITATION

The United States is unique among the nations of the world in that it places primary reliance for the regulation of institutions of higher education on voluntary non-governmental membership associations of schools and colleges that attest to the overall quality of educational institutions. The New England Association of Schools and Colleges is the first non-governmental regional accrediting association; it was established in the New England States in 1885. By the 1890s the Middle States Association, the Southern Association, and the North Central Association had been established. The establishment of the Northwest Association in 1917, followed by the Western Association in 1948, completed the division of the United States into six regional accrediting associations. These associations are primarily concerned with the application of operational and quality assurance processes in the institutions in their respective regions. Each association conducts its accreditation business by applying their respective standards of membership to the applicant or member institution, utilizing the processes of self-study and peer review.

THE COUNCIL FOR HIGHER EDUCATION ACCREDITATION

The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) is a national organization whose purposes are to recognize sound and effective higher education accrediting bodies; coordinate research and debate the processes that improve accreditation; serve as a national advocate for voluntary self-regulation through accreditation; collect and disseminate data and information about accreditation; mediate disputes and foster communication between and among accrediting bodies and the higher education community; and work to preserve the quality and diversity of colleges and universities.

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges and its Commission on Technical and Career Institutions enjoy membership in and recognition by CHEA.

THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Recognition of Accrediting Agencies

For the purpose of determining eligibility for United States government assistance within Federal legislative acts, the Secretary of the United States Department of Education is required to publish a list of nationally recognized agencies. The New England Association of Schools and Colleges' Commission on Technical and Career Institutions has been determined to be a reliable authority concerning the quality of educational institutions and programs. Thus the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions is one of a number of gatekeeper agencies that assist the Federal government in determining the eligibility of institutions to participate in Federal financial assistance programs.

The initial petition for recognition of the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions was submitted in December 1972 and approved officially by the United States Commissioner of Education in February 1973. In 1976 a second petition was submitted for continued recognition on behalf of the total Association and subsequently approved. In 1987 it was determined by officials at the USDOE that its statutory authority included only postsecondary accreditation; thus the two NEASC Commissions of Higher Education remain on the Secretary's list of recognized accrediting agencies. The New England Association of Schools and Colleges and thus the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions continue to be recognized by the USDOE and, as a result, may act as gatekeepers for an institution's eligibility to participate in certain federal financial aid programs.

NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges is one of six regional accrediting organizations. It is structured as a voluntary, non-profit, self-governing entity. Included among the New England Association of Schools and Colleges' stated purposes and objectives are the purposes of advancing the cause of education in its member colleges and schools, the establishment of a cooperative relationship among its member institutions, and the maintenance and improvement of sound educational standards.

An institution achieves initial accreditation by vote of the Board of Trustees of the Association upon the recommendation of one of the six Commissions listed below:

- Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE)
- Independent Schools (CIS)
- Public Secondary Schools (CPSS)
- Public Elementary and Middle Schools (CPEMS)
- Technical and Career Institutions (CTCI)
- American and International Schools Abroad (CAISA)

Continued accreditation is a decision of the respective Commissions.

Each Commission bases its recommendations or decisions on reports of specially appointed teams, which have visited and appraised schools and colleges on the basis of the Commission's established **Standards of Membership**. These standards are sector specific, qualitative, focus on educational outcomes, and are such that they can be utilized to evaluate any of the various types of educational institutions served by the Commission.

Accreditation means that a school or postsecondary institution is fulfilling its publicly announced mission by meeting its objectives and conforming to a set of common standards as established by the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions and affirmed by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges' Board of Trustees. These standards are designed and periodically reviewed by the Commission in consultation with its member schools and colleges. The standards enjoy wide ranging acceptance within the institutions that come under the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions' jurisdiction. The mission of a given institution must relate to its organizational structure, program, faculty, students, and facilities. Resources must be adequate to carry out its purposes. No attempt is made by the Association to delineate relative excellence among institutions.

Member institutions are reappraised on a cycle determined by the Commission. Continued accreditation is dependent upon the maintenance of the established standards. If the Commission recommendations are not followed by appropriate action, taken in reasonably specified intervals, the member institutions may be placed on probation for a limited period. Unless corrective measures are taken during this second interval, the institution may be dropped from membership. Opportunity is provided for appeal of adverse Commission and Association decisions.

THE COMMISSION ON TECHNICAL AND CAREER INSTITUTIONS

In 1968 the then Executive Committee of New England Association of Schools and Colleges appointed an ad hoc committee to survey vocational, technical and career education in the six New England states to determine if the need existed for an accreditation process to serve that community of institutions. Following an intensive two-year study, the ad hoc committee in 1970 recommended to the Executive Committee of the Association that a Commission on Vocational, Technical and Career Institutions be created. The recommendation was acted upon favorably by the Executive Committee and the Commission was established, effective December 2, 1970. The Executive Committee, in consultation with the ad hoc committee and the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, determined that the purview of the new Commission would be secondary, i.e. grades 9-12 and would include postgraduate programs offered under the jurisdiction of its member secondary schools. Additionally, non-degree and associate degree-granting institutions of higher education came under the Commission's jurisdiction. In 1993, institutions already within the Commission's membership which move to the 2+2 baccalaureate degree were added to the Commission's accreditation jurisdiction. The name of the Commission was officially changed to add the word "Career" on December 7, 1975. In 1992 the Commission's name changed once again by the removal of the word "Vocational" from its name.

Introduction

While the work of the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions is primarily regional in its scope of operations, it could, as a result of Association by-law Amendments in 1978, enter into geographical areas outside New England.

Responsibility for recommending candidacy status and initial accreditation or voting continued accreditation for non-degree granting institutions of higher education offering a certificate, diploma or other non-degree postsecondary academic credential lies with the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions.

Members of the Commission are elected by representatives of member institutions on the basis of criteria, which ensure representation from each of the six New England states and the levels of education within the parameters of the Commission's responsibilities. Membership on the Commission may be drawn from and be representative of administrators and teaching personnel of individual member institutions and the general public. The Commission on Technical and Career Institutions is composed of fifteen (15) individuals, including three non-educators representing the public interest.

MISSION

The Mission of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges' Commission on Technical and Career Institutions is to accredit member institutions, thus, assuring the public of the quality of a particular institution and entering into a partnership with it for its self-improvement.

Accreditation is achieved by applying the Commission's Standards of Membership through a deliberate process of voluntary self-regulation and peer review, including institutional self-study and evaluation, accompanied by Commission examination and analysis leading to accreditation at the institutional level.

The Commission's evaluation and accreditation activities are directed to secondary and postsecondary institutions whose mission is career and technical in nature. Nationally, the Commission limits its scope to institutions in the New England states; the Commission sets no international limits. At the postsecondary level, non-degree granting institutions are included in the Commission's scope.

INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION

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ITS PURPOSES AND THE COMMISSION

Institutional accreditation through the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions is a means used to fulfill the following stated purposes:

- Foster excellence in secondary and postsecondary education through the development of criteria and guidelines for assessing educational effectiveness.
- Encourage institutional improvement through self-study and peer review.
- Assure the educational community, the general public, and other agencies or organizations that an institution has a published mission statement characterized by clearly defined and appropriate educational objectives; has established conditions under which their achievement can be reasonably expected and assessed, is in fact accomplishing them substantially; and is so organized, staffed, and supported that it can be expected to continue to do so.
- Provide counsel and assistance to established and developing institutions.
- Protect institutions against encroachments that might jeopardize their educational effectiveness or academic freedom.

To accomplish these purposes, the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions has undertaken to

- develop general policies and procedures governing its work;
- set standards for accreditation that are sector specific and appropriate to the level of education practiced by the institution;
- provide adequate guidance to institutions preparing self-study reports for accreditation, reaffirmation of accreditation, or the status of candidate for accreditation;
- schedule institutional site visits and appoint site visiting teams;
- consider the evaluation reports and recommendations of visiting teams;
- assist in the implementation of the Association's Appeal Procedure when an institution believes it has cause to challenge an adverse decision on pre-accredited or accredited status;
- maintain contact with institutions relative to accreditation status and take note of substantive institutional or program changes that could affect accreditation;

Institutional Accreditation – Its Purposes and the Commission

- conduct special inquiries into unusual or critical issues that may develop in an accredited institution;
- represent New England Association of Schools and Colleges' accredited institutions at national or regional associations concerned with accreditation matters;
- stimulate and promote continued improvement of educational programs.

STANDARDS OF MEMBERSHIP

NON-DEGREE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION AT THE TECHNICAL OR CAREER LEVEL

The Standards of Membership as established at the non-degree level are primarily qualitative and are applied to both individual programs and the institution as a whole. In making recommendations concerning candidacy, initial accreditation and decisions on continued accreditation, the Commission bases its judgements on the nature and purposes of the institution, the appropriateness of objectives in terms of the institution's structure, the degree to which objectives are realized, and the institution's compliance with the Standards of Membership.

1. MISSION

- 1.1 The institution is guided by a mission statement which clearly defines its character, is appropriate for higher education, and is consistent with Commission Standards.
- 1.2 The institution shall state in its mission statement its general purpose and specific objectives. There shall be evidence supporting the fact that the programs of the institution are consistent with these objectives and promote the intellectual growth of its students and the employment prospects of its graduates. Moreover, there shall be evidence that the mission statement is consistent with the institution's charter or formal legal authority.
- 1.3 The institution shall show evidence that the mission statement periodically undergoes a process of review and affirmation at the institutional level. The review of an institution's statement of mission is a major educational decision that should involve the efforts of groups such as faculty, students, administration, governing boards and/or other appropriate groups. The institution shall show evidence that educational decisions are supported by sufficient resources to meet its mission. The institution must also provide evidence which demonstrates the institution's effectiveness in meeting its mission.
- 1.4 Appropriate publications, such as the official catalog, must accurately reflect the statement of mission.

2. PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT

The institution develops and implements a broad-based and integrated system of planning and assessment which involves all appropriate constituencies. This system is appropriate to the institution's mission and its purposes as an institution of higher education and includes planning and assessment processes that embrace all of the standards of membership. The results of assessment data are used to determine institutional effectiveness and to modify institutional plans as appropriate. Consistent with institutional outcomes assessments that demonstrate attainment of institutional purposes and objectives, the institutional record of formal complaints which relate to compliance with the accreditation standards and which are filed through the grievance process within the institution or with NEASC or with the U.S. Department of Education during the

review period must be included in all institutional assessments, analyses and self-studies for CTCI accreditation. The records and incident files shall be available for verification. The integration of assessment and planning processes allows the institution to identify priorities for improvement.

Mission

- 2.1 The institutional mission and goal statements include objectives for which accomplishment can be documented and made public. The institution regularly evaluates and revises as necessary its institutional policies, practices, and publications to ensure integrity in all its representations about its mission, programs and services.

Governance

- 2.2 The governing board regularly evaluates and revises as necessary its policies, practices, and performance to ensure its constituencies that it carries out its responsibilities in an effective and efficient manner.

Finance

- 2.3 The institution's planning process and budget process are interconnected. The institution provides the necessary resources for effective evaluation and planning processes.

Faculty

- 2.4 The institution has in place a process to assess the professional qualifications of its faculty and to assess its policies related to faculty. Furthermore, there is a process to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction.

Student Services

- 2.5 The institution assesses the learning needs of its student population and provides services and programs for meeting them. The institution regularly evaluates and revises as necessary its student services and programs to ensure that it is meeting the identified needs of its students. The institution uses the results of its systematic assessment activities to improve its instructional programs and institutional services and activities.

Programs of Study

- 2.6 The institution has implemented a process to verify that its programs, wherever and however they are offered, support the mission of the institution. Through its planning and assessment process, the institution ensures the quality of instruction, academic rigor, and educational effectiveness of all of its courses and programs wherever and however they are offered. Furthermore, the planning and assessment process ensures that all educational programs have a coherent design and are characterized by appropriate

breadth, depth, sequencing of courses, synthesis of learning, and use of information resources.

- 2.7 The institution identifies and publishes in appropriate and accessible documents the expected learning outcomes for each of its major programs and general education programs. It assesses and documents that students completing its programs have achieved those stated learning outcomes.
- 2.8 The institution's processes for establishing and evaluating its educational programs are clearly defined, encompass all of the institution's offerings, are conducted on a regular basis, and are integrated into the institution's overall planning and evaluation efforts. The institution uses the results of its assessment activities to improve its educational programs. The institution provides evidence that its program reviews lead to the improvement of the teaching and learning processes at the institution.

Physical Facilities

- 2.9 A process is in place to evaluate the physical facilities of the institution on a regular basis. The results of this process are used to inform the institution's planning processes.

Library and Information Resources

- 2.10 The institution regularly and systematically evaluates the adequacy and utilization of its learning and information resources and services and makes changes as necessary.

Publications

- 2.11 The institution regularly assesses its publications both in terms of their adequacy and their integrity, making sure that the publications are complete, clear, and accurate.

3. GOVERNANCE

- 3.1 The institution has legal authority to operate from all jurisdictions in which services are delivered and it has received authority from all appropriate regulatory agencies. It has a system of governance that facilitates the successful accomplishment of its mission and purposes. In multi-institution systems, the division of responsibility and authority between the system office and the institution is clearly defined. The responsibilities and relationships among the governing board, administration, staff and faculty are prescribed in governance documents and in a table of organization accurately reflecting the actual lines of authority within the institution. The institution's internal system of governance reflects the appropriate and responsible participation of its constituencies and promotes regular and effective communication among them.
- 3.2 The institution has a governing board that is the legally constituted body responsible for the quality and integrity of the institution and has the authority to achieve institutional

purposes. The duties, responsibility, operating procedures and structure of the board are clearly defined in a published governance document. Its membership includes representation reflecting the public interest. The public interest requirement recognizes that institutions do serve a public purpose when they provide educational experiences that benefit not only the individual student but society as well. Public representation is defined as those members of the board who are not administrators, faculty or staff members of the institution (or are directly related to such) and who in no way benefit from the operation. In addition, public representatives are free from present or potential conflicts of interest. The chief executive officer of the institution may be a member of the governing board, but should not serve as its chair. The governing board of the institution has a program for board turnover and development and new board member recruitment and orientation. The board routinely conducts a self-assessment, using the results for improvement.

- 3.3 The institution has a chief executive officer appointed by the board and whose full-time or major responsibilities are to the institution's mission and goals. A qualified administrative staff, appropriately separate from the governing board and accountable to the chief executive officer, has the responsibility for the implementation and management of policies of the institution. The organizational structure reflects the needs of the institution and is responsive to administrative requirements, constituent needs and the community it serves. Groups providing advisory information to the institution function within the established parameters of the institution. All institutional programs, including continuing education, off campus locations, distance education and international programs are incorporated into the administrative management system of the institution.
- 3.4 The extent of various college constituents' involvement, with particular attention to the role of the faculty, in the formulation of educational policy is clearly defined. Within the context of the institution's system of governance, the faculty is accorded the right and exercises its responsibility to provide a substantive voice in matters of educational programs, faculty personnel and other aspects of the institutional policy that relate to its areas of responsibility and expertise.
- 3.5 An atmosphere of trust and focused commitment to the mission of the institution is evident, as is a collegial atmosphere that encourages communication among all of the institution's constituents. The system of governance makes provisions for consideration of student views and judgments in those matters in which students have a direct and reasonable interest.
- 3.6 The institution assesses the effectiveness of its system of management and governance, using the results for its improvement.

4. FINANCE

- 4.1 Since the financial resources of an institution influence, in part, the quality of the instructional program, an institution shall present evidence that financial resources are

available to achieve and maintain the objectives of the institution. The institution must provide evidence of the reasonable financial viability of the institution and a plan that outlines how the institution intends to continually improve its financial position. The adequacy of financial resources will be judged relative to the purposes of the institution, the scope of programs offered, and the number of students enrolled.

- 4.2 The governing board must accept responsibility for the financial health of the institution. The chief executive officer shall ensure that a qualified financial officer or department oversees the financial operations of the institution. The chief financial officer is accountable to the chief executive officer and provides financial information on a regular basis to the governing board. Moreover, the financial aid program is supervised by a qualified financial aid administrator.
- 4.3 The system of financial management needs to exhibit sound budgeting practices, employ appropriate accounting principles, and utilize financial and non-financial data. The chief executive officer, through the chief financial officer, shall ensure that the system of financial management has appropriate controls that allow reasonable assurance that material errors, omissions and irregularities can be detected without undue delay. The institution's financial systems shall be maintained in such a manner that its fiscal position can be analyzed routinely without undue delay. An audit by a qualified accountant shall be required at least once a biennium. The institution must demonstrate that the auditors' comments and recommendations and reports of findings are addressed promptly.
- 4.4 The institution must demonstrate that it has prudent financial management in both its day-to-day operation and in its handling of investments that are committed for the long-term financial strength of the institution.
- 4.5 The institution must develop and adhere to a published policy for tuition, fees, and other charges. This policy must contain provisions for students who withdraw from the institution. Refund provisions must be consistent with generally accepted refund policies in higher education and with the requirements of grantors of financial assistance, including but not limited to Federal financial aid regulations. Financial aid policies and practices meet state and federal regulations and are subject to periodic audits.

5. FACULTY

- 5.1 The primary responsibility for the development and improvement of educational programs lies with the faculty. The selection and retention of a qualified faculty must be a major focus for the institution. The professional qualifications of the faculty, employment responsibilities, and the effectiveness of teaching are paramount factors in consideration of an institution for membership. The institution has in place policies governing the role and responsibility of full-time and part-time faculty.
- 5.2 To ensure full participation by the community, the institution uses an open process in the selection of faculty. Faculty routinely participate in the search process for

- the selection of new instructional staff. The institution follows applicable employment guidelines which reflect its desire for diversity in academic preparation and expertise in its faculty ranks.
- 5.3 The institution employs a sufficient number of full-time faculty members to ensure effective teaching, proper advisement of students, adequate review and development of curricula, and involvement in institutional governance and planning.
 - 5.4 The preparation and qualifications of full-time and part-time faculty members must be appropriate to their instructional assignments. Teaching faculty must have competence in the fields in which they teach and must demonstrate success in creating a supportive learning environment for students.
 - 5.5 The minimum academic credential is an academic degree at least one degree level above the level being taught. Moreover, the faculty must hold degrees related to the field(s) in which they are teaching.
 - 5.6 In some fields, however, there may be other qualifications which are equivalent to the minimum academic credential. Qualifications may be measured by such accomplishments as scholarship, advanced study, creative activities, and relevant professional experience, training, and credentials, such as licensure or professional registration. Institutions must provide documentation in those cases where qualifications other than the minimum academic degree are used for faculty appointment.
 - 5.7 While teaching loads and schedules will vary depending on the institution and the field of instruction, faculty should be allowed time for adequate preparation and for continuing professional growth. The student-faculty ratio shall be appropriate to the type of programs offered by the institution. Faculty assignments and workloads are reviewed periodically by appropriate personnel and adjusted as institutional conditions change.
 - 5.8 Since faculty are responsible for the development and improvement of the instructional program, a shared system of governance must exist which includes the participation and representation of the faculty in appropriate matters relating to academic affairs.
 - 5.9 The institution regularly evaluates faculty to ensure that they are effective in carrying out their professional responsibilities. The criteria used in the evaluation process reflect the mission and objectives of the institution. The evaluation procedures used are broad-based and equitable.
 - 5.10 Written policies concerning faculty responsibilities and conditions of employment are clearly stated and understood. These policies allow for due process to deal with grievances brought by the faculty. Faculty are provided reasonable contractual security for appropriate periods of time consistent with the resources of the institution. As part of this reasonable contractual security, a statement of academic freedom for the faculty is adopted by the governing board. Crucial to the integrity of an educational institution, a

statement of academic freedom allows faculty and students -- even in institutions with particular philosophical or religious beliefs -- to examine all pertinent data, to question assumptions, and to teach and study the full range of a given discipline.

6. STUDENTS

- 6.1 Each institution provides an environment which fosters academic success and intellectual and personal growth by offering appropriate student support services and co-curricular activities. Student support services begin with the recruitment and admission of students, continue throughout the academic experience, and include placement and career counseling activities prior to completion of the program.
- 6.2 Each institution's recruitment and admissions policies ensure that the qualifications and interests of the students recruited are compatible with the institution's mission and the accepting program's focus. The institution's admissions policies are published and admissions practices are consistent with those policies.
- 6.3 Student financial aid policies and opportunities are published and the institution's process of awarding financial aid is in keeping with the published process. Financial aid policies and practice meet state and federal regulations and are subject to periodic audits.
- 6.4 The institution provides appropriate and effective orientation for new students. Counseling services are available at the institution or by referral for personal and emotional needs of students. Career counseling, placement services and transfer counseling are available for students.
- 6.5 The institution continually monitors the learning needs of its student population and provides services to meet those needs. Those services may include but are not limited to: basic skills training, remedial preparation or course work, academic program supplementary services such as tutoring or mentoring, counseling on personal and/or educational problems. Academic skills development programs are also available.
- 6.6 Academic retention policies and standards for continuation need as much attention as recruitment policies. Standards for satisfactory academic progress and continued enrollment are clearly stated, publicized and uniformly applied. Academic advising and counseling is available for students to help them assess their personal education goals and determine their compatibility with the objectives of their academic program. Such services may be available through the faculty or the academic support services. The diversity of student educational goals is recognized in all institutional policies on retention and continuation.
- 6.7 The institution fosters the intellectual and personal development of each of its students through the co-curricular activities it provides in keeping with its mission and objectives. The institution supports opportunities for student development and the growth of student leadership. If consistent with its mission and purposes, the institution provides

- opportunities and facilities for student recreation and athletics. Such activity supports institutional educational objectives.
- 6.8 Institutions state and publish statements of student rights and responsibilities that include clearly stated expectations for student behavior. Student conduct policies clearly state the institution's due process procedures and specify possible sanctions. Student rights and responsibilities policies include a procedure to address complaints against the institution or institutional personnel.
- 6.9 Health, wellness and safety education appropriate to the learning community are provided through seminars and student services. The institution provides a safe learning environment and information on security is clearly stated and readily available. Continuing policies and procedures for security and safety are monitored for effectiveness.
- 6.10 If the institution provides residences for students, residence-life policies and procedures support the institutional mission and are clearly stated, well publicized, readily available and fairly and consistently administered.
- 6.11 The institution has established policies regarding information maintained in student records, their access, and maintenance. Records of health, admission criteria and student performance are maintained with full protection assured for that information over time. Records of graduate performance including employment and continued education are kept in sufficient detail to serve as a major source of information concerning program effectiveness. Adequate security and respect for the confidentiality of student records are observed.
- 6.12 All student support services and co-curricular activities are available to students no matter where the student is enrolled in the institution's programs.
- 6.13 The institution periodically and systematically evaluates the appropriateness, adequacy and effectiveness of all student services. Information obtained through this evaluation is used to improve the effectiveness of the student services.

7. PROGRAMS OF STUDY

- 7.1 A CTCI member institution offers programs of study in an environment conducive to learning and free inquiry. A program of study is defined as a curriculum or sequence of course work, lab work, independent study or other academic endeavor that leads to a certificate or diploma. The objectives, requirements, and suggested curricular sequence for each program are clearly specified, published and readily available. The institution regularly and systematically evaluates its programs of study to assess their effectiveness in accomplishing the objectives and to maintain these standards for programs of study. (See also Planning and Assessment, Standard 2).

- 7.2 Programs of study are directly related and appropriate to the general purposes and specific objectives of the institution. Each program demonstrates consistency with the institution's mission through its goals, structure, and content. The institution provides resources and services to meet the learning needs of students in each program. It provides the instructional personnel, resources, equipment and facilities necessary to deliver its programs of study so as to meet their objectives.
- 7.3 The major program, through the development of a mastery of methods of inquiry, promotes an appreciation for the complex structure of the discipline, its relatedness to other knowledge, and current field practice. There is continuous progression across the discipline as well as depth beyond the introductory level. The timing, sequencing and delivery format of courses in a program ensure opportunities for reflection, analysis, mastery of the subject matter and the development of skills of application.
- 7.4 Programs of study allow for the student's completion in a reasonable time according to the institution's published standards. The skills of students who are accepted into a particular program are consistent with the program's clearly specified entry expectations and give the students reasonable potential for success in the program. In cases where a program is to be modified or eliminated, appropriate and timely notice is given and arrangements are made to allow enrolled students the opportunity to complete their education with a minimum of disruption.
- 7.5 Curriculum planning and development occur under clearly defined institutional policies and procedures. Faculty have a substantive responsibility for the design, implementation, and review of curriculum. Institutions offer evidence of regularly using advisory committees in the planning process as well as in periodic curriculum reviews, especially for technical or career programs.
- 7.6 Programs that use internship, clinical, co-op, or similar work experiences have written agreements that define the parameters of activities and the responsibilities of the institution, the students and the host site.

8. PHYSICAL RESOURCES

- 8.1 Physical resources, including buildings and grounds, utilities, laboratories, shops, equipment and materials whether owned or rented, at both on-campus or off-campus locations, are adequate to enable the institution to fulfill its stated purposes and objectives. Additionally, the institution's physical resources contribute to the establishment of a climate in which effective learning can occur.
- 8.2 Classrooms, laboratories, shops and other facilities are appropriately configured and equipped, and provide lighting and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems appropriate for its use with consideration for conditions which might adversely affect health and safety. Particular attention is paid to institutional cleanliness and appearance.

- 8.3 Facilities are designed, constructed and maintained in accordance with legal requirements regarding physical access, environmental standards and regulations, energy efficiency, safety, security, aesthetics, and consistency with the institution's mission. Physical resource evaluation and planning occurs on a regular basis to ensure that the physical resources allocated to any institutional function are adequate for the effective conduct of that function and its current demand. Special attention is given to safety issues relating to the use and disposal of equipment and hazardous materials. Adequate safety equipment and supplies are mandatory in laboratories and other hazardous areas. Proper management, maintenance, and operation of all physical facilities are accomplished by adequate and competent staffing.
- 8.4 The institution has a facilities plan linked to academic, student services and financial planning for the operations of its physical resources to include ongoing operations and maintenance, preventive maintenance, energy management, deferred maintenance and capital renewal and replacement. The plan specifies strategies for correcting identified problems, includes estimated costs, and is supported by adequate and appropriate staffing.

9. LIBRARY AND INFORMATION RESOURCES

Mission

- 9.1 The institution makes available the library and information resources necessary for the fulfillment of its mission. The published mission and objectives of the library are consistent with those of the institution.

Outcomes Assessment and Planning

- 9.2 The library continuously and systematically evaluates its effectiveness by identifying outcomes consistent with its mission, gathering data to measure those outcomes, and using that data to improve library resources, instruction, and services. The library's outcomes assessment process reflects and contributes to institutional planning. The institutional outcomes assessment plan includes components outlining the role of the library and information resources in maximizing student learning and institutional effectiveness.

Teaching and Learning

- 9.3 The library staff is integrally involved in the teaching and learning of the institution. The institution provides opportunities and demonstrates that library staff and faculty collaborate to: ensure that materials and services support curricula/curriculum frameworks; integrate information literacy into the learning process; assess the effectiveness of teaching and learning; and use information gathered to develop a plan for curricular and instructional improvement. The library provides orientation and instruction in the use of resources which develop skills enabling users to become lifelong

learners with the ability to locate, select, evaluate, organize, apply, and present information effectively.

Resources and Access

- 9.4 The institution ensures that students use library resources as an integral part of their education. Resources and services are readily available to the learning community wherever programs are located or however they are delivered. These resources (i.e. collections, technology, and services), owned by the institution or guaranteed through formal written agreements, are appropriate in quality, level, scope, diversity, quantity, and currency to support and enrich the institution's mission. Cooperative relationships and access to external resources are encouraged as a means of complementing rather than substituting for the institution's own adequate and accessible collection and services. In addition to curriculum support, the library provides materials that support faculty teaching and the intellectual, cultural, and personal development of the community.
- 9.5 Faculty, staff, students, and administration participate, through formal and informal means, in the development, assessment, and improvement of library services and collections. The library has a written policy governing the selection and deletion of all materials. The institution demonstrates that the library's hours of operation meet the information needs of students, faculty and staff.

Staff

- 9.6 The institution demonstrates that staff size is appropriate to serve effectively the learning community. Library staff is credentialed and/or professionally and educationally qualified to support the teaching and learning mission and goals of the institution. The institution clearly defines the responsibilities of library personnel and provides evidence that opportunities for ongoing professional development are pursued by staff.

Facility and Environment

- 9.7 The institution provides accessible facilities with a welcoming atmosphere that encourages inquiry, study, and learning among students, faculty, and staff. The physical layout includes multiple-use space accommodating individual and group study. The overall size of the library supports the teaching and learning of the institution, including space for efficient use of collections, staff operations, storage, and administrative and educational technology. The library facility and equipment is up-to-date, properly maintained, repaired in a timely manner, and secured.

Financial Support

- 9.8 The institution provides sufficient and consistent financial support for staff, collection development, instructional resources, and the maintenance and enhancement of facilities,

technology, and equipment. The library staff participates in the development of the institution's annual budget.

10. PUBLICATIONS

- 10.1 In presenting itself to current and prospective students as well as other members of the interested public, the institution provides information in either print or electronic format (appropriate to the audience) that is complete, accurate, and clear.
- 10.2 The information disseminated in all institutional publications reflects the most currently available information, and it portrays the institution ethically and honestly.
- 10.3 As appropriate, publications, print or electronic, should include the date of publication and contain the institution's mission, objectives, and expected educational outcomes; requirements, procedures, and policies related to admissions and the transfer of credit; student fees, charges, refund policies, and financial aid options; other items related to attending or withdrawing from the institution; academic programs, courses currently offered, and other educational opportunities; academic policies and procedures; and the requirements for certificates and/or diplomas.
- 10.4 Relevant publications, print or electronic, also include a list of current faculty showing degrees held and the institution which granted them; the names of administrative officers with their titles; and the names of the members of the governing board together with their residence by city or town and any appropriate affiliations.
- 10.5 The institution publishes and provides a description of the size and characteristics of the student body, the campus setting, those institutional learning and physical resources from which a student can reasonably be expected to benefit, and the range of co-curricular and non-academic opportunities available to students.
- 10.6 The institution has readily available valid documentation for any statements regarding such matters as program excellence, learning outcomes, business and community partnerships, success in placement, and achievements of graduates or faculty.
- 10.7 The institution assures ready availability on request of all of its publications, and it is also responsive to reasonable requests for all other information pertaining to the institution.
- 10.8 Relevant publications include an accurate, explicit statement about the institution's current status with respect to accreditation.
- 10.9 Through a systematic process of periodic review, the institution ensures that all of its publications are current, comprehensive, accurate, and ethical.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION AT THE TECHNICAL OR CAREER LEVEL

To become a Candidate for Accreditation or be considered for accredited status, an institution must provide evidence of the following:

1. The institution is authorized and/or licensed to operate as an educational institution and award recognized academic credentials, such as certificates or diplomas, by an appropriate governmental agency as required by each of the jurisdictions in which it operates.
2. The institution is geographically located and organizationally structured to fall within the scope of the Commission's purposes and jurisdiction.
3. The institution's mission is clearly defined, made public, and formally adopted by its governing board consistent with its legal authorization, and is appropriate to an institution of higher education.
4. The institution is operational with students actively pursuing its certificate or diploma programs.
5. The institution has a functioning governing board responsible for the quality and integrity of the institution and for ensuring that the institution's mission is being carried out. Its membership is sufficient in size and composition to fulfill all board responsibilities. The governing board is an independent policy-making body, capable of reflecting constituent and public interest in board activities and decisions. A majority of the board members have no contractual, employment, family or personal financial interest in the institution.
6. The institution has employed a chief executive officer, housed in the institution, who is appointed by the governing board and whose primary responsibility is to the institution.
7. The institution has a core of faculty qualified by education and/or experience with full-time responsibility to the institution. The faculty is sufficient in size and significantly involved in the development and review of all of the institution's educational programs.
8. The institution has an established strategic and long-range planning process, which includes its engagement in the systematic evaluation of how well and in what ways it is accomplishing its purposes, including assessment of student learning and documentation of institutional effectiveness.

Eligibility Requirements

9. The institution is capable of providing effective academic leadership and management of all of the educational programs.
10. The institution provides for all of its students, in all of its satellite locations, appropriate student services and development programs consistent with student characteristics and its institutional mission.
11. The institution has adopted and adheres to admission policies compatible with the institution's stated mission and program objectives that specify the qualifications of students appropriate for its programs.
12. The institution has programs of study typically found in institutions with missions consistent with postsecondary technical and career institutions. If the school is a non-degree public, proprietary or private non-profit institution, at least one of its programs must be one academic year in length and lead to a certificate or diploma. Its academic programs are congruent with its mission, and based on recognized field(s) of study and are conducted at levels of quality and rigor appropriate to higher education.
13. The institution awards academic credits or uses units based on credit hour equivalency.
14. The institution has a program in general study in support of its career and technical diploma programs that is an essential component of the educational process.
15. The institution owns or otherwise provides access to sufficient information and learning resources and services to support its mission and all of its educational programs, wherever located.
16. The institution has established an adequate financial base to support its mission and educational programs. It makes available its latest financial statement, from the previous fiscal year, externally audited annually by a certified public accountant or state agency.
17. The institution publishes in a catalog or other appropriate places accurate and current information that describes its mission, purposes, and objectives. It also publishes its requirements for admission and the procedures, rules, and regulations it utilizes which directly affect students. The documents also list the institution's academic programs and courses, certificates and diplomas, and their individual requirements. Additional required information includes cost and refund policies, grievance procedures, academic credentials of faculty and administrators, and other items relative to attending the institution and withdrawing from it.

Eligibility Requirements

18. The institution submits an **Application for Candidacy**, accompanied by a fee equal to one year's affiliation or membership dues.
19. The institution submits a self-study, in accordance with Commission policies and procedures, that provides evidence that the institution applying for candidacy has the potential to achieve accreditation.
20. The institution undergoes an examination by a team of evaluators appointed by the Commission.
21. The institution has not had its accredited or affiliated status withdrawn or has been placed on probation by an accrediting body recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) within the past twelve months.
22. The institution provides assurance by its governing board that it adheres to the eligibility requirements, accreditation standards and policies of the Commission, and that it agrees to disclose information required by the Commission to carry out its accrediting responsibilities.

INITIAL OR DECENNIAL ACCREDITATION – THE PROCESS

The Commission publication, **Evaluation Procedures**, sets forth in detail the various stages of the accreditation process. Institutions seeking either initial accreditation or continued accreditation at the decennial cycle experience a chronological sequence of events that leads to the final decision of the Association's Board of Trustees for initial accreditation or, in the case of continued accreditation, the final decision of the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions.

PRELIMINARY STAGE

When the Commission's **Eligibility Requirements** have been met, an institution requests Commission publications to include **Standards of Membership**, the **Self-Study Manual**, and other evaluation materials from the Commission office.

An application and letter of intent to seek initial accreditation or continued accreditation is submitted to the Commission office by the chief administrative officer of the institution at least twelve months prior to the date requested for the on-site visit.

A Commission representative visits the campus to discuss evaluation procedures.

If appropriate, authorization and confirmation of the on-site visit will be acknowledged by the Commission office.

PREPARATION FOR THE VISIT

A steering committee is organized on campus.

Arrangements are made to have a Commission representative spend time on campus visiting with either the whole staff or a representative group to discuss institutional and Association responsibilities.

Using the **Self-Study Manual**, the professional staff and administration (through various subcommittees) prepare materials, which will allow the institution to assess the consistency of its educational policies and programs in terms of its procedures and outcomes and in relation to the **Standards of Membership**.

The Commission office nominates a visiting team including a chairperson and various team members. Subject to approval by the chief administrative officer, invitations are extended.

The chief administrative officer, upon finalization of the team's membership, communicates with the visiting team chairperson to discuss housing and other arrangements for the team's arrival.

The schedule of the visiting team is arranged in advance by the chairperson in consultation with the institution's chief administrative officer.

The host institution is responsible for all lodging, meals, and out-of-pocket expenses.

No later than four weeks prior to the visitation date, the institution mails to visiting team members materials identified in the Commission publication, **Evaluation Procedures**.

One complete set of the same materials is also mailed to the Commission office.

THE VISIT

Typically, team members arrive at the institution on the afternoon of one day (usually Monday) and spend the next three days on campus.

On-campus evaluation activities are guided by explicit directions in the Commission publications, **Guide for Chairpersons** and **Instructions for Evaluators**.

The visiting team chairperson develops three documents: **Evaluation Report, Strengths, Concerns and Recommendations**, and the **confidential letter** containing the visiting team's accreditation action recommendation to the Commission.

The visiting team chairperson conducts an exit interview.

AFTER THE VISIT

The chairperson of the visiting team forwards both the **Evaluation Report** and the separate document identifying **Strengths, Concerns and Recommendations** to the institution for factual accuracy review.

Both the **Evaluation Report** and the **Strengths, Concerns and Recommendations** document, with accompanying recommendations and suggestions, are forwarded to the Commission office.

A separate single copy communication is forwarded to the Director of the Commission with a visiting team recommendation concerning accreditation.

THE REVIEW PROCESS

Upon receipt of the reports and other supporting documents, the institution's application for candidacy, initial accreditation or continued accreditation is usually placed on the next Commission agenda and documents are forwarded to the Commission members.

The visiting team chairperson is occasionally invited to attend the next scheduled Commission meeting to answer any questions concerning visiting team findings.

The Commission formulates a recommendation concerning initial accreditation to be forwarded to the Association's Board of Trustees for affirmation. The Commission is solely responsible for all decisions on continued accreditation.

Initial or Decennial Accreditation – The Process

In the case of initial accreditation, the institution is informed of any recommendation for that status and the proposed date for Board of Trustees' action. If the recommendation is of an adverse nature, the chief administrative officer will be notified in writing and an opportunity will be provided for officials (within a time period fixed by the Commission) to **show cause** why the proposed action should not be taken.

The Board of Trustees takes final action on the recommendation for candidacy or initial accreditation. The President of the Association then notifies the chief administrative officer of action taken.

In the case of initial accreditation, there are two letters of transmittal (the action and the reasons for the action, and the final Board of Trustees' vote) detailing accreditation decisions. In the case of continued accreditation, a letter of notification containing the action taken and the reasons for it is forwarded to the institution.

REVIEW OF INSTITUTIONS WITHIN THE DECENNIAL CYCLE - THE PROCESS

All institutions are required to submit at least one progress report and experience at least one focused visit within the decennial cycle. Most institutions are required to submit more than one progress report and experience more than one on-site visit. Steps in the review process within the decennial cycle include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The institution gives a brief analysis of its current state in terms of each of the **Standards of Membership**.
- The institution is required to respond to each concern and recommendation submitted by the visiting team during the most recent on-site visit.
- The institution is required to respond to those issues identified in the most recent Commission letter of notification.
- A small visiting team is appointed by the Director of the Commission to review the report of the last visitation and all progress reports submitted on behalf of the institution.
- A team visits the institution (usually two and one-half days) to validate progress realized since the last review.
- The institution is required to submit the Commission's **Annual Report Form** in the spring of each year.

The Commission reviews all documentation and makes its final decision on continued accreditation.

Until all review procedures have been accomplished and rights of appeal have been exhausted, membership shall be continued.

PART II – EVALUATION PROCEDURES

EVALUATION PROCEDURES

INTRODUCTION

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges has delegated to each of its six Accrediting Commissions the responsibility for the formulation and maintenance of **Standards of Membership** for its own constituency. Membership constitutes regional accreditation.

An institution becomes a member by majority vote of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges' Board of Trustees upon the recommendation of the appropriate Commission.

The Commission on Technical and Career Institutions bases its recommendations on the results of institutional self-studies and the reports of appointed peer visiting teams which have visited the institutions and evaluated them according to the **Standards of Membership** established by the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions. These standards are made up of both qualitative and quantitative elements and are applicable to the institution as a whole. In addition, although the Commission's accreditation recommendations and decisions are for the institution as a whole, each individual program of study, including the institution's general education curriculum component, is reviewed in the institution's self-study and receives the attention and carefully considered deliberations of the peer visiting teams and the Commission. The Commission believes that an institution cannot be judiciously reviewed for accreditation without careful consideration of its entire curriculum or programs of study. The following fundamental questions are asked by the Commission:

- Is the institution satisfactorily performing those functions that it has set for itself in its publicly disseminated mission statement and its purposes and objectives?
- Are these functions educationally sound?
- Does the institution conform to the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions **Standards of Membership**?

Member institutions are normally evaluated on a cycle determined by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges' Board of Trustees or by the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions. The normal cycle of evaluation is based on a decennial accreditation review with a mandatory fifth-year focused visit within the decennial cycle. The Commission reserves the right to require reports and/or formal visits to the institution within the decennial cycle in cases of substantive change or when the Commission judges it requires information to satisfy itself of an institution's continuing substantial compliance with its **Standards of Membership**. Continuation of membership depends upon the institution's substantial compliance with the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions' **Standards of Membership** and the New England Association of Schools and Colleges' and Commission on Technical and Career Institutions' processes and procedures.

PURPOSES OF EVALUATION

The purposes of evaluation is two-fold. First, the institution engages in a self-study process and is encouraged to analyze and appraise its own mission and concomitant functions, including all of its academic programs, its educational effectiveness and its strengths and weaknesses, in order to improve the quality of its performance. Secondly, the results of this analysis, together with a report of a peer visiting team are considered by the Commission in deciding whether or not to recommend an institution for candidacy for accreditation status or initial accreditation to the New England Association of Schools and Colleges' Board of Trustees; or to vote continued accreditation. The grant of accreditation is recognition that, as a result of institutional self-study and peer review, the institution is educationally sound and is achieving the mission, goals and objectives that it has set for itself. Additionally, the grant of accreditation is an indicator that the institution has committed itself to its ongoing improvement.

THE EVALUATION PROCESS - THE APPLICANT INSTITUTION

An institution considering application for membership should request the **Standards of Membership**, the **Self-Study Manual**, and other evaluation materials from

Director
Commission on Technical and Career Institutions
New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc.
209 Burlington Road, Suite 201
Bedford, MA 01730

Tel # 781-271-0022, ext. 5416 - Fax # 781-271-0950
e-mail: pbento@neasc.org

A letter from the president or chief executive officer of the institution applying for candidate status, initial, or continued membership, and accompanied by a copy of the institution's catalog, should be sent to the Director of the Commission. The Commission Director will review the letter of application, set an evaluation date in consultation with the institution's chief executive officer, visit the institution to communicate to it that it should begin the process of self-study and prepare for a site visit by a peer visiting team.

THE SELF-STUDY

It is suggested that upon receipt of the Commission's confirmation of evaluation dates the institution should activate a self-study steering committee. The members may be selected by the chief executive officer or elected by the staff; the local situation should determine the wiser course of action. A useful suggestion is that the self-study be conducted in the most collegial fashion possible. The material in this part of the handbook provides more information concerning the suggested duties of the self-study steering committee.

Experienced evaluators look upon the self-study as the most important aspect of the evaluation process leading to candidacy, initial, or continuing accreditation. Although a thorough self-study requires much preparation and hard work, the professional rewards can be enormous. Many institutional staff members have found that the self-study and visiting team experience serve to unsettle complacent attitudes; bring technical, career and academic programs into focus; and provide motivation for improvement. Most importantly, the self-study process lends itself to strategic and operational planning. The accreditation of technical and career institutions indicates that qualitative and quantitative standards are being met and should engender in the public an attitude of trust and confidence in the institution and its programs of study.

The basic document used for planning the self-study process and its opportunity for institutional introspection is the **Self-Study Manual**. The institution is required to provide specific information which will allow the staff to assess the consistency of its educational policies and programs in terms of its procedures and outcomes and in relation to the appropriate Commission on Technical and Career Institutions' **Standards of Membership**. The various **Self-Study Guides** have been designed to assist in the process of self-study and to elicit descriptive and statistical information about the institution. Obviously, the guides cannot fit every situation exactly. Requests for information that are not applicable may be omitted. Supplementary statements may be submitted whenever appropriate. The collection and reporting of additional informative data useful to the process is encouraged.

THE EVALUATION PROCESS - THE VISITING TEAM

The Director of the Commission invites peer evaluators to serve on the visiting team. The chief executive officer, upon finalization of the team's membership, should communicate with the visiting team chairperson to discuss arrangements for the team's arrival, accommodations, etc. (NOTE: The institution should arrange for charging of lodging and meals incurred by the visiting team to be billed directly to the institution unless prior arrangements are made with the Director of the Commission.) Timely arrangements should also be made to reimburse members of the visiting team for travel expenses at a mileage rate approved by the Association's Board of Trustees.

No later than four weeks prior to the visitation date, the institution mails to each member of the visiting team one copy of each of the following:

- Self-Study Report
- Current Catalog (and, if published separately, program brochures)
- Current Faculty Handbook
- Current Student Handbook
- Any other printed matter describing the institution which the institution wishes to include
- Explicit instructions concerning travel, housing and other arrangements for the on-site visit

In addition, one complete set of the same materials should be assembled and mailed to the Director of the Commission, NEASC, 209 Burlington Road, Suite 201, Bedford, Massachusetts 01730 for use by members of the Commission.

Additional copies of the institution's self-study report should be retained by the institution. The institution is expected to archive copies of the self-study and any attendant documentation resulting from the self-study and review process. (See Commission Policy on **Self-Study and Report Archiving for Accredited and Candidate Institutions.**)

The Director of the Commission provides information to the visiting team on team membership and any prior history of either institutional affiliation or accreditation. Team members are asked to study these materials thoroughly in advance of the visit so that time spent at the institution may be used to clarify obscure points and gain additional information and insight.

Typically, the team arrives at the institution on a Monday afternoon. The Commission Director or his designee meets with the team chairperson and assistant chairperson, conducts a pre-visit workshop for the visiting team, followed by an opportunity for the team chairperson to complete preparations for the visit. The visiting team is invited to a formal or informal dinner and/or reception hosted by the institution and spends the evening becoming acquainted with the individuals at the institution who will relate most closely to their assigned areas of responsibility. In the following three days, the team conducts its review of the institution, including its organization, administration, academic and technical or occupational programs, resources, facilities, etc. as presented in the self-study report and as observed by the visiting team. This review is designed to review the claims made in the self-study, ascertain institutional effectiveness and whether the institution fulfills its stated mission.

The exact schedule of the visiting team is arranged in advance through a preliminary site visit by the team chairperson and discussions between the chairperson and the chief executive officer or his/her designated representative. A longer visit may be arranged if the visiting team, in consultation with the Director of the Commission, deems it appropriate. Clerical assistance and computers should be made available by the host institution to facilitate the work of the visiting team during the second and third days of the visitation.

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION TO THE COMMISSION

The **Evaluation Report** and the separate document, **Strengths, Concerns and Recommendations**, should be completed.

The chairperson should also forward to the Commission office the visiting team's letter of recommendation concerning accreditation. The letter should clearly state the terms of accreditation, any conditions the team recommends to the Commission, and the reasons for the team's recommendations. When an adverse recommendation is forwarded to the Commission, the reasons for the adverse recommendation should be clearly tied to one or more of the Commission's **Standards of Membership**. It is important that the contents of this separate

communication be kept absolutely confidential **for the eyes of the Commission and its Director only**.

With the exception of the visiting team chairperson possibly appearing before the Commission, the chairperson and his/her colleagues on the visiting team have discharged their responsibilities to the Commission with the presentation of both reports and their confidential recommendation to the Commission for accreditation action. Thereafter, all correspondence regarding the evaluation visit, the report, or recommendations should be directed to the Director of the Commission.

THE EVALUATION PROCESS - THE COMMISSION

The Commission meets at regular intervals to deliberate about visiting team reports as a general order of business. The visiting team chairperson is occasionally invited to be present to review and discuss the team's report with the Commission. The Commission reserves the right to invite institutional CEO's as it deems appropriate. In its deliberations, the Commission will consider all relevant information available, including the results of the institutional self-study and the reports of the visiting team, plus any comments submitted by the institution prior to making its decision on candidacy, initial, or continued accreditation. The final decision on candidacy and initial accreditation involves a recommendation by the Commission and a majority vote of affirmation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges' Board of Trustees. Information concerning the Commission recommendation on candidacy and initial accreditation is, however, reported directly to the institution on the first working day following the Commission meeting. A letter of notification will be forwarded to the institution discussing Commission deliberations within approximately three weeks after the Commission meeting. The letter of notification details the basis for the Commission's accrediting action, whether that action recommends candidacy, initial accreditation or reaffirms accreditation. When the Commission takes an adverse action against an accredited institution, details concerning that action are also included in the Commission's letter of notification to the institution. A second letter of notification will be forwarded to the chief executive officer of the institution following action by the Board of Trustees when required. The final decision on continued accreditation is rendered by a majority vote of the Commission.

Institutions are accredited for a period not to exceed a cycle approved by the Association Board of Trustees. The New England Association of Schools and Colleges' Board of Trustees sets no definite term of accreditation and defines accreditation as a continuing relationship with the Association. Continuation of accreditation depends upon maintenance of the established **Standards of Membership**. If an accredited institution fails to maintain the prescribed requirements, an interval of time is allowed for the institution to correct its deficiencies. If these deficiencies are not remedied during this interval, the institution is placed on probation for a specific limited period; and unless adequate corrections to substantially meet the **Standards of Membership** of the Commission have been accomplished during the second interval, the accreditation of the institution may be revoked. The Association and thus the Commission allows for the appeal of any adverse decision against a member institution. (See Commission Policy for the **Appeal of Adverse Action**.)

Any institution that has its accreditation terminated may, upon submission of evidence that the deficiencies leading to revocation have been remedied, petition the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions for reinstatement of its accreditation.

THE SELF-STUDY STEERING COMMITTEE

The Commission is often asked questions about the steering committee - its make-up and duties. While responding to questions typically asked, it is emphasized that decisions on the composition and duties of the steering committee are local options. The answers provided are designed to suggest procedures that have proved helpful in other institutions.

1. Who should be on the steering committee?

While most institutions limit committee membership to the professional staff, it need not be limited to the faculty. The committee should be representative of administrative and instructional levels, and the chairperson may be an administrator, department chairperson, or member of the faculty. In any case, the chairperson should enjoy the respect of the various constituencies, and must have demonstrated leadership ability with the talent to coordinate the work of many people while meeting established deadlines.

2. How large should the steering committee be?

The size of the committee will vary with the size of the faculty. The Commission suggests four to seven members, with the president or director serving in an ex officio capacity. Some institutions have a committee made up of a chairperson and one person acting as a subcommittee chairperson for each of the **Standards of Membership**. The size and composition of the committee, however, remain a local option. The committee and its subcommittees should be arranged so as to insure the collegiality of the self-study process.

3. How should the steering committee assign faculty members to subcommittees?

Although some faculty assignments to subcommittees may, of necessity, be arbitrary since there are a number of subcommittees to be covered, it is best to begin with some indication of specific faculty or administrator interests. A form should be distributed so that preferences of the professional staff will be known and subcommittees should be established for each section of the **Self-Study Manual**. If possible, limit the number of committee assignments to two committees.

4. How should the chairperson of each subcommittee be determined?

Chairpersons may be assigned by the steering committee or be elected by members of the subcommittee itself.

5. Who should assist in the self-study of the institution?

The decision on the makeup of the self-study group of an institution is a local option. We have found that the self-study process in many instances includes faculty, administrators, students, and advisory committees or other interested groups. We suggest that an institution undergoing evaluation consider widening the base of self-evaluation so that various viewpoints may be introduced into the self-study process.

6. How long should the institution spend on the self-study program?

The typical self-study is complete in one academic year. The beginning and end of the self-evaluation will be determined by the evaluation date. It must be remembered that all self-study outline materials must be prepared and sent to the visiting team and the Commission office in final form one month prior to the evaluation date.

7. Is there an ideal order in which to present subcommittee reports to the faculty?

All subcommittee reports should be presented to the faculty and ideally to the entire institutional community for their review and consideration. Our analysis of institutions that recently underwent accreditation review indicates some similarity, but not total uniformity, in schedules. **Mission** review and validation, as the keystone of accreditation, should be the first report submitted for faculty consideration. Ideally, program evaluations should be presented following staff acceptance of the **Mission** report, since the individual programs of an institution should be congruent to the institution's mission. There is no ideal order of presentation, but some major sections of the self-study, such as **Governance**, **Finance** and **Faculty**, may be better presented near the end of the self-study so that the strengths, concerns and recommendations for those sections of the self-study are allowed to evolve in consideration of the responses to other subcommittee reports.

8. Is there a list of duties that the subcommittee must complete?

We have suggested a list of responsibilities that most steering committees will assume. Although the duties of any particular committee may vary, this list may help.

**SUGGESTED SCHEDULE OF STEERING
COMMITTEE FOR NEASC/CTCI SELF-STUDY**

PHASE I

- President or director appoints a chairperson of the self-study steering committee and potential members are invited to participate. Membership should be representative of the faculty and professional staff. The committee should also include representatives from the institution's administration, support services such as admissions, guidance and counseling, etc.

- The steering committee should establish a calendar for the self-study, allowing time for the various committees to work individually and time to make subcommittee reports to the total faculty. Allow time for the report on **Mission** to be presented to the total faculty prior to the initiation of other self-evaluation subcommittee work assignments.
- Develop a budget for the evaluation and submit it to the appropriate board of control for approval. Consider lodging, meals, secretarial assistance, travel expenses for the visiting team, clerical supplies and printing costs.
- The steering committee should survey staff for individual staff member preference for serving on the various subcommittees. It should be noted that each staff member would also be responsible for working on the subcommittee in his or her own area of responsibility.
- It is appropriate when evaluating each of the individual programs of study that at least one or two professional staff members from outside that area of study be invited to serve.

PHASE II

- Mission committee begins its work.
- All departments review and revise course syllabi and attendant curriculum objectives and assessment measures.

PHASE III

- Subcommittee assignments reviewed with the faculty.

PHASE IV

- Steering committee explores options for lodging for the visiting team. Ensure that each team member will have a private room and a meeting room during the day at institution and during the evening at the hotel. Clerical support and access to computers for the visiting team should be arranged.

PHASE V

- Respond to the Commission's visiting team nominations.
- Develop a package of preliminary data for the visiting team. The following items are recommended:

- a) Statement of Mission
 - b) Institution catalog
 - c) Faculty Handbook
 - d) Student Handbook
 - e) Floor plan
 - f) Union contractual agreements and salary schedules
 - g) Supplemental descriptive data
 - h) Organizational chart with names and titles
- Order and prepare name tags for faculty and administration. The steering committee may want to include the names of non-professional staff members at the institution. Prepare name tags for all visiting team members, including their titles and their institutions.

PHASE VI

- Reports of subcommittees to faculty.
- These reports should be made available for faculty review prior to any scheduled meeting. Each committee is responsible for explaining its section of the self-study and highlighting other important information gathered and reviewed in the self-study process.
- Provide copies of each subcommittee report for the visiting team.
- Provide one copy of the self-study report for the Commission.
- Make up a notebook of all syllabi for each individual program.
- Develop a letter of introduction and welcome to each visiting team member with an explanation of lodging and dining provisions, directions to the motel or hotel, and the time for the first meeting.
- Invite the Commission Director to the opening reception/dinner and provide an opportunity for him to conduct a workshop for the visiting team on the afternoon of the first day of the visit.

PHASE VII

- Submit one copy of the self-study to each visiting team member at least one month prior to the scheduled visit.
- Meet with the visiting team chairperson at least six weeks prior to the visit to review facilities at the hotel and institution and establish a time schedule.

- Make arrangements for lunches, restrooms and secretarial assistance while the team is at the institution during the day.
- Develop a chart showing all professional staff assignments and rooms.
- Develop emergency procedures and information for the visiting team in case of illness.
- Develop a list of activities at the institution while the visiting team will be on-site.
- Publish locations and times for the visiting team subgroups to meet with faculty self-study groups or others.
- Finalize all preparations at the inn, hotel or motel, as well as at the institution.
- Distribute to faculty prior to arrival of visiting team, name tags, names of visiting team members, and visiting team time schedules as they become available.
- Notify students that the visit will occur and the purposes of the visit.
- Ensure that supplies will be adequate during the visit. Provide access to computers in the visiting team's meeting rooms.
- Prepare a presentation about the institution and its mission to be given at the reception/dinner on the first day.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

CHAIRPERSON

- Coordinate work with president or director, committee and staff
- Prepare self-study budget
- Manage self-study calendar
- Coordinate the preparation of self-study reports
- Organize course syllabi
- Invitations to the governing board
- Letters of welcome to visiting team

MEMBER 1

- Prepare name tags
- Provide incidental supplies
- Arrange school facilities in terms of meeting rooms, lunches, coffee
- Prepare a chart of the daily schedule at the institution

MEMBER 2

- Develop committee assignments
- Develop the self-evaluation calendar
- Provide parking space for visitors
- Supervise typing of evaluation reports

MEMBER 3

- Oversee housing at the motel and transportation to and from the institution
- Prepare and mail preliminary data envelopes
- Prepare and distribute supplies at motel

GUIDE FOR CHAIRPERSONS

ROLE OF THE CHAIRPERSON

The role of the chairperson of the visiting team is a prime factor in the success of the evaluation process. The leadership of a visiting team is of the same critical importance as institutional leadership, for the chairperson's performance is the capstone of a lengthy and complex enterprise.

The task of the chairperson, with the assistance of visiting team members, is to ensure that the institution visited receives the kind of educational audit which will

- identify areas for constructive action by the institution for its continual improvement
- serve as a sound basis for a recommendation to the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions
- provide further validity and reliability of the evaluation and accreditation process

If an evaluation has served these purposes, the institution should benefit from a clarification of its objectives, a realistic self-examination of its success in attaining them, and a stimulation to continue the study of ways by which it might increase its effectiveness.

PLANNING THE VISIT

The responsibilities of the chairperson begin as soon as the membership of the visiting team has been finalized. The Commission's letter to the visiting team chairperson and members of the team indicates that the president of the institution to be evaluated has been requested to contact the chairperson of the team to discuss arrangements for the visit (housing, meals, time, place and participants at the initial meeting with institutional personnel, schedule and length of visit, etc.). The president is also requested to contact other members of the team through a letter of welcome that includes travel instructions and lodging arrangements.

WHEN THE CHAIRPERSON RECEIVES THE NAMES OF TEAM MEMBERS

As soon as the chairperson receives a letter from the Commission office with the names of individuals serving on the visiting team, copies of previous evaluation reports and other background information, he or she should communicate with team members to establish contact and to obtain any assignment preference or suggestions about arrangements for the visit which would facilitate discussions with officials at the institution. Part of this initial communication might address the need for computers and urge the members to bring laptops, if available, and indicate the preferred word processing software that should be used. The Commission uses Microsoft Office XP.

Experience has shown that it is preferable to have the visiting team housed in single rooms in one place. The host institution should also arrange for a suitable work/meeting room for the

team in the same place where it is housed. The latter should be private with adequate security for the

team's confidential documents and should be provided with a supply of writing materials and one or more PCs for use by team members. It will be helpful to have available in the work/meeting room copies of current class schedules, staff directories, bulletins, and other institutional publications that may be of interest to the visiting team.

Upon receipt of the names of team members, the chairperson should analyze the list and begin to think about tentative areas of responsibility for each member.

As an aid in organizing the team, the Director of the Commission will forward to each evaluator an **Evaluator Experience Summary Form** with a request that it be completed and forwarded to the chairperson. The form should indicate the nature of visiting team experience and other appropriate background information.

WHEN THE CHAIRPERSON RECEIVES BACKGROUND MATERIALS FROM THE COMMISSION

Approximately six weeks before the campus visit, the Commission office will forward to other members of the visiting team copies of any correspondence and other pertinent information relating to actions by the Commission. Copies of the Commission's current **Standards of Membership, Evaluation Procedures** and **Self-Study Manual** will also be made available at this time.

The chairperson should become thoroughly familiar with the above background materials.

WHEN THE CHAIRPERSON RECEIVES THE SELF-STUDY REPORT FROM THE INSTITUTION

The institution has been requested to forward to each member of the visiting team a copy of its completed self-study report, current catalog, faculty handbook, student handbook, and any other relevant descriptive material no later than a month prior to the campus visit. Upon receipt of the self-study report from the institution, the chairperson should analyze and begin to think about these materials. The following questions may help to guide an analysis:

- What additional information is needed?
- Which material requires interpretation?
- What appear to be strong points? Weak points?
- How do the parts fit together in viewing the institution as a whole?
- Which people should be interviewed during campus visits?
- Are the institution's recommendations for improvement realistic and thorough?
- Is there sufficient narrative to give the team the information it needs?

If this review suggests that additional or clarifying information would be helpful to the team, a request should be conveyed to the president of the institution (or his/her designated representative) as soon as possible so that the material can be prepared and made available for the team's use no later than the time of the initial meeting on campus.

As soon as the chairperson has completed a study of all the background materials (previous visiting team reports, the current self-study report, evaluator experience summary forms, etc.), he or she should communicate with the team members again to make preliminary assignments. These assignments should be kept flexible, however, subject to modification after the team arrives on campus and after the chairperson has a better impression of the situation and the team members.

DURING THE VISIT

Throughout the visit the chairperson should keep constantly in touch with the work of the team as a whole, doing whatever is necessary to facilitate its continued understanding of and concentration on its task of determining the degree to which the institution is fulfilling its objectives in relation to the New England Association of Schools and Colleges' Commission on Technical and Career Institutions' **Standards of Membership**. The chairperson must be constantly alert to the orientation and attitude of team members, helping them to approach their roles as colleagues and friendly consultants, not as inspectors, and to realize that a fair evaluation identifies strengths as well as weaknesses.

INITIAL MEETING OF THE VISITING TEAM

At the initial meeting of the visiting team (usually beginning at 3:00 p.m. at the hotel or motel on Monday afternoon prior to any meetings with institutional personnel), the Commission Director conducts an orientation session for the visiting team. The chairperson should then accomplish the following:

- Get acquainted with and form an impression of team members and convince them of the importance of writing their reports in a timely fashion.
- Orient team members to their role (professional service) and attitude (fair and responsible observers). Hector Lee's Decalogue, which is included in all team members' material, has some good thoughts on these items. Also, any uncertainties about the Commission's policies or procedures should be clarified at this time.
- Share preliminary impressions of the institution gleaned from the background materials, drawing team members out to get further leads about their special competencies and possible prejudices. At this point, prior conclusions should obviously be avoided, but working hypotheses may serve as useful points of departure.
- Assign responsibilities for interviews and finalize the time schedule for all activities during the visit, insuring that these are conveyed to the appropriate persons at the first meeting with institutional personnel. Insofar as time allows, every major administrative officer of the institution, every department chairperson, and, if feasible, all faculty members should be consulted. One or more members of the team should also confer formally or informally with representative members of the

student body. The chairperson will normally be responsible for interviews with members of the governing board, the president, and other major administrative officers. Every member of the team, however, should have an opportunity to meet with the president.

- Set exact times for conferences among team members during the visit.

INITIAL MEETING WITH INSTITUTIONAL PERSONNEL

The initial meeting of the team with key institutional personnel arranged through earlier discussions between the chairperson and the president should occur no later than the first evening meeting (this session is typically a reception/dinner meeting). At that time the team should receive whatever additional orientation of either a general or specific nature the institution deems appropriate to the evaluation (for example, it might wish to use this occasion to elaborate on its mission and attendant objectives and how it seeks to achieve them). Above all, this first meeting with institutional personnel should be informal and the chairperson and his/her colleagues should attempt to allay any tensions and anxieties.

VISITING TEAM ACTIVITIES AND CONFERENCES

In the course of the visit, the chairperson and members of the team should seek opportunities to talk with representatives of the faculty, students, and administration; to visit classes and the library; and to see other aspects of the physical plant.

The chairperson should organize conferences of team members, carefully noting what is to be accomplished each time. The chairperson should not dominate the discussion, but rather should provide firm leadership. Reports and observations from individual team members should be discussed. Most teams work informally and reach decisions by consensus.

At or near the end of the visit, the chairperson should schedule a “wrap-up” meeting of the team. By the end of this session, a team point of view, hopefully a consensus on major issues, should emerge. Most chairpersons have found it helpful to have a rough draft of the various sections of the report completed before the team disbands and leaves the campus. Regardless of the procedure that the chairperson chooses to follow, it is most important that the team be in general agreement as to the contents of its report and its recommendation to the Commission. Each member of the team should also have a clear understanding of his/her individual responsibilities with respect to the preparation of the report and its required confidentiality.

The visiting team recommendation to the Commission generally is in the form of one of the options made available. (See **Visiting Team Options Following an On-Site Review for Candidate or Accredited Status.**) Recommendations should be tied to specific standards, policies or procedures whenever possible, and especially in cases of adverse recommendations.

It should be noted that the recommendation to the Commission is **confidential** and must **not** be divulged to the institution. It should be submitted separately as described in the following section.

EXIT INTERVIEW WITH THE PRESIDENT

At the last meeting of the team, preparations should be finalized for the exit interview with institutional representatives. This conference is probably the most difficult, yet one of the most important tasks of the chairperson. Many chairpersons find it good practice to meet with the chief executive officer before the exit interview to explain in condensed form the contents of the team's report. The exit interview should provide the institution's staff (those in attendance to be determined by the chief executive officer and the chairperson) with a preview of major points included in the written report. It is important that both the content and tone of the oral exit interview be consistent with the written report the institution will later receive. The oral report should not provide for comment or questions by the staff or chief executive officer.

By its very nature, the exit interview cannot be a courtesy call; it must truly be a conference in which the host institution has ample opportunity to understand the summary of the report presented. If any points appear to be on "shaky" ground due to questions of fact, this is the time to make sure of the facts.

A special note of caution is in order. No indication should be made to the president or to anyone else at the institution visited what accreditation recommendation the team will make to the Commission. **The final accreditation decision is the Commission's to make.** Thus the Commission requests that this protocol be followed because, however unlikely it may be, it could modify the recommendation of the visiting team which would be cause for considerable confusion and embarrassment if this custom of privacy is not strictly observed.

AFTER THE VISIT

PREPARATION OF THE REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION TO THE COMMISSION

Note: The following format should be used by visiting team chairpersons when writing visiting team reports as the result of candidacy, initial accreditation, decennial accreditation, or focused visits.

The **Evaluation Report** and the separate document, **Strengths, Concerns and Recommendations**, should be completed no later than one month following the visit.

Each visiting team member is responsible for preparing an initial draft of those sections of the report assigned as an individual area of responsibility during the visit.

The organization of the report should follow the order of the Commission's **Standards of Membership**.

Every effort should be made to submit a report that is both scrupulously fair and factually accurate in describing the institution and its operations as they were observed by the visiting team during the visit. In an era of heightened public interest and growing concern for consumer protection, it is likely that the visiting team report will be read and referred to by lay as well as professional parties unknown to the visiting team or the Commission. The report should be a professional document in every respect and should never refer to individuals by name.

Recommendations concerning possible changes in institutional policies or practices should not be offered in the body of the report, but rather should be submitted to the Commission in a separate confidential communication.

The chairperson typically writes the introductory and concluding sections and edits the drafts of other reports so that the final document is a cohesive representation of the institution as a whole. **The report should be double-spaced on one side of the paper.** The introductory section and the **Mission** report are particularly important, for they set the stage for the rest of the report. In it the chairperson should carefully analyze the institution's concept and understanding of its task, its general educational philosophy and any conclusions by the visiting team as to the extent to which it is meeting these responsibilities.

As soon as the chairperson has completed the editing of the **Evaluation Report** and the **Strengths, Concerns and Recommendations** document, the corrected draft of the **Evaluation Report** and the **Strengths, Concerns and Recommendations** document should then be forwarded to the president or director of the institution evaluated who will have an opportunity to identify errors of factual accuracy and/or misinterpretation. The final draft of the **Evaluation Report** and the **Strengths, Concerns and Recommendations** document will then be prepared by the chairperson. It should be duplicated and twenty (20) copies forwarded to the Director of the Commission.

The **Strengths, Concerns and Recommendations** document should include

- a listing of the institutions strengths and areas of concern as observed by the visiting team.
- recommendations for change that the visiting team may wish to offer. These recommendations should relate directly to the Commission's **Standards of Membership**.
- suggestions for change the visiting team may wish to offer. These suggestions should represent perceptions that, if acted upon favorably, would improve programs or the institution.

The final printing of both the **Evaluation Report** and the **Strengths, Concerns and Recommendations** document will be shared with the institution evaluated prior to Commission deliberations.

LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION TO THE COMMISSION

A **confidential letter** to the Director of the Commission, **not to be shared with the institution**, will be forwarded by the visiting team chairperson. The letter contains the visiting team's accrediting action recommendations to the Commission. The visiting team chairperson will ensure that the contents of this communication are kept absolutely confidential and only for the eyes of the Commission and its Director.

The letter of recommendation should include the following:

- a recommendation for Commission action
- the rationale for that decision tied to the **Standards of Membership**
- any outstanding commendations and/or recommendations that deserve specific and immediate attention

When the **Evaluation Report** and the **Strengths, Concerns and Recommendations** document are received in the Commission office, the Director of the Commission will ensure that a copy of each is in the possession of the institution. The Commission reserves the right, upon deliberation, to request further information from the institution if deemed necessary.

DISCUSSING THE REPORT WITH THE COMMISSION

Visiting team reports are scheduled for review and discussion by the Commission at one of its regular meetings. In special circumstances, the visiting team chairperson is invited to join the Commission for a discussion of the visiting team's report. Arrangements should be made for another member of the visiting team to be present at the Commission meeting whenever the visiting team chairperson cannot attend.

The chairperson and his/her visiting team colleagues have discharged their responsibilities to the Commission with the presentation of the report. All correspondence thereafter should be directed to or from the Director of the Commission.

MISCELLANEOUS

Use of a personal automobile by visiting team members in connection with an evaluation visit is reimbursed at a rate to be set by the Association's Board of Trustees.

Members of evaluation teams serve without honoraria. However, the institution pays for their lodging, meals, and out-of-pocket expenses (including transportation). These costs are in addition to the evaluation fee paid to the Association. It is the responsibility of the visiting team chairperson to collect expense vouchers from the team members and submit them to the chief

executive office of the institution. It is the responsibility of the institution to process these vouchers for payment within two weeks of their receipt. In unusual circumstances, and with prior approval of the Commission Director, expense vouchers may be submitted to the Commission office for reimbursement to the team members. In such cases, the Association will bill the institution as an accreditation expense. Please note that reimbursement through the Association is the exception. Reimbursement should occur at the institutional level in a timely fashion.

If emergencies arise with respect to any aspect of the evaluation process, the chairperson should not hesitate to telephone collect the Director of the Commission at the following:

office: 781-271-0022, ext. 5416

e-mail: pbento@neasc.org

FOCUSED VISIT REVIEWS

ROLE OF THE CHAIRPERSON AND EVALUATORS

The leadership of the chairperson for a focused visit is of the same critical importance as that expected during a comprehensive review.

In many respects, the policies and procedures governing a focused visit are similar to those governing comprehensive evaluations. There are, however, a number of significant differences, including the following:

- The size of the team.
- Focused evaluations are two and one-half days.
- The total institution is not evaluated; rather, progress is reviewed in terms of both the most recent on-site decennial visit and the Commission's letter(s) of notification.
- The preparation for the on-site visit is in the form of a focused visit report on issues identified during and subsequent to the last review, as well as a report on any recent developments. (See Commission document **Format for Focused Visit Reports**.)

It is recommended that the team chairperson visit the institution prior to the scheduled focused visit. It is his/her responsibility to contact the chief executive officer of the host institution to be sure that all appropriate arrangements have been made to include the following:

- hotel accommodations
- materials to be forwarded to each team member
- any unusual travel requirements
- the mailing of the focused visit report at least 30 calendar days prior to the team's arrival

The team chairperson should also write to team members to inform them of preliminary arrangements and receive from each team member an **Evaluator Experience Summary Form** identifying specific areas of competence and interest that should be an assistance in making assignments for the on-site visit.

It is expected that team members will carefully examine all materials prior to the on-site visit.

ORGANIZATION OF THE VISIT

Team members are expected to arrive during the late afternoon on the day prior to the two-day visit. It is expected that the team chairperson will inform members of the team as to the expected time of arrival and the scheduled time for an organizational meeting.

- The chairperson will review specific plans, establish final team assignments, and be certain that team members understand their responsibilities for writing the various

sections. Team members should be encouraged to approach their work informally and as colleagues rather than inspectors.

- The chairperson will also review in detail the most recent letter of notification and the Commission's expectations of progress. The chairperson may at that time wish to encourage an open exchange of preliminary reactions to the progress report, and team members may wish to share their analyses of materials forwarded. It is important, however, to guard against any prior conclusions and any attempt to write the report prior to the on-site visit.
- The chairperson should make clear that the Commission does not take a position on certain issues unless they affect compliance with **Standards of Membership** or adherence to the **Eligibility Requirements**. Included among these issues might be the following:
 - Collective Bargaining
 - Academic Freedom
 - Due Process
 - Affirmative Action

Remember, team members are not charged with enforcing government regulations. The responsibilities of team members are to evaluate, to recommend, and to advise.

DURING THE VISIT

Because the team visit involves only two full days, team members should be careful to establish a tentative time table with individual interviews in mind. Every effort should be made to spend time with representative members of the faculty, students, and governing board.

Team members should schedule enough time to draft reports based on their individual assignments. While the team chairperson writes the final focused visit report, there is great reliance on comments, ideas, and rough drafts submitted by team members. Those who author the documents should remember that focused visit reports are intended for a large audience, to include the Commission, the affected institution, and any public use the institution may wish to make of the findings. The bottom line is, has the institution's staff addressed appropriately those Areas of Concern and Recommendations most recently identified by the Commission and/or its evaluators?

INSTRUCTIONS FOR EVALUATORS

GENERAL

The purpose of the visit is to evaluate the institution as a whole in terms of the **Standards of Membership** for the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. Although the Commission firmly believes that it is not possible to conduct a valid evaluation of an institution without carefully reviewing each of the institution's educational programs of study, the visiting team must bear in mind that the Commission accredits institutions and not programs. The team should ensure that the institution receives the kind of education audit that will

- identify areas for constructive action by the institution leading to its improvement
- serve as a sound basis for a recommendation to the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions

If an evaluation has served these purposes, the institution should benefit from a clarification of its mission and its attendant objectives, a realistic self-examination of its success in attaining them, and stimulation for a continuing study of ways by which it might increase its effectiveness in service to its students.

PLANNING THE VISIT

Each evaluator will receive from the Commission a letter of invitation to serve on the visiting team and a follow-up communication outlining details of the three and one-half day visit. When the membership of the visiting team has been established, it is the responsibility of the president of the institution to be evaluated to contact the chairperson of the team to discuss arrangements for the visit (housing, meals, plans and the particulars of the initial meeting with institutional personnel, schedules, etc.) Prior to the visit the chairperson will communicate with team members to establish contact and obtain any preferences and suggestions for the visit. Arrangements for the "housekeeping" of the on-site visit are the responsibility of the host institution, but they depend upon the receipt of appropriate information and direction from the visiting team chairperson. As an aid to the chairperson in organizing the visiting team for institutional evaluation, the Commission office will make available copies of **Evaluator Experience Summary Forms** to be completed by each team member and forwarded to the visiting team chairperson.

Experience has shown that it is preferable to have the visiting team housed in single rooms in one place. The host institution will have arranged to have a suitable work/meeting room for the team in the same place where it is housed. The latter should be private and should be provided with one or more computers and a supply of writing materials for use by the team. The institution will have available in the work/meeting room copies of current class schedules, staff directories, bulletins, and other institutional publications that may be of interest to the team.

BACKGROUND MATERIALS FROM THE COMMISSION

Approximately six weeks before the campus visit, the Commission office will forward to the chairperson copies of any appropriate evaluation reports developed by previous visiting teams representing the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions, as well as copies of correspondence and other pertinent information relating to actions by the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions. Copies of the Commission's current **Standards of Membership**, its policies and procedures, and its **Self-Study Manual** will also be forwarded at this time.

Each team member should become familiar with these background materials, giving particular attention to the findings of the most recent evaluation for possible items that may warrant special review in the current self-study and campus visit.

SELF-STUDY REPORT FROM THE INSTITUTION

The institution will forward to each team member, no later than one month prior to the campus visit, a copy of its completed self-study, current catalog, faculty handbook, student handbook, and any other relevant descriptive material. Each team member should read, analyze and begin to think about these materials before the visit. The following questions may be of help in the analysis of material received:

- What additional information is needed?
- Which material requires interpretation?
- What appear to be strong points? Weak points?
- How do the parts fit together in viewing the institution as a whole?
- Which people should be interviewed during the campus visit?
- Are the institution's recommendations for its improvement realistic and thorough?
- Is there sufficient narrative to give the team the information it needs?

If this review suggests that additional or clarifying information would be helpful to the team, the evaluator should communicate this feeling to the chairperson. It is the chairperson's responsibility to convey any requests for further information to the institution as soon as possible so that the material can be available for the team's use by no later than the time of its initial meeting on the campus.

When the chairperson has carefully reviewed all background materials (previous visiting team reports, the current self-study, evaluator experience summary forms), he/she will then communicate with fellow team members to make preliminary assignments of areas for special attention by individual team members.

DURING THE VISIT

Throughout the visit, each team member must keep in mind that the visiting team member's role is that of colleague and friendly consultant. If any word should characterize the nature of the visiting team experience, it may be professionalism.

INITIAL MEETING OF THE VISITING TEAM

The initial meeting of the visiting team takes place at the hotel or motel at 3:00 p.m. on the Monday afternoon prior to any meeting with institutional personnel. At that meeting, the Commission Director or his designee will conduct an orientation to the peer review accreditation process, followed by an organizational meeting conducted by the visiting team chairperson. Each team member should get acquainted with other team members, understand his/her place on the team, and share with others preliminary impressions of the institution gained from a review of background materials.

INITIAL MEETING WITH INSTITUTIONAL PERSONNEL

The initial meeting of the team with key institutional personnel, arranged through earlier discussions between the chairperson and the president, should occur no later than Monday evening (this session is typically a reception/dinner meeting). At that time the visiting team should receive whatever additional orientation, of either a general or specific nature, the institution deems appropriate to the evaluation. (For example, it might wish to use this occasion to elaborate on its mission and objectives and how it seeks to carry them out.) Above all, this first meeting with institutional personnel should be informal, and all members of the visiting team should attempt to allay any tensions and fears and set an atmosphere of professionalism.

VISITING TEAM ACTIVITIES AND CONFERENCES

In the course of the visit, team members should seek opportunities to meet with representatives of the faculty, students, and administration; to visit classes and the library; and to see other aspects of the physical plant.

In addition to the meeting room at the hotel, the institution will provide a meeting room at the institution, which will serve as home base for the team. The meeting room will contain one or more computers and various materials to facilitate the visit. The institution is expected to provide the team with appropriate clerical support. The chairperson will set specific times for visiting team conferences during the visit. Reports and observations from individual team members should be discussed. Most teams work informally and reach decisions by consensus.

At or near the end of the visit, a "wrap-up" conference of the visiting team should occur. By the end of this session, the visiting team should seek to come to consensus on major issues. Most teams find it helpful to have a rough draft of the various sections of the report completed before the team disbands and leaves the campus. Regardless of the procedure that a particular team chooses to follow, it is most important that the team be in general agreement as to the subject

matter of its report and recommendation to the Commission. Each member of the team should have a clear understanding of individual team member responsibilities with respect to the preparation of the report.

The visiting team recommendation concerning accreditation should be based on options described in the Commission's document **Range and Meaning of Commission Actions Affecting Institutional Status** and, whenever possible, tied to Commission standards, policies or procedures.

It should be noted that the recommendation to the Commission is **confidential** and must **not** be divulged to the institution.

EXIT INTERVIEW WITH THE PRESIDENT

Before leaving the campus, the visiting team chairperson should give the president (and whoever the chairperson and president decide should be included in the meeting) an oral preview of the team's findings. This conference is probably the most difficult, yet one of the most important aspects of the evaluation.

By its very nature the exit interview cannot be a courtesy call; it must truly be a conference in which the host institution has ample opportunity to talk and discuss the summary of the report presented. If any points appear to be on "shaky" ground, this is the time to make sure of the facts.

No indication should be made to the president or to anyone else at the institution visited what the recommendation of the team is going to be. The Commission requests that this procedure be followed because it may modify the recommendation of the visiting team, which could cause considerable embarrassment if this custom of privacy is not strictly observed.

The visit typically concludes in the early afternoon of the fourth day, usually on Thursday.

AFTER THE VISIT

PREPARATION OF THE REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION TO THE COMMISSION

Three documents are prepared for the Commission's review as a result of a site visit to an institution: the **Evaluation Report; Strengths, Concerns and Recommendations**; and the formal and confidential **Letter of Recommendation** from the team to the Commission.

Each team member is responsible for preparing an initial draft of those sections of the report concerning his or her assigned areas of responsibility. Depending upon the decision of the team, this may or may not be accomplished prior to the team's departure from the host institution. It is strongly recommended that all elements of the evaluation report be completed and in the possession of the chairperson before the team disbands.

The organization of the report should follow the order of the Commission's **Standards of Membership** as published.

Every effort should be made to submit a report that is both scrupulously fair and factually accurate in describing the institution and its operations as they were observed by the team during the visit. In an era of heightened public interest and growing concern for consumer protection, it is likely that the visiting team report will be read and referred to by lay as well as professional parties unknown to the team or the Commission. The report should be a professional document in every respect and should never refer to individuals by name. **Recommendations concerning possible changes in institutional policies or procedures should not be offered in the body of the report**, but rather should be submitted to the Commission in a separate communication (see below).

The chairperson typically writes the introductory and concluding sections and edits the drafts of other team members so that the final report is a cohesive representation of the institution as a whole. **The report should be double-spaced on one side of the paper.** The introductory section and the **Mission** report are particularly important, for they set the stage for the rest of the report. The chairperson should carefully analyze the institution's concept and understanding of its mission, its general educational philosophy, and any conclusions arrived at by the visiting team apropos the extent to which it is meeting its mission.

As soon as the chairperson has completed the editing of the **Evaluation Report** and the **Strengths, Concerns and Recommendations** document, the corrected draft of the **Evaluation Report** and the **Strengths, Concerns and Recommendations** document should then be forwarded to the president or director of the institution evaluated who will have an opportunity to identify errors of factual accuracy and/or misinterpretation. The final draft of the **Evaluation Report** and the **Strengths, Concerns and Recommendations** document will then be prepared by the chairperson. It should be duplicated and twenty (20) copies forwarded to the Director of the Commission.

The **Strengths, Concerns and Recommendations** document should include

- a listing of the institution's strengths and areas of concern as observed by the visiting team.
- recommendations for change that the visiting team may wish to offer; These recommendations should relate directly to the Commission's **Standards of Membership**.
- suggestions for change the visiting team may wish to offer; these suggestions should represent perceptions that, if acted upon favorably, would improve programs or the institution. Typically, they will not relate directly to the **Standards of Membership**.

The final printing of both the **Evaluation Report** and the **Strengths, Concerns and Recommendations** document will be shared with the institution evaluated prior to Commission deliberations.

A separate single copy communication is to be forwarded by the visiting team chairperson to the Director of the Commission with the visiting team recommendation for accreditation on the basis of options indicated by the visiting team chairperson. The visiting team chairperson will ensure that the contents of this communication are kept absolutely **confidential** and only for the eyes of the Commission and its Director.

When the **Evaluation Report** and the **Strengths, Concerns and Recommendations** document are received in the Commission office, the Director of the Commission will ensure that a copy of each is in the possession of the institution. The Commission reserves the right upon deliberation to request further information from the institution if deemed necessary.

DISCUSSING THE REPORT WITH THE COMMISSION

Visiting team reports are scheduled for review and discussion by the Commission at one of its regular meetings. In special circumstances, the visiting team chairperson is invited to join the Commission for a discussion of the team's report. Arrangements should be made for another member of the visiting team to be present at the Commission meeting whenever the visiting team chairperson cannot attend.

The chairperson and visiting team colleagues have discharged their responsibilities to the Commission with the presentation of the report. All correspondence thereafter should be directed to or from the Director of the Commission.

MISCELLANEOUS

Use of a personal automobile in connection with an evaluation visit is reimbursed at a rate to be set by the Association's Board of Trustees.

Members of evaluation teams serve without honoraria. However, the institution pays for their lodging, meals, and out-of-pocket expenses (including transportation). These costs are in addition to the evaluation fee paid to the Association. It is the responsibility of the visiting team chairperson to collect expense vouchers from the team members and submit them to the chief executive office of the institution. It is the responsibility of the institution to process these vouchers for payment within two weeks of their receipt. In unusual circumstances, and with prior approval of the Commission Director, expense vouchers may be submitted to the Commission office for reimbursement to the team members. In such cases, the Association will bill the institution as an accreditation expense. Please note that reimbursement through the Association is the exception. Reimbursement should occur at the institutional level in a timely fashion.

If emergencies arise with respect to any aspect of the evaluation process, the chairperson should not hesitate to telephone collect the Director of the Commission.

ACCREDITATION DECALOGUE FOR THE ACCREDITATION TEAM

By Hector H. Lee, Dean of the College, Sonoma State College, California

DON'T SNITCH: A team member often learns private matters about an institution that an outsider has no business knowing; he is privy to “classified” information. Don't “tell tales” or talk about the weaknesses of an institution after the visit.

DON'T STEAL APPLES: A team member often discovers promising personnel that he would like to recruit for his own institution. Don't take advantage of the opportunity afforded by your position on the team to lure good teachers away from the institution you are visiting.

DON'T BE ON THE TAKE: A team member is often tempted to accept small favors, services, or gifts from the institution being visited. Don't accept or even suggest that you would like to have, a sample of the wares of an institution - a book it published, a product produced, or a service performed by the institution visited.

DON'T BE A CANDIDATE: A team member might see an opportunity to suggest himself for consultantship, a temporary job, or a permanent position with the institution he is visiting. Don't apply or suggest your availability until after your report has been filed.

DON'T BE A NIT-PICKER: A team member often sees small problems that can be solved by attention to minor details. Don't use the accreditation report, which should deal with major or serious policy-level matters, as the means of effecting minor reforms.

DON'T SHOOT SMALL GAME WITH A BIG GUN: A team member often finds that a small, weak, or marginal institution is completely at his mercy. Don't be sadistic or use the power of accreditation to deal heavily with or injure an institution that may need help more than punishment.

DON'T BE A BLEEDING HEART: A team member with “do-good” impulses may be blinded by good intentions and try to play the role of savior for an institution that may not deserve to be saved. Don't compound weakness by sentimental generosity in the hope that a school's problems will go away if ignored or treated with unwarranted optimism.

DON'T PUSH DOPE: A team member often sees an opportunity to recommend his own personal theories, philosophies, or techniques as the solution to an institution's problems. Don't force an institution to adopt measures that are likely to be altered or reversed by a subsequent visiting team.

DON'T SHOOT POISON DARTS: A team member may be tempted to “tip off” the administration to suspected treachery or to warn one faction of a campus of hidden enemies. Don't poison the minds of the staff or reveal suspicions to the administration; there are more wholesome ways to alert an administration to hidden tensions.

DON'T WORSHIP SACRED COWS: A team member in awe of a large and powerful institution may be reluctant to criticize an obvious problem in some department. Don't overlook weakness because the institution has a great reputation.

EVALUATOR EXPERIENCE SUMMARY FORM

NAME _____

INSTITUTION _____

POSITION _____

EDUCATION, TRAINING AND OTHER BACKGROUND INFORMATION DISCIPLINE(S)

TEACHING AND INDUSTRIAL EXPERIENCE DISCIPLINE(S)

ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

TEAM EXPERIENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

OTHER EXPERIENCE RELEVANT TO INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION AND ACCREDITATION

FORMAT FOR FOCUSED VISIT REPORTS

The Commission on Technical and Career Institutions mandates as a matter of policy that all of its accredited Institutions at the secondary and postsecondary level must undergo a focused visit no later than five years following a decennial or initial accreditation visit.

The institution bears the responsibility for preparing a focused visit report to be distributed to the Commission office and to members of the focused visit team no later than 30 calendar days prior to the date of the on-site visit by the team.

The **purpose** of the Focused Visit Report and the ensuing site visit is to inform the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions of significant developments and progress made by the institution since its most recent decennial on-site visit to include any progress reports or other actions required of the institution by Commission policy or specific action.

The institution's Focused Visit Report should be organized in the following manner:

PART ONE

The staff and administration are requested to report on the continuing substantial compliance of the institution with the Commission's **Standards of Membership** as they are stated when the report is written. The institution should note any significant changes that may have occurred since the last accreditation review. Additionally, the institution should review the Commission's **Substantive Change Policy** and report any such changes.

PART TWO

The institution must respond to those **Areas of Concern and/or Recommendations** identified in its most recent decennial accreditation evaluation report. The staff of the institution is to comment directly and in detail on action taken concerning each area identified and any plans that exist for future action. We suggest that a grid format should be prepared which clearly states each area of concern and/or recommendation and the action taken or planned for the future in sufficient detail to assure the visiting team and the Commission that progress is being made.

PART THREE

The institution responds specifically and in detail to the recommendations made by the Commission in its one or more letters of notification to the institution since its last decennial visit and as a result of Commission deliberations on the accredited status of the institution. It is not necessary to duplicate the institution's response to those recommendations and concerns dealt with in Part Two. However, the institution should clearly state the location of the response if it appears in Part Two.

SUPPORTING MATERIALS

Copies of the most recent school publications describing the institution and its programs; an organizational chart listing both positions and the names of those in the positions. The institution should feel free to provide any additional supporting material to Parts 1-3 as it sees fit.

COPIES

A copy of both the institution's focused visit report and supporting material should be sent to the chairperson of the visiting team, to all team members, and one copy to the Commission Director no later than 30 calendar days prior to the focused site visit.

COST

A fee will be charged to the institution in anticipation of the focused visit. That fee will be calculated at half the cost of the visited institution's annual Association dues as set for the year of the visit. The fee will be in addition to the dues. Additionally, the institution will be expected to pay the costs of travel, room and board incurred by the visiting team and calculated at rates set by the Association's Board of Trustees. The institution will reimburse team members directly unless prior arrangements with the Commission have been made.

TEAM SIZE

Commission experience shows that a focused visit should be as long as two and one-half days. The team could be as small as three members but could be as large as five depending upon the complexity of the report and the visit. The Commission will consider requests for a larger team only for exceptional reasons.

INSTITUTION _____

Page __ **of** __

REPORT/STANDARD _____

RECOMMENDATIONS AS OF _____	1. COMPLETED 2. IN PROGRESS 3. PLANNED FOR THE FUTURE 4. REJECTED 5. NO ACTION	STATUS

VISITING TEAM OPTIONS FOLLOWING AN ON-SITE REVIEW FOR CANDIDATE OR ACCREDITED STATUS

INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION AT THE TECHNICAL OR CAREER LEVEL

INITIAL ACCREDITATION

VISITING TEAM OPTIONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPONSE TO APPLICATIONS FOR INITIAL ACCREDITATION

1. Grant accreditation
2. Denial of accreditation
3. Provide definitive statement related to any conditions or suggested review procedures
4. Deferral of action for cause

CONTINUED ACCREDITATION - DECENNIAL CYCLE

VISITING TEAM OPTIONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPONSE TO APPLICATIONS FOR CONTINUED ACCREDITATION

1. Continued accreditation
2. Denial of continued accreditation
3. Probation
4. Warning procedure implemented
5. Provide definitive statement related to any conditions or suggested review of procedures
6. Deferral of action for cause

CONTINUED ACCREDITATION – WITHIN THE DECENNIAL CYCLE

VISITING TEAM OPTIONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPONSE TO APPLICATIONS FOR CONTINUED ACCREDITATION

1. Continued accreditation
2. Denial of continued accreditation
3. Probation

4. Warning procedure implemented
5. Provide definitive statement related to any conditions or suggested review procedures
6. Deferral of action for cause

CANDIDATE FOR ACCREDITATION

VISITING TEAM OPTIONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPONSE TO APPLICATIONS FOR CANDIDATE FOR ACCREDITATION STATUS

1. Denial of candidacy
2. Award candidacy (biennial progress reports required)
3. Define any conditions or requirements
4. Deferral of action for cause

A recommendation for initial accreditation or denial of initial accreditation should be based on the Commission's **Standards of Membership** and the institution's stated mission and includes a rationale in support of the recommendation. The visiting team should list any conditions that should be placed on the institution's accreditation. Additionally, the visiting team should suggest review procedures and time lines for those reviews for the Commission's consideration.

The Commission has identified the following options for review, following the grant of initial accreditation:

1. ***Special Progress Report*** -- A report prepared as an update on information available during the on-site review or a request to provide further information related to certain aspects of institutional finance, enrollment, or other matters of concern to the Commission but not requiring on-site validation.
2. ***Progress Report*** -- A report prepared in anticipation of an optional on-site visit. The institution is requested to report developments in terms of issues identified in the most recent evaluation report, the Commission's letter of notification and **Standards of Membership**.
3. ***Mandatory Focused Visit Report*** (at the five-year point of the decennial cycle) -- A report prepared in response to specific issues or areas of concern as identified during the on-site visit and by the Commission in its letter of notification. The report is followed by a two and one-half day on-site visit.

Following a decennial review, a recommendation for continued accreditation, denial of continued accreditation, or probation should be based on the Commission's **Standards of Membership** and

the institution's stated mission and includes a rationale in support of the recommendation. The visiting team should list any conditions that should be placed on the institution's accreditation. Additionally, the visiting team should suggest review procedures and time lines for those reviews for the Commission's consideration.

The Commission has identified as options for review, following the grant of continued accreditation on the basis of a comprehensive evaluation, the following:

1. ***Special Progress Report*** -- A report prepared as an update on information available during the on-site review or a request to provide further information related to certain aspects of institutional finance, enrollment, or other matters of concern to the Commission but not requiring on-site validation.
2. ***Progress Report*** -- A report prepared in anticipation of an optional on-site visit. The institution is requested to report developments in terms of issues identified in the most recent evaluation report, the Commission's letter of notification and **Standards of Membership**.
3. ***Mandatory Focused Visit Report*** (at the five-year point of the decennial cycle) -- A report prepared in response to specific issues or areas of concern as identified during the on-site visit and by the Commission in its letter of notification. The report is followed by a two and one-half day on-site visit.

PART III – POLICY STATEMENTS

ACCREDITATION AND COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

The decision to enter into a collective bargaining agreement is primarily institutional, governed by state laws for public institutions and federal laws for private institutions. Accrediting Commissions take no position, pro or con, on these decisions.

Regional accreditation evaluates the effectiveness of a school in achieving its stated purposes. Its primary concern is with the total institution. Whenever institutional policies and procedures are modified by collective bargaining agreements, such modifications should not contravene the requirements of the Commission's **Standards of Membership**, and negotiations should not unduly disrupt the educational processes of the institution.

Within this context, the Commission believes that the self-study, the visiting team, and those responsible for accreditation decisions must consider the impact of collective bargaining on the quality and effectiveness of the institution. To help achieve this result, the following principles are presented for adherence:

- Collective bargaining processes should not impede self-study participation by administrators, faculty, and support staff, as well as appropriate involvement of trustees and students.
- The self-study committee and the visiting team should assess the impact of collective bargaining on the quality and effectiveness of the institution.
- Visiting teams should use care in composing recommendations, which may be used by either party to influence the bargaining process. In writing the evaluation report, teams should avoid the use of language that is inflammatory or easily distorted for partisan purposes.
- Institutional representatives are reminded that visiting team recommendations must be considered, but no one of them is a mandate or an arbitrary standard.
- Institutions should strive to clarify the respective roles of faculty bargaining units.
- Collective bargaining agreements should be a part of the document collection set aside for review for team visits.

If an institution believes that the collective bargaining climate will impair an effective self-study or team visit, the chief executive officer is invited to confer with the Commission's Director. In unusual circumstances, the Commission will consider a request to defer either or both processes until conditions are more favorable.

POLICY AND PROCEDURE FOR THE APPEAL OF ADVERSE ACTION AFFECTING INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION OR CANDIDATE FOR ACCREDITATION STATUS

POLICY AND PROCEDURE

SECTION 1. Right of Appeal. An institution shall have the right to appeal to the Board of Trustees of the Association a decision made by a Commission which is adverse to the institution's accreditation. For purposes of this policy those decisions include denial of candidacy for accreditation, termination of candidacy for accreditation, denial of accreditation, placement on probation, or termination of accreditation.

The accreditation status of the institution shall not change until all rights of appeal pursuant to the Policy and Procedure are exhausted or extinguished.

Actions regarding adverse decisions and the review of those decisions shall be carried out in a timely and expeditious manner so as to insure protection of the public interest and the institution.

SECTION 2. Adverse Decision. After a Commission votes for an adverse decision it shall no later than fourteen (14) days after the Commission makes its decision notify the institution, the United States Secretary of Education and the appropriate state licensing or authorizing agency of its decision. The notification shall be in writing and shall specify the standards and/or criteria not met. Within twenty four (24) hours of notifying the institution of an adverse decision the Association shall provide written notice to the public of the adverse decision. A copy of this Policy and Procedure shall also be provided to the institution along with a notice of the adverse decision.

SECTION 3. Notice of Intent to Appeal and Filing the Appeal. An institution may appeal to the Board of Trustees of the Association to review an adverse decision of a Commission by filing a notice of intent to appeal no later than seven (7) days following receipt of the notice of the Commission's adverse decision. A notice of an intent to appeal shall be filed only with the prior authorization of the governing board of the institution. The notice of intent to appeal shall be delivered by certified mail, return receipt requested, to the Executive Director of the Association. The notice of intent to appeal shall contain a statement of the ground(s) on which the appeal will be made but need not provide evidence in support of the appeal.

Within fifteen (15) days of filing a notice of intent to appeal, the institution shall file copies of its written appeal in person or by certified mail, return receipt requested, with the Executive Director of the Association who shall promptly transmit copies of the written appeal to the Commission. The written appeal shall set forth the institution's evidence and its argument in support of its appeal. There shall be no required format for the written appeal. The institution may retain legal counsel to assist it in the preparation of its appeal.

Within fifteen (15) days following receipt by the Commission from the Executive Director of the written appeal, the Commission from whose adverse decision the appeal is being taken shall submit its response in writing to the Executive Director with a copy to the institution. In the event the Commission has more than one appeal pending, the Commission may request from the Executive Director an extension of the time for the submission of its response to a newly filed appeal. The institution shall be notified of any such extensions. The decision to grant an extension shall be in the sole discretion of the Executive Director.

SECTION 4. Grounds for Appeal. The grounds on which an appeal may be taken are (a) departure by the Commission from the procedures established by written policy or agreement or by recognized custom which is of such significance as to affect materially the Commission's adverse decision; (b) the citing by the Commission of factually incorrect information as basis for its decision which is of such significance as to affect materially the Commission's adverse decision; (c) bias, as evidenced by a demonstrable intent on the part of evaluators, a Commission, or the Commission's professional staff to prejudice the evaluation or other review of the institution's status of accreditation, such bias being of such significance as to affect materially the Commission's adverse decision; or (d) the decision is arbitrary and capricious.

SECTION 5. Appeals Committee. Upon receipt of notice from the Executive Director that an appeal has been filed the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees shall appoint an Appeals Committee consisting of not less than five (5) Trustees, or their designees at least three (3) of whom shall be employed by an institution which is a member of the Commission from which the appeal is being taken. Three members, at least two of whom shall be from the constituency of the Commission which decision is being appealed, shall constitute a quorum of the Appeals Committee. The Executive Director shall notify promptly the institution and the particular Commission of the names of the members of the Appeals Committee and the date and place of its review. The Executive Director shall transmit a copy of the institution's appeal documents and the Commission's response to each member of the Appeals Committee in advance of its meeting.

SECTION 6. Appeals Review. After consultation with the Appeals Committee, the Executive Director shall establish a date and place to review the appeal which shall be not later than sixty (60) days after the filing of the notice of intent to appeal with the Executive Director, provided, however, the time may be extended by the mutual agreement of the institution and the chairperson of the Appeals Committee.

The Executive Director or his/her designee shall serve as the staff for the Appeals Committee. The Appeals Committee shall meet in executive session to consider the institution's appeal documents, and the Commission's response. Evidence in support of the appeal shall be limited to that evidence presented to the Commission prior to making its adverse decision except as hereinafter provided. The Appeals Committee shall consider evidence bearing only upon the grounds specified for the appeal. Additional written materials or evidence not presented to the Commission at the time of its original decision as a part of its review (or of its decision following a remand as provided below) may not be presented to the Appeals Committee. The Appeals Committee shall not otherwise meet with representatives of either the institution or the

Commission. The final decision of the Appeals Committee shall be determined by majority vote. In the event of a tie vote, the appeal shall be deemed denied.

The Appeals Committee report shall contain the Committee's decision together with the reasons therefore as well as any additional information deemed pertinent by the Committee and shall be the only written report of the Committee.

If the Appeals Committee finds that the appeal should be sustained, it shall remand the Commission's adverse decision to the Commission for reconsideration of the adverse decision along with its reasons for the remand. The accreditation status of the institution shall not change during reconsideration. If the Appeals Committee determines that the appeal should be denied, it shall inform the institution, the Commission, the Board of Trustees, the United States Secretary of Education and the appropriate State licensing or authorizing agency of its determination within seven (7) days of filing its written report with the Executive Director. Which report shall be filed by the Appeals Committee with the Executive Director on or before the tenth (10th) day following the close of the hearing. The notification of the Appeals Committee determination, along with the written report of the Appeals Committee, shall be sent by certified mail, return receipt requested.

SECTION 7. Board of Trustees Action. The decision rendered by the Board of Trustees through its designated Appeal Committee shall be final and is not subject to further appeal.

SECTION 8. Costs. At the time the institution submits its notice of intent to appeal, it shall also submit to the Executive Director a deposit of \$7,500 payable to the Association, to be held by the Association and applied against certain costs of the appeals process as follows: costs of travel, subsistence, telephone, correspondence, meeting rooms, legal counsel and any other costs directly attributable to the work of the Appeals Committee sustained by its members and reimbursed or paid directly by the Association following its policies. At the conclusion of the appeals process, the Executive Director shall compute these costs, deducting the total amount from the deposit and remit to the institution any remaining sum along with an accounting of how the funds were spent. In the event the costs exceed the amount of the deposit, the institution will be responsible for the balance. The institution shall be responsible for its own costs and expenses.

SECTION 9. Limitations. If an institution fails to file its notice of intent to appeal or its written appeal within the time specified, or it fails to provide its deposit against costs, the appeal shall fail and the Commission's adverse decision shall be considered final.

SECTION 10. New Evidence. No later than fifteen (15) days prior to the date the Appeals Committee is scheduled to meet, the institution may file, in writing, with the Executive Director, on one occasion only, information which in the opinion of the institution's chief administrative officer constitutes evidence ("New Evidence") that (a) was not available to the institution at the time the Commission voted for the adverse decision, and (b) is deemed to be so substantial and material that had it been available it is likely to have had a bearing on the decision of the Commission to issue an adverse decision. The Executive Director, upon receipt

of the New Evidence, shall forward the New Evidence to the Director of the appropriate Commission, who, shall constitute a group of not fewer than three (3) Commissioners from that Commission (the New Evidence Committee) to review the New Evidence. If, in the sole judgment and discretion of the New Evidence Committee, acting by majority vote, the New Evidence is considered substantial and material to the decision and was not previously available to the institution for submission to the Commission, the Executive Director, at the request of the New Evidence Committee shall postpone any further proceedings or action until the next meeting of the Commission at which time it will consider the New Evidence, and make a further decision upon the basis of all the evidence, including the New Evidence. Should the Commission reaffirm an adverse decision, including any modifications or revisions thereto, the institution shall have the right to appeal the reaffirmation as modified or revised. The decision by the New Evidence Committee that the New Evidence is not substantial and material, or that such evidence was previously available to the institution for submission to the Commission shall not be subject to appeal. The Commission's adverse decision, as revised or modified, shall be forwarded to the Board of Trustees for action consistent with this Policy and Procedure.

CANDIDACY FOR ACCREDITATION

THE MEANING OF CANDIDACY

The Commission on Technical and Career Institutions' Candidacy for Accreditation program offers institutions that fall under the Commission's jurisdiction the opportunity to establish a formal, publicly recognized relationship with the New England Association of Schools and Colleges' Commission on Technical and Career Institutions. Candidacy is a status of affiliation which indicates that an institution

- has met the Commission's **Eligibility Requirements**
- is progressing toward initial accreditation, but may not currently meet some of the Commission's **Standards of Membership**

Only accredited institutions are members of the Association.

Attainment of candidacy does not ensure eventual accreditation. A candidate institution has a maximum period of five years within which to achieve accredited status.

CRITERIA FOR CANDIDACY

To be granted Candidacy for Accreditation status an applicant institution must demonstrate that it

- meets the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions' **Eligibility Requirements**
- has, with the intention of meeting the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions' **Standards of Membership**, effectively organized sufficient human, financial, learning, and physical resources into educational and other activities so that it is accomplishing its stated and publicly declared mission
- has established and is following realistic plans to acquire, organize, and appropriately apply any additional resources needed to comply with the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions' **Standards of Membership**, within the candidacy period of five years

APPLICATION FOR CANDIDACY

If an institution believes that it meets the **Criteria for Candidacy** and wishes to be considered for candidate status, its chief executive officer should contact the Director of the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions. The Commission requires that representatives of the institution meet with the Director to discuss application procedures and materials. After this meeting, the institution's chief executive officer should submit the following to the Commission through its Director:

- a **Letter of Intent** stating that the institution's governing board has authorized the institution to seek affiliation with the Commission;
- a **Report of Eligibility** documenting how the institution meets each **Eligibility Requirement**. The report is to be concise, responsive to the Commission's requests for information pertaining to each requirement, and accompanied by the specified documents.

In presenting its **Letter of Intent** and its **Report of Eligibility**, the institution commits itself to reimburse the Commission for all expenses related to the candidacy process.

Providing eligibility materials constitutes neither a formal application for candidacy, nor does it commit the institution to an evaluation by the Commission.

The Commission staff reviews the institution's **Report of Eligibility** to determine if the institution shows probable compliance with the **Eligibility Requirements** and appears to have the potential to meet the **Criteria for Candidacy**. The Director, in consultation with the Commission, may determine the need for an investigator reporter team visit to the institution. The purposes of such a visit are to validate the contents of the report and to recommend to the Commission whether it wishes to proceed with its candidacy process. The Director then advises the institution on whether to make formal application.

If the institution proceeds to make a formal application, the Director of the Commission and the institution's chief executive officer establish a time line for a formal on-site evaluation by a peer visiting team. An institution making formal application for candidacy must submit the following to the Commission:

- letter of application from the chief executive officer;
- self-study following the Commission's prescribed format;
- evaluation fee, as listed in **Dues and Fees for Member and Affiliated Institutions of Higher Education at the Technical or Career Level**. The fee covers administrative costs incurred by the Commission and the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. Additional costs may be incurred to cover consultation and travel.

An institution does not establish any affiliation with the Commission until the Board of Trustees of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges grants candidacy status; until that occurs, an institution is not permitted to state or imply that it has any affiliation with the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions or the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. An institution may not make a public statement that it has applied for candidacy or suggest in any other way that eventual affiliation is ensured.

SELF-STUDY FOR CANDIDACY

The self-study undertaken for a candidacy application serves both internal and external purposes. It encourages institutional improvement through rigorous self-analysis and creates a basis for the Commission's evaluation. The Commission strongly recommends that institutional representatives consult with the Commission Director about the preparation of the self-study report.

FORMAT OF REPORT

The following elements make up a complete self-study report for purposes of determining whether an institution will be granted candidacy:

- The institution's **Letter of Intent** and **Report of Eligibility** prepared earlier for Commission staff review. This report enables the Commission to determine if its **Eligibility Requirements** have been met.
- A comprehensive narrative which provides evidence that the institution has reviewed the **Standards of Membership** of the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions. The self-study must address each Commission standard and show how the institution is either in substantial compliance with the standards or describe how it is not. The institution must provide evidence that it has undertaken a serious and thorough appraisal of itself, describe how it has done so, and provide evidence that it is prepared to address those issues identified which are not in compliance with one or more standards. The institution, therefore, must demonstrate how it will organize its resources to accomplish its publicly announced mission with particular attention to its immediate educational purposes. Further, it must explain how it is planning to acquire the resources necessary to comply with the **Standards of Membership**. This analysis enables the Commission to determine if the institution meets all the **Criteria for Candidacy**.
- Supportive materials, including those required for the **Report of Eligibility** and the various informational data forms are contained in the handbook.

MAILING OF REPORT

Four weeks before the evaluation visit, the institution mails to each member of the visiting team the complete self-study report and current catalog(s). In addition, one set of the same materials is mailed to the Director of the Commission.

EVALUATION FOR CANDIDACY

SELECTION OF VISITING TEAM

The on-campus evaluation is typically scheduled for a three-day period, from Monday afternoon through Thursday afternoon. Well in advance of the scheduled visit, the Director of the Commission, with consideration for the nature of the institution, proposes a visiting team of three to five members and solicits the chief executive officer's comments about the prospective team. The Commission maintains a file of several hundred evaluators at accredited institutions. While the Commission always reserves the right to appoint the visiting team, the views of the institution are important in ensuring the appropriateness and effectiveness of evaluators. The Commission relies on the personal and professional integrity of individuals to refuse any assignment where even the slightest potential for conflict of interest exists.

As soon as all team members have accepted appointment, the Commission Director informs the institution and indicates that the evaluation process will benefit from a preliminary visit by the team chairperson. This visit is designed to help the institution understand how the team will operate and to enable the chairperson to assess the institution's self-study progress and make arrangements for the visit.

FORMAT OF VISIT

The team chairperson communicates with the chief executive officer to discuss the team's time of arrival, schedule, accommodations, and related matters. The institution should arrange for charges for the team's lodging and meals to be billed directly to the institution for timely reimbursement to the members of the visiting team.

The team arrives at the institution on Monday afternoon. After its initial session, the team meets with major administrators, faculty, and board members, typically at dinner. The following days of the visit are spent in conducting a review of the institution and preparing the team's report and its recommendations to the Commission. The exact schedule of the team is arranged in advance through discussions between its chairperson and institutional staff.

At a final session with representatives of the institution, the team chairperson presents an oral review of all major points that will be made in the team's report. The chief executive officer and chairperson decide who will be present at this session. Frequently the chief executive officer wants the major administrative officers and/or the steering committee of the self-study present; all members of the team will also be present.

TEAM REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION TO THE COMMISSION

The visiting team chairperson is responsible for the preparation of the report for submission to the Commission. The report is due in the Commission office no later than one month following the conclusion of the visit. This report is essentially an assessment of the institution's eligibility for candidate status and its potential for attaining accreditation within a maximum of five years.

The chairperson is asked to use the following format for the report:

COVER PAGE

- “Report on the Candidacy Application of (name of institution)”
- dates of visit
- names and titles of team members

PREFACE PAGE

INTRODUCTION

- brief summary of purpose and format of visit
- basic information about institution: date of certificate or diploma authority, range of authority, date of first certificate or diploma awarded (if any), type of control, FTE enrollment and other data on student body

COMPLIANCE WITH THE COMMISSION’S ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- assessment of institution's compliance with each of the Commission’s **Eligibility Requirements**
- appraisal of institution's ability to accomplish its mission statement and its educational objectives
- appraisal of plans to comply with the **Standards of Membership**

MAJOR STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES (related specifically to the **Eligibility Requirements** and the institution's ability to achieve accreditation)

After the chairperson has completed an initial draft of the report, it is forwarded to the institution's chief executive officer, who is allowed a brief interval (no more than one week) to identify factual errors. It is inappropriate at this time for the institution’s chief executive officer to take issue with the substance of the report when the issues do not involve factual accuracy. When the final draft of the report has been prepared by the chairperson, it is sent to the chief executive officer. The institution duplicates the report and sends 20 copies to the Director of the Commission.

In a separate communication, the chairperson sends to the Director of the Commission the team's confidential recommendation on whether the institution should be granted candidate status. Specific reasons based on the **Eligibility Requirements** with particular reference to the

Commission's **Standards of Membership** must be set forth in support of the team's recommendation to grant or deny candidacy.

Evaluation Reports are considered at one of the Commission's regularly scheduled meetings. Commission actions are usually taken at a fall meeting for institutions visited in the spring of a given year, and at a spring meeting for those visited the previous fall. The visiting team chairperson is occasionally asked to be present at the Commission's discussion of the team's report.

The members of the visiting team have discharged their responsibilities to the Commission with the presentation of the report.

COMMISSION AND ASSOCIATION ACTION ON CANDIDACY APPLICATION

In taking action on candidate status, the Commission considers all relevant information available, including the self-study report and related materials and the report of the visiting team. It should be understood that the visiting team's recommendation may be modified by the Commission. Following its meeting, the Commission reports its action to the institution and the visiting team. Review or appeal of an adverse action by the Commission is governed by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges' **Appeals Policy**.

In making the grant or denial of candidacy status, the Commission makes a recommendation to the New England Association of Schools and Colleges' Board of Trustees, which takes final action. An institution denied candidacy status is free to reapply when it can demonstrate that it has substantially improved those areas cited as reasons for the denial. An applicant for candidacy can withdraw its request for affiliation at any time prior to action by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges' Board of Trustees.

If candidacy status is granted, the effective date (unless otherwise specified) is the last day of the evaluation visit that resulted in the Association's action.

PUBLIC STATEMENT ON CANDIDATE STATUS

An institution granted Candidate for Accreditation status must use the following statement whenever it makes reference to its affiliation with the New England Association.

_____ (Institution) has been granted Candidate for Accreditation status by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc. Candidacy is neither accreditation nor does it ensure eventual accreditation. Candidacy for Accreditation is a status of affiliation that indicates that the institution has met specified criteria and is progressing toward accreditation.

Upon inquiry about a candidate institution, the Commission will release the date when candidacy was granted, the date of the next biennial review, and certain other information described in the policy on **Public Disclosure of Information about Affiliated Institutions and Principles of**

Good Practice in Institutional Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Representation of Accredited Status. If an institution releases information that misrepresents its affiliation, the institution will be notified and asked to take corrective action. Should it fail to do so, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, acting through its Executive Director, will release a public statement providing correct information.

PROCEDURES REQUIRED OF CANDIDATE INSTITUTIONS

Each institution granted candidate status has the following responsibilities:

ANNUAL REPORT

An annual data report is required of all candidate institutions.

NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE

New programs, sites, and other substantive changes, as defined in Commission policy, must be reported in advance to the Commission. Candidacy covers only those aspects of the institution in existence at the time of the evaluation visit; a substantive change must be approved by the Commission before the institution can claim its inclusion in its candidate or accredited status.

BIENNIAL REVIEW

Every two years a candidate institution submits a focused visit report using the Commission's established focused visit report format, which is followed by a brief evaluation visit. The purpose of this biennial review is to determine if the institution continues to meet the **Eligibility Requirements** and is making reasonable progress toward accreditation. The biennial review does not serve as an evaluation for accreditation.

APPLICATION FOR ACCREDITATION

A candidate institution wishing to apply for accreditation should first consult with the Director of the Commission. A comprehensive self-study and visit are required, and the Commission staff will provide appropriate materials and advice on preparing for the evaluation.

COST OF CANDIDACY APPLICATION AND AFFILIATION

Annual fees and dues paid by affiliated institutions cover the cost of services provided by the Commission and Association and are the means by which independent, non-governmental accreditation is sustained.

The evaluation fee for candidate status varies according to the institution's full-time-equivalent enrollment. If the institution is accepted as a candidate, it will pay an annual affiliation fee, also based on its full-time-equivalent enrollment. For the biennial review visit, the institution will be assessed a fee equal to one-half the annual affiliation fee. A current schedule of evaluation and

affiliation fees may be obtained from the Commission; the schedule is also included with the application.

Members of evaluation teams serve without honoraria. However, the institution pays for their lodging, meals, and out-of-pocket expenses (including transportation). These costs are in addition to the evaluation fee paid to the Association. It is the responsibility of the visiting team chairperson to collect expense vouchers from the team members and submit them to the chief executive office of the institution. It is the responsibility of the institution to process these vouchers for payment within two weeks of their receipt. In unusual circumstances, and with prior approval of the Commission Director, expense vouchers may be submitted to the Commission office for reimbursement to the team members. In such cases, the Association will bill the institution as an accreditation expense. Please note that reimbursement through the Association is the exception. Reimbursement should occur at the institutional level in a timely fashion.

LOSS OF CANDIDATE STATUS

Candidacy lapses when an institution fails to achieve accredited status by the end of the maximum five-year period or voluntarily withdraws from candidate status. Extensions of candidacy beyond the fifth year will not be granted by the Commission.

Termination of candidacy status within the five-year period can occur, following due process, as a result of a determination that the institution no longer meets one or more of the **Eligibility Requirements** or that conditions at the institution have been radically altered since it was admitted to candidacy. An institution removed from candidacy or which voluntarily withdraws from candidacy may reapply for candidate status when it can demonstrate that the conditions leading to the lapse or termination of candidacy have been corrected. However, in no case will the Commission consider such application prior to the effective date of loss of candidacy.

CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE IN ACCREDITING POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

The Commission on Technical and Career Institutions, in accordance with this Code of Good Practice, agrees

- to evaluate or visit an institution only at the expressed invitation of the chief executive officer, or when the action is initiated by the Commission with respect to an institution already accredited by the Commission, with specific authorization of the institution's chief executive officer or an officially designated representative;
- to permit the withdrawal of a request for initial accreditation at any time (even after evaluation) prior to final action;
- to recognize the right of an institution to be appraised in light of its own stated purposes so long as those purposes demonstrably fall within the definitions of general purpose established by the Commission;
- to rely upon the processes associated with regional accreditation in the conduct of evaluations of the general quality of an institution;
- to state criteria or standards for accreditation in terms that are manifestly relevant to the quality of an institution, respecting institutional freedom in other matters;
- to use relevant qualitative and quantitative information in the Commission's evaluation process;
- to consider a program or programs of study at an institution, including its administration and financing, not on the basis of a single predetermined pattern, but rather in relationship to the operation and goals of the whole institution;
- to assist and stimulate improvement of the educational effectiveness of an institution, and to this end be prepared to provide consultative assistance;
- to encourage sound educational experimentation and permit innovations;
- to design questionnaires and forms so as to not only obtain information for the visiting team, but also as much as possible to stimulate an institution to evaluate and improve itself;
- to conduct any evaluation visit to an institution by experienced and qualified team members under conditions that assure impartial and objective judgment;
- to follow the principle that there shall be adequate representation in an evaluation from the staffs of other institutions offering programs of study in the fields to be accredited;

- to avoid appointment of team members who may not be acceptable to an institution;
- to cooperate with other accrediting agencies so far as possible in scheduling joint visits when an institution so requests;
- to provide for adequate consultation during the visit between the team members and the faculty and staff of an institution, including the president or a designated representative;
- to provide adequate opportunity for the inclusion of students among those interviewed during accrediting visits;
- to provide the president of an institution being evaluated an opportunity to review the report prepared by the visiting team and to comment on its factual accuracy before the Commission takes action;
- to regard the text of the evaluation report as confidential between an institution and the accrediting agency, with the exception that it may be made available to other recognized accrediting agencies by which the institution has been accredited or whose accreditation it is seeking;
- except as provided in the above, to permit an institution to make such disposition of evaluation reports as it desires consistent with Commission policies on the public release of information;
- to consider decisions relative to accreditation only after receipt of the comments of the president, and when the chairperson of the visiting team and the views of the visiting team are otherwise adequately represented in writing;
- to refrain from conditioning accreditation upon payment of fees for the purposes other than membership dues or actual evaluation costs;
- to notify an institution as quickly as possible regarding any accreditation decision;
- to revoke accreditation only after advance notice has been given to the president of an institution that such action is contemplated and the reasons therefore, sufficient to permit timely rejoinder;
- to provide a means for an institution to appeal from or request a reconsideration of a decision regarding accredited status.

COMMISSIONER SELECTION, ETHICS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Commission on Technical and Career Institutions is composed of 15 individuals. Twelve are currently affiliated with member institutions as faculty or administrators. There are three representatives of the public interest who are elected for two-year terms and are eligible to serve a second two-year term. Other Commissioners are elected for three-year terms and are eligible to serve a second three-year term.

Commissioners are elected by majority vote of the delegates of institutional members at the Commission's annual business meeting held in December, in conjunction with the New England Association of Schools and Colleges' annual meeting. A slate of nominees is presented by the Commission Nominating Committee and an opportunity is offered for nominations from the floor. In compiling its slate of nominees, the Commission solicits suggestions from the chief executive officer of each member institution as well as interested others.

Vacancies occurring on the Commission at a time other than that of the annual business meeting are filled by the Commission, subject to the approval of the Association's Board of Trustees. Individuals elected in this manner serve until the time of the next annual business meeting when they may be nominated for the balance of a three-year term.

I. Criteria for Selection

A. Commissioners affiliated with institutions

1. Balance among the wide range of accredited institutions served by the Commission
2. Faculty and administrative representation including full-time teaching staff and full-time administrators
3. Balance between men and women and representation of the racial and ethnic makeup of the region
4. Representation from each of the six New England states
5. Stature in the profession: interest in and experience with the accrediting process
6. Willingness to devote the time necessary to fulfill the responsibilities of Commissioner

B. Commissioners representing the public interest

1. Knowledge and understanding of higher education

2. Sensitivity to the mission and goals of the diverse career and technical institutions of secondary and higher education in New England
3. Not active as a professional educator for the past five years
4. Not an employee, member of the governing board, owner, or shareholder of an institution accredited by the Commission or which has applied for accreditation
5. Not a spouse, parent, child, or sibling of an individual identified in I.B. 4 above
6. Willingness to devote the time necessary to fulfill the responsibilities of Commissioner

II. ETHICS

- A. Accepts and subscribes to purposes of accreditation as defined in Association/Commission policy
- B. Does not discuss matters outside of the meeting; refers all inquiries to staff or chairperson
- C. Holds in confidence all documents that come from the staff in preparation for meetings
- D. Adheres to the Commission policy statement on **Conflict of Interest**

III. RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. Makes every effort to attend all Commission meetings and remains until business is concluded
- B. Reads documents as assigned prior to the meetings
- C. Votes according to professional judgments consistent with basic accrediting policy
- D. Recommends new or revised policy
- E. Interprets accreditation to his/her own institution and to others
- F. Assists the staff in training programs and other activities
- G. Serves on ad hoc committees of the Commission as requested

COMPLAINTS AGAINST AFFILIATED INSTITUTIONS

The Commission on Technical and Career Institutions is concerned with institutional integrity and with performance consistent with its standards and policies. While it cannot intervene in the internal procedures of institutions or perform 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 Standards of Membership.

Complaints are considered only when made in writing and when the complainant is clearly identified. Substantial evidence should be included in support of the allegations that the institution is in violation of Commission Standards of Membership. Such evidence should state relevant and provable facts. The complaint should demonstrate that a serious effort has been made to pursue all review procedures provided within the institution.

The Commission does not consider allegations concerning the personal lives of individuals connected with affiliated institutions. It assumes no responsibility for adjudicating isolated individual grievances, nor will it act as a court of appeal in such matters as admission, granting or transfer of academic credit, financial aid, fees, student discipline collective bargaining, or faculty appointments, promotion, tenure, and dismissals. If the Commission ascertains that a complainant has instituted litigation against the institution, no action will be taken on the complaint while the matter is under judicial consideration.

Procedures and Time Lines for the Review of Complaints

1. A complaint received by the Commission is acknowledged in writing upon receipt.
2. The complaint is reviewed by the Director of the Commission who within two weeks of its receipt takes one of the following actions:
 - a. if the complaint is found to be not within the scope of Commission policies and/or jurisdiction, the complainant will be so informed and the matter closed;
 - b. if the complaint appears to be within the scope of Commission policies and jurisdiction, and substantially documented, a copy of the complaint will be forwarded to the institution's chief executive officer who is asked to provide the Commission a response to the complaint. The originator of the complaint will be notified of the action at that time.
3. When the complaint is forwarded to the institution, it is asked to provide its response within 30 days.
4. In cases where no response is received, a second request will be forwarded to the institution within one week of the original deadline for submission. If no response to the second request is received, the Commission's Director will place the matter on the agenda of the next Commission meeting for its determination as to the future course of action.

5. If the institution acknowledges the complaint is valid, it will advise the Commission in writing of the actions taken to rectify the situation. At its next scheduled meeting, the Commission will consider the institutional response and determine whether the complaint should be investigated further or that the matter should be closed.
6. Should the institution deny that the complaint is valid, it will provide the Commission a response indicating why it believes the allegations made are either untrue or do not represent a breach of the Commission's criteria. Such a response should include supportive documentation where appropriate.

The response will be referred to a committee of two Commissioners for review which will report their findings with a recommendation for further action to the Commission at its next scheduled meeting. The Commission will take action as it deems appropriate. The Commission Chair, at his/her sole discretion, may call a special meeting to act on a complaint when it is believed in the public interest to do so.

7. The complainant will be informed of steps taken by the Commission in reviewing the complaint within a week of each step.
8. The Director will provide to the Commission at each meeting for its review, a report of any complaints received since the previous meeting and the action taken with respect to each.
9. Complaints against institutions accredited by other regional commissions or recognized institutional accrediting bodies will be referred to the appropriate accrediting agency.
10. The Commission will make every effort to adhere to the above time line. In cases where circumstances beyond its control necessitate its modification, the involved parties will be so informed.

Resolved complaints will become part of the institution's file.

POLICY ON THE RECORD OF COMPLAINTS

The Commission is concerned with institutional integrity and performance consistent with Commission standards and policies. For this reason, it takes very seriously the record of complaints against accredited institutions and maintains a comprehensive record of all such complaints.

The log of complaints against an institution is made available to the visiting team that conducts an on-site review of the institution before the institution is accredited or reaccredited. It is also made available to the Commission before it reaches its accreditation decision concerning the institution.

Complaints Against Affiliated Institutions

In addition, the Commission requires each institution to address the record of complaints that are filed against it through the grievance process within the institution, the Commission, and/or the U. S. Department of Education in all institutional assessments, analyses, and self-studies the institution prepares for CTCI accreditation. The Commission also requires the institution to make the records and incident files associated with those complaints available to the visiting team.

Finally, the Commission requires the visiting team to review the institution's records and files related to complaints while on site, to compare those records and files with the record of complaints maintained by the Commission, and to report its findings in the team report.

COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE COMMISSION ON TECHNICAL AND CAREER INSTITUTIONS

Complaints against the Commission are considered only when made in writing and when the complainant is clearly identified. To be considered, a complaint must address concerns relative to the application of the Commission's standards, criteria, or procedures. The written complaint must plainly define the nature of the concern and substantial evidence must be included to support the allegations being made. No action will be taken on a complaint where the matters are under judicial consideration.

The Commission's Director responds to all complaints within 30 days of their receipt. The Director reports on complaints received and their disposition at each regularly scheduled Commission meeting. Should a complaint require Commission consideration and action, all documentation will be provided and the complainant will be notified of the timing of the Commission's review. In such cases the complainant will be informed of the Commission's disposition in the matter within 14 days of any action taken.

Complaints against the Commission Director will be immediately forwarded to the Commission Chair, who will process the complaint in a manner similar to the processing of a complaint against the Commission.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

It is the policy of the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions to avoid actual and potential conflicts of interest -- or the appearance thereof -- in its accreditation decisions.

The Commission seeks to avoid such conflicts by not assigning the following persons to a visiting committee:

- One who has expressed opinions, whether professional or personal, about the accreditability of the institution under review
- One who has been or is a candidate for employment in the institution under review
- One who has recently been an appointee or employee of the institution under review
- One who has close relatives or significant others who are appointees, employees, or candidates for employment in the institution

In the event that a conflict of interest arises prior to or during the evaluation of an institution, the individual who is in conflict of interest is removed by the chair of the visiting committee or the Director of the Commission.

Commissioners with any employment, business, consultative, or other relationship with an institution under review must absent themselves from any part of a Commission meeting during any discussion or decision involving such institution, and may not serve on a reactor team during their discussion or decision about such institution.

In the event that a conflict of interest may not be clear, any visiting committee member or Commissioner should advise the Commission of the possibility of a conflict. Such matter will be settled by a vote of the Commission.

Commission staff may not serve in any capacity that represents a conflict of interest with the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions or the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. This includes private consulting or other employment arrangements with any member or candidate institution in the New England region.

CONSIDERATIONS WHEN CLOSING AN INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

PREPARING THE WAY

A decision to close an educational institution requires thoughtful planning and careful consultation with all affected constituencies. Every effort should be devoted to informing each constituency as fully as possible about the conditions requiring consideration of a decision of such importance, and all available information should be shared. Before closing, such alternatives as merging with another institution, forming a consortium, or participating in extensive inter-institutional sharing and cooperation should be carefully considered. As much as possible, the determination to close an institution should involve a consultative process, but responsibility for the final decision to close rests with the institution's governing board.

Tradition and sentiment are important considerations, but sentimentality should not be allowed to determine events. A decision to close should never be made or reversed simply on the basis of fears, hopes or aspirations that have little relation to reality. Neither should it be delayed to the point where the institution has lost its viability and its educational program no longer retains quality and integrity. Since the immediate interests of current students and faculty are most directly affected, their present and future prospects require especially sensitive attention and involvement.

It is assumed that closing an institution means a decision to permanently discontinue its educational activities, not merely to suspend them for an indefinite period in the hope that circumstances may someday permit their resumption. But it should be noted that most institutions of higher education are corporations established under the provisions of state law, and as such may have legal responsibilities (holding title to real property, for example) that may necessitate the continued existence of the corporation after the educational activities of the institution have been terminated. Indeed, it is probable that such continued corporate existence, at least for a time, will prove to be the usual situation. It is unlikely in most cases that corporate existence and educational activities can be terminated simultaneously.

CLOSING AN INSTITUTION

A decision to close requires that the institution develop appropriate plans which provide for the students, faculty, administrative and support staff, and for the disposition of the institution's assets. Many considerations bear upon closing an educational institution, and each situation will be unique. Public institutions, proprietary institutions, private non-profit institutions, and church related institutions require different approaches and pose particular conditions to be met in reaching and carrying out the ultimate closure decision. Nevertheless general guidelines may be helpful to each institution considering closure.

This statement makes only incidental reference to such corporate responsibilities and always in the educational context. It is imperative, therefore, that a governing board considering closing an institution under its care should be guided not only by guidelines such as these and by the state educational authorities, but also by advice of legal counsel. Special counsel to advise with

respect to problems of closing may be desirable for the institution. Institutional and specialized accrediting bodies should also be consulted and be kept fully apprised of developments.

THE STUDENTS

Students who have not completed their programs should be provided for according to their academic needs. Arrangements for transfer to other institutions will require complete academic records and all other related information gathered in dossiers, which can be transmitted promptly to receiving institutions. Agreements made with other institutions to receive transferring students and to accept their records should be in writing. (See **Policy on Teach-Out Agreements**.) Where financial aid is concerned, particularly federal or state grants, arrangements should be made with the appropriate agencies to transfer the grants to the receiving institutions. Where such arrangements cannot be completed, students should be fully informed. In cases where students have held institutional scholarships or grants and there are available funds which can legally be used to support students while completing programs at other institutions, appropriate agreements should be negotiated.

ACADEMIC RECORDS AND FINANCIAL AID TRANSCRIPTS

All academic, financial aid information, and other records should be prepared for permanent filing, including electronic formats. Arrangements should be made with the state department of higher education or other appropriate agency for filing of student records. If there is no state educational agency that can receive records, arrangements should be made with another institution or with the state archives to preserve the records. Notification should be sent to every current and past student indicating where the records are being stored and what the accessibility to those records will be. Where possible, a copy of a student's record should also be forwarded to the individual student.

COMPLETION OF INSTITUTIONAL OBLIGATIONS

When a student chooses to continue at another institution but is within 12 or 18 months of completing a program in the closing institution, arrangements may be made to permit that student to complete the requirements for a certificate or diploma elsewhere but to receive it from the closed institution. This may require special action by the appropriate state agency. Such arrangements should also include provision for continuation of the institution's accreditation only for this purpose by the accrediting agency involved. These steps normally require the institution to continue as a legal corporate entity for 12 to 18 months beyond the closing date, but any such arrangement must be established in careful consultation with the appropriate authorities and with their written consent.

PROVISION FOR FACULTY AND STAFF

In every possible case, the institution should arrange for continuation of those faculty and staff who will be necessary for the completion of the institution's work up to the closing date. When faculty and staff are no longer needed, the institution should make every effort to assist them in

finding alternative employment. It should be understood that the institution can make no guarantees, but genuinely good faith efforts to assist in relocation and reassignment are essential. In the event that faculty or staff members find new positions, early resignations should be accepted.

THE FINAL DETERMINATION

Determinations must be made to allocate whatever financial resources and assets remain after the basic needs of current students, faculty and staff are provided for. When the financial resources of the institution are inadequate to honor commitments, the governing board should investigate what alternatives and protection are available under applicable bankruptcy laws before deciding to close. If funds are insufficient to maintain normal operations through the end of the closing process, the institution should not overlook the possibility of soliciting one-time gifts and donations to assist in fulfilling its final obligations.

Every effort should be made to develop publicly defensible policies for dividing the resources equitably among those with claims against the institution. One of the best ways of achieving this goal is to involve potential claimants in the process of developing the policies. Time and effort devoted to carrying the process to a judicious conclusion may considerably reduce the likelihood of lawsuits or other forms of confrontation.

It is impossible to anticipate in advance the many claims that might be made against remaining resources of an institution, but the following three principles may help to sort out possible claims and to set priorities:

1. Students have the right to expect basic minimal services during the final semester, not only in the academic division, but also in the business office, financial aid office, registrar's office, counseling and other essential support services. Staff should be retained long enough to provide these services. It may be appropriate to offer special incentives to keep key personnel present.
2. Reasonable notice should be given to all employees explaining the possibility of early termination of contract and that the reasons for retaining some personnel longer than others are based on satisfying the minimal needs of students and the legal requirements for closing.
3. Every effort should be made to honor long-term financial obligations (loans, debentures, etc.) even though parties holding such claims may choose not to press them.

THE CLOSING DATE

The governing board should take a formal vote to terminate the institution on a specified date. That date will depend on a number of factors including the decision to file or not to file for bankruptcy. Another key factor is whether or not all obligations to students will have been satisfactorily discharged. This is particularly important if the decision is made to allow students

in their final year to graduate from the institution by completing their requirements elsewhere. If such arrangements are made, the governing board must be sure to take the legal action necessary to permit awarding certificates after the institution otherwise ceases to function. Normally, a formal vote to award a certificate is made after all requirements have been met, but it is legally possible to make arrangements for a student to complete the requirements for a certificate at another institution and to receive the certificate from the closed institution. These requirements must be clearly specified along with a deadline for completion. Also the governing board must identify the person or persons authorized to determine whether or not these requirements have in fact been satisfied. Arrangements must be completed with the appropriate state and accrediting agencies in advance in order to assure that the certificate is awarded by a legally authorized and accredited institution.

DISPOSITION OF ASSETS

In the case of a non-profit institution, the legal requirements of the state and the federal government must be carefully examined with respect to the disposition of institutional assets. Arrangements for the sale of the physical plant, equipment, the library, special collections, art, or other funds must be explored with legal counsel. In the case of wills, endowments, or special grants, the institution should discuss with the donors, grantors, executors of estates, and other providers of special funds arrangements to accommodate their wishes. State laws regarding the disposition of funds from a non-profit institution must be meticulously followed.

All concerned federal and state agencies need to be apprised of the institution's situation, and any obligations relating to estate or federal funds need to be cleared with the proper agencies.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The institution should establish a clear understanding with its creditors and all other agencies involved with its activities to assure that their claims and interests will be properly processed. Insofar as possible, the institution should assure that its final arrangements will not be subject to later legal proceedings which might jeopardize the records or status of its students or faculty.

CONCLUSION

The closing of an educational institution is never a happy event. Nevertheless, such action can be rendered less traumatic by careful attention to the details of the legal and moral obligations of the institution. Closing will be marked by sadness, but well-planned and conscientious efforts to assure that the institution's students, faculty, and staff will be optimally provided for and that its assets will be used in ways that will honor the intentions of the original donors should help in avoiding bitterness and rancor. A final report on the closing should be submitted to the appropriate accrediting and state agencies for their records.

CONTRACTUAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH NON-REGIONALLY ACCREDITED ORGANIZATIONS

No postsecondary educational institution accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges can lend the prestige or authority of its accreditation to authenticate courses or programs offered under contract with organizations not so accredited unless it demonstrates adherence to the following principles:

- The primary purpose of offering such a course or program is educational. (Although the primary purpose of the offering must be educational, what ancillary purposes also provide the foundation for the program or course such as auxiliary services, anticipated income and public relations?)
- Any course offered must be consistent with the institution's educational purpose and objectives as they were at the time of the last evaluation. If the institution alters its purpose and objectives, the Commission must be notified and the policy on substantive change applied. (How does the institution define the specific relationship between the primary and ancillary purposes and the contracted service, and how does it demonstrate its capability to attain these purposes?)
- Courses to be offered and the value and level of their credit must be determined in accordance with established institutional procedures and under the usual mechanisms of review. (What evidence exists that established institutional procedures have been followed?)
- Courses offered for credit must remain under the sole and direct control of the sponsoring accredited institution, which exercises ultimate and continuing responsibility for the performance of these functions as reflected in the contract, with provisions to assure that conduct of the courses meets the standards of its regular programs as disclosed fully in the institution's publications, especially as these pertain to
 - recruitment and counseling of students
 - admission of students to courses and/or to the sponsoring institution where credit programs are pursued
 - instructions in the courses
 - evaluation of student progress
 - record keeping
 - tuition and/or fees charged, receipt and disbursement of funds and refund policy

- appointment and validation of credentials of faculty teaching the course
- nature and location of courses
- instructional resources, such as the library

Additional data needed would include course outlines, syllabi, copies of exams, records of students and evidence of equivalencies with established programs.

GUIDELINES

In establishing contractual arrangements with non-regionally accredited organizations, institutions are expected to utilize the following guidelines. The non-profit institution should establish that its tax-exempt status as governed by the state or federal regulations will not be affected by such contractual arrangements with a for-profit organization.

THE CONTRACT

Guidelines for the contract should include the following:

- The contract should be executed only by duly designated officers of the institution and their counterparts in the contracting organization. While other faculty and administrative representatives will undoubtedly be involved in the contract negotiations, care should be taken to avoid implied or apparent power to execute the contract by unauthorized personnel.
- The contract should establish a definite understanding between the institution and contractor regarding the work to be performed, the period of the agreement, and the conditions under which any possible renewal or renegotiation of the contract would take place.
- The contract should clearly vest the ultimate responsibility for the performance of the necessary control functions for the educational offering with the accredited institution granting credit for the offering. Such responsibility by the credit-granting institution would minimally consist of adequate provisions for review and approval of work performed in each functional area by the contractor.
- The contract should clearly establish the responsibilities of the institution and contractor regarding
 - indirect costs
 - approval of salaries
 - equipment
 - subcontracts and travel
 - property ownership and accountability

- inventions and patents
- publications and copyrights
- accounting records and audits
- security
- termination costs
- tuition refund
- student records
- faculty facilities
- safety regulations
- insurance coverage

ENROLLMENT AGREEMENT

The enrollment agreement should clearly outline the obligations of both the institution and the student, and a copy of the enrollment agreement should be furnished to the student before any payment is made.

The institution should determine that each applicant is fully informed as to the nature of the obligation he is entering into and as to his responsibilities and his rights under the enrollment agreement before he signs it.

No enrollment agreement should be binding until it has been accepted by the authorities of the institution vested with this responsibility.

TUITION POLICIES (RATES)

The total tuition for any specific given course should be the same for all persons at any given time. Group training contracts showing lower individual rates may be negotiated with business, industrial, or governmental agencies.

Tuition charges in courses should be bona fide, effective on specific dates and applicable to all those who enroll thereafter or are presently in school provided the enrollment agreement so stipulates.

All extra charges and costs incidental to training should be revealed to the prospective student before the student is enrolled.

The institution should show that the total tuition charges for each of its courses is reasonable in light of the service to be rendered, the equipment to be furnished, and its operating costs.

REFUNDS AND CANCELLATIONS

The institution should have a fair and equitable tuition refund and cancellation policy.

The institution should publish its tuition refund and cancellation policy in its catalog or other appropriate literature.

COLLECTION PRACTICES

Methods used by an institution in requesting or demanding payment should follow sound ethical business practices.

If promissory notes or contracts for tuition are sold or discounted to third parties by the institution, enrollees or their financial sponsors should be aware of this action.

ADVERTISING AND PROMOTIONAL LITERATURE (STUDENT RECRUITMENT)

All advertisements and promotional literature used should be truthful and avoid leaving any false, misleading or exaggerated impressions with respect to the school, its personnel, its courses and services, or the occupational opportunities for its graduates.

All advertising and promotional literature used should clearly indicate that education, and not employment, is being offered.

All advertising and promotional literature should include the correct name of the school. So-called “blind” advertisements are misleading and unethical.

FIELD AGENTS

An institution is responsible to its current and prospective students for the representations made by its field representatives (including agencies and other authorized persons or firms soliciting students), and, therefore, should select each of them with the utmost care, provide them with adequate training, and arrange for proper supervision of their work.

It is the responsibility of an institution to conform to the laws and regulations of each of the states or countries in which it operates or solicits students. In particular, the institution must ensure that each of its field representatives working in those states or countries is properly licensed or registered as required by the applicable laws or regulations.

If field representatives are authorized to collect money from an applicant for enrollment, they should leave with the applicant a receipt for the money collected and a copy of the enrollment agreement.

No field representative should use any title, such as “counselor,” “advisor,” or “registrar,” that tends to indicate that his duties and responsibilities are other than they actually are.

No field agent should violate orally any of the standards applicable to advertising and promotional material.

DEFAULT RATES IN TITLE IV STUDENT LOAN PROGRAMS

Federal regulations implementing the 1992 Higher Education Act Amendments require that accrediting agencies review default rate information provided by the Secretary for those institutions participating in Title IV programs to assure that those institutions comply with the regulations in the student loan programs as established under Title IV. This policy has been developed to implement that requirement.

The Commission on Technical and Career Institutions reviews the most recent default rate rosters and reports provided by the Department of Education and determines whether the provided information calls into question an institution's compliance with the agency standard that default rates in student loan programs not be excessive.

Excessive default rates in the student loan program may be an indicator of impaired administrative capability and may raise questions about the institution's quality of education and/or ability to meet the agency's standards. Therefore, based on information of excessive default rate provided by the secretary, the Commission will request that

- the institution present to the Commission a default reduction plan through prudent institutional policies to address federal concern about the excessive default rate, and
- upon consideration of that plan by the Commission, the institution take appropriate action to follow the plan

POLICY AND PROCEDURES ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A BRANCH CAMPUS

This policy and accompanying procedures concern the establishment of a branch campus. In keeping with Federal regulations, to which the Commission must adhere, a branch campus is defined as

Any location of an institution, other than the main campus, at which the institution offers at least 50 percent of an educational program.

Federal regulations also require that institutions submit a report to the Commission prior to the initiation of the branch campus activity and that it undergo an on-site evaluation within six months of becoming operational.

This statement is not applicable to short-term, non-credit, community service courses, or to traditional courses offered on an occasional basis in response to constituency needs or interests. Any questions about the applicability of this policy to specific institutional off-campus activities should be directed to the Director of the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions.

The Commission regards branch campus programming as an integral part of the institution and not peripheral to its objectives or other programs. It encourages and supports institutional efforts to extend higher education opportunities to previously unserved populations, and this statement is not meant to inhibit such activities or to diminish creative approaches to them.

In keeping with the **Standards of Membership**, branch campus programming should be consistent with the educational objectives of the institution; be an integral part of the institution and maintain the same academic standards as courses and programs offered on campus; receive sufficient support for instructional and other needs; and have ready access to appropriate learning resources. The institution maintains direct and sole responsibility for the academic quality of all aspects of all programs and assures adequate resources to maintain quality. On-campus faculty have a substantive role in the design and implementation of off-campus programs.

All institutions that seek or have attained candidacy or accreditation assume the obligation of abiding by principles and policies of the Commission directed toward ensuring quality control of all educational offerings. Institutions with already operative branch campuses will have such activities evaluated as part of the next evaluation of the institution as a whole. However, the Commission reserves the right to review these activities at any time circumstances may require to assure their educational quality and effectiveness. Such reviews will be in accordance with the principles and procedures of this policy statement.

Newly initiated branch campuses will not be automatically included in the institution's accreditation. The following procedures must be completed before a branch campus is encompassed within the scope of its accreditation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges.

ADVANCE NOTICE TO THE COMMISSION

It is the responsibility of an institution to notify the Commission about its intention to establish a branch campus before it becomes operational and to provide a report about its plans for the new activity. The following information should be included:

- a summary of the educational programming to be offered
- provisions for faculty, library, academic technological support, and student services including advising and counseling
- a description of the operation, management, and physical resources at the branch campus including, if appropriate, legal authorization to conduct the activity
- projected revenues and expenditures and cash flow at the branch campus
- copies of contractual agreements, if any, with non-regionally accredited organizations which will recruit students and/or provide instruction or otherwise provide academic services in support of the branch campus

COMMISSION REVIEW

The institution's plans will be reviewed by the Commission at the earliest possible date following their receipt. Should the Commission conclude that the plans for the new branch campus appear to fulfill the **Standards of Membership**, the projected activities will be approved and considered as encompassed within the institution's accreditation. If approval is withheld, the reasons for doing so and subsequent steps will be specified.

ON-SITE EVALUATION

As soon as possible, but within six months after it becomes operational, the Commission will undertake an on-site visit to the new branch campus. The purpose of the visit will be to assess the institution's success in implementing its plans for the new activity. For such reviews, the procedures for the focused visit will be followed.

ETHICAL PRACTICES

The Commission has an obligation to assure itself that any institution which seeks candidacy, accreditation, or reaffirmation of accreditation conducts its affairs with honesty and frankness.

When the Commission has cause to believe that any institution with which it is concerned is acting in an unethical manner or is deliberately misrepresenting itself to its students or the public, it will investigate the matter and provide the institution an opportunity to explain the alleged abuse. If, on the basis of such an investigation and after affording the institution an opportunity to respond, the Commission finds that an institution has engaged in unethical conduct or that its integrity has been seriously undermined, the Commission will

- with regard to an institution which is an applicant, but is not yet a candidate or accredited, break off relations
- with regard to a candidate or accredited institution, either issue a show cause order with a time stated, or in extreme cases, immediately sever its relationship with the institution by denying or terminating candidacy or accreditation

The institution may appeal the decision of the Commission in accordance with the New England Association of Schools and Colleges' appeal process.

EVALUATION AND ACCREDITATION OF PROPRIETARY INSTITUTIONS

Accreditation is a status which indicates that an institution is offering its students, on a satisfactory level, educational opportunities implied in its objectives. Accreditation may be applied to public and non-profit proprietary institutions by the appropriate regional accrediting association. The primary determinant for accreditation shall be the quality of the institution and its technical offerings. The nature of ownership is not a factor unless such ownership affects adversely the quality of the institution and its educational offerings.

In defining guidelines for institutional accreditation, regional accrediting associations do not wish to duplicate or preempt the responsibilities or interests of other CHEA recognized accrediting bodies. Also, accrediting associations do not advocate a change in the traditionally voluntary nature of the accreditation process by shifting the initiative for seeking accreditation away from the individual institution.

To be considered for accreditation, all institutions, including proprietary, must

- have a charter, license and/or formal authority from an appropriate governmental agency to award a certificate or diploma.
- be legally constituted as a corporate entity, with an appropriate governing board, to assure continuity and stability.
- have within its governing or advisory board representatives of the public who have no vested interest or other institutional affiliation, and who possess a demonstrated ability and willingness to serve.
- demonstrate financial stability, beyond tuition income, to include income fluctuation and unusual expenditure requirements. Important to the review of financial stability is the availability of the institution's latest audited financial statement prepared by a certified independent accountant, indicating fiscal resources adequate to support its current and future offerings.
- demonstrate that an adequate proportion of its budget is expended for the instructional program.
- offer one or more educational programs of at least one academic year in length or the equivalent at the postsecondary level, with clearly defined and published educational objectives, as well as a clear statement of its means for achieving them.
- include general education when appropriate at the postsecondary level as a prerequisite to, or an essential element of, its principal educational program.
- have clearly defined and published ethical student policies pertaining to admissions, tuition and reasonable refunds.

- have completed at least one cycle of its principle programs prior to an on-site visit.
- submit an institutional self-study.

EVALUATOR AND COMMISSIONER TRAINING

Well-trained evaluators being essential to the success of the accreditation process, individuals identified to serve on visiting committees, shall receive comprehensive training which shall encompass the Commission's Standards of Membership, policies, and procedures. Such training is required of all individuals who have not previously served as an evaluator prior to undertaking a visiting committee assignment and otherwise made available from time to time for those experienced as necessitated by changes in criteria, policies and procedures.

Individuals elected to serve on the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions shall also receive comprehensive training in the Commission's Standards of Membership, policies, and procedures prior to assuming office.

EVALUATOR SELECTION, ETHICS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Commission on Technical and Career Institutions creates an evaluator pool from the recommendations of staff by the chief executive officer of member institutions. In special circumstances, the Director may solicit evaluators in specialized areas outside of the member institutions and/or outside of the New England area. Once recommended and approved by the Director, a master listing is maintained and reviewed by the member institution CEOs each year.

Due to the size of the Commission and the effort to keep new evaluators few in number on each visiting team, the training of team members is accomplished just prior to the commencement of the visit. The mentor model is used in working new evaluators through their first visit.

I. Criteria for Selection

- A. Credentials reflective of teaching assignment
- B. Administrative and/or teaching experience in the recommended field
- C. Institutional experience in accreditation activities, i.e. self-study committee, curriculum work, specialized accreditation experience, team experience

II. Ethics

- A. Accepts and subscribes to purposes of regional accreditation
- B. Recognizes confidentiality of discussions and refers all inquiries to staff or chairperson
- C. Holds in confidence all documents and electronic sources that are part of the accreditation process
- D. Accepts the Commission policy on Conflict of Interest

III. Responsibilities

- A. Responds to correspondence regarding an upcoming accreditation visit
- B. Reads and reviews documents in preparation for a visit
- C. Attends all accreditation team activities and remains until business is concluded
- D. Completes accreditation assignments in a timely manner
- E. Reflects on accreditation experience and makes suggestions for improvement

IV. Notification

- A. Individuals nominated and approved for the accreditation pool will be notified by the Commission of their selection by letter
- B. At the minimum, the following will be attachments:
 - 1. Policy on Evaluator Selection, Ethics and Responsibilities
 - 2. Policy on Conflict of Interest
 - 3. Instructions for Visiting Committee

EXTERNAL BUDGET CONTROL

The governing board of an institution must control the institution's budget which is the expression of the institution's plans in financial terms. Unless the governing board has control of the budget, it cannot complete its planning function or ensure the implementation of its plans.

When an institution depends for its support on an external agency -- state, church, or other public or private agency -- the external agency will determine the amount of support it will provide and may appropriately indicate in broad terms the categories for which support is provided and the amounts. The external agency should not, through line item control or other means, determine in detail how the funds are to be spent. This is a function of the governing board and the institution's officers.

Once funds have been allocated, the normal expectation should be that the amount of funds will not be reduced in a given fiscal year. If subsequent developments necessitate reduction of the allocation, the governing board and the institution's officers should determine how and where the reductions are to be made.

If an external agency has a responsibility for pre-auditing or post-auditing, it should check only on such matters as arithmetic accuracy, authenticity of signatures, consistency with the provisions of the budget, and legality; it should not question the appropriateness of a particular expenditure.

GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS IN SPECIALIZED PROGRAMS

This policy expresses a principle of general education that the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions considers to be a desirable characteristic of postsecondary institutions.

General education is recognized as an important component of all higher education programs. Institutions must be clear about the place of its general education component in the context of its programs and the purposes it serves. Higher education institutions must identify and provide a recognizable core of general education that is consistent with the educational philosophy of the institution for each program. In some cases, institutions may provide for general education requirements through admission or graduation prerequisites. Institutions are encouraged to include general education in non-degree specialized programs.

General education may include educational experiences which provide the following:

- introduction to the major areas of knowledge
- opportunity for acquiring skills and knowledge necessary for living in a complex modern society
- opportunity for the development of basic learning skills and foundations necessary for success in mastering advanced specialized subject matter

General education in specialized programs shall be of postsecondary level. The content of general education in specialized programs should be comparable, though not necessarily identical, to traditional academic offerings and should be taught by appropriately qualified faculty.

Programs in career oriented higher education institutions need to evidence recognition of the relationship between broad education and the acquisition of techniques and skills. While an appropriate level of mastery in occupations and technologies is recognized as fundamental, every institution should also strive for the development of student character and the preparation of its students to live in the world. Programs need to develop within students the capabilities of forming independent judgments, exercising critical thinking, weighing values, and understanding fundamental theory, in addition to amassing facts and mastering skills. The institutional effort in helping its students become contributing and useful members of society, other than through its specific occupational and technical offerings, should be demonstrated in the performance of the institution's graduates. In any type of program, the general education courses, as well as technical courses, should be taught by staff members who are qualified in the subject being taught.

INNOVATION

The Commission on Technical and Career Institutions welcomes perceptive and imaginative experimentation, which aims at intensifying the effectiveness of postsecondary education. The Commission supports no particular theories or styles of education or organization. Neither does it prescribe specific rules or formulae. It is cognizant that special requirements may pertain to some institutions, but these should not be permitted to inhibit new approaches and emphases in their educational programs. The Commission insists only that new departures or adaptations be consistent with an institution's purposes and goals as originally established or as modified to accommodate new conditions.

INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION AND NON-TRADITIONAL STUDY

Accreditation procedures for non-traditional programs should encourage innovative and imaginative approaches to providing quality education whether in new institutions or in those already accredited. The accrediting process generally should move toward assessment of the results of education rather than its processes, and developments in non-traditional studies provide opportunities to do so. At the same time, the Commission emphasizes that accreditation is concerned with institutional improvement and that attention to outcomes only, without considering the relations of these to the environment and educational processes, would be of little assistance to either traditional or non-traditional programs in raising questions and providing suggestions for improvement.

The Commission believes that the principles, policies, and procedures specified for accreditation must be flexible and leave room for innovation. As the nature of innovative developments becomes clear and experience is gained in working with them, accreditation policies and procedures may be adjusted to attain a uniform approach to the traditional and innovative.

GENERAL POLICIES

Accreditation will be considered only when students have been granted or have qualified for a certificate or diploma. The Commission will consider accreditation of non-traditional institutions only when the institution can show that it has graduated students and provide data concerning the effectiveness of its programs of study.

Accreditation procedures and standards should be comprehensive, flexible and fair. Visiting teams should include persons who have experience in non-traditional programs and/or who are sufficiently conversant and understanding to review innovations completely.

An institution which, by the nature of its programs, abandons or renders non-functional traditional criteria and mechanisms of review and control aimed at assuring quality, must accept responsibility for indicating alternative ways in which quality will be assured.

GUIDELINES

When certificates or diplomas based heavily on non-traditional patterns of study are offered, evidence will be required that awards are earned on the basis of definite criteria and demonstrated competency commensurate with the level and nature of the certificates or diplomas.

The appraisal, evaluation or examination procedures of an institution must be conducted with a high degree of objectivity, with due regard for maintenance of honesty and security and with explicit statements of criteria and standards for judging satisfactory performance. The learner's self-appraisal of the worth of an experience is a valuable, but not sufficient basis for awarding credit or a certificate.

Publicity statements to prospective students must be factual. For example, actual services provided must be consistent with publicity. This will require monitoring adjunct professors to assure that they fulfill their commitments.

To protect the integrity of the faculty/institution work relationship and avoid circumstances involving conflict of interest, policies regarding the amount of outside work for pay and safeguards surrounding the use of institutional resources and facilities for their intended purposes are required. The relationship of full-time faculty serving as adjunct faculty or program advisors and using the learning resources and facilities of their full-time employer for programs of study offered by other institutions (accredited or non-accredited) should conform to their institution's policies and standards on these matters.

The conditions and circumstances of subcontracts with adjunct faculty in the community with museums, art institutes, libraries, government agencies, foreign study institutions, and other diverse learning facilities should be made explicit and should be in conformity with the policies and standards of the institution on such matters. They should be accompanied by a description of the means to be used for documenting and evaluating the work done by the student in reference to the objectives of the programs of study.

The conditions and circumstances of subcontracts by non-accredited institutions with accredited institutions for use by students of their learning resources, facilities and degree-granting prerogatives should be made explicit. They should also be in conformity with the usual institutional policies and procedures safeguarding their intended use and with the Commission's guidelines on **Contractual Relationships with Non-Regionally Accredited Organizations**.

The concern here is both with placement of responsibility, the use and availability of resources, and the relation between tuition and fees, services rendered and benefits acquired.

INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRITY AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM

By tradition and by philosophical principle, an academic institution is committed to the pursuit of truth. To carry out this essential commitment calls for institutional integrity in the way an institution manages its affairs, specifies its goals, selects and retains its faculty, admits students, establishes curricula, determines programs, conducts research, and fixes its fields of service.

The maintenance and exercise of such institutional integrity postulates and requires appropriate autonomy and freedom.

This is the freedom to examine data, to question assumptions, to be guided by evidence, to teach what one knows, and to be a learner and a scholar. This is the freedom from unwarranted harassment, which hinders or prevents an institution from proceeding with its essential work.

An institution must be managed well and remain solvent. It may be organized and structured for profit, but it is not strictly a business; while it must be concerned with the needs of its community, state and country, an institution of higher education is not a political party or a social service. It must be morally responsible, but even when church-related, it is neither a religion nor a church.

Those within an institution have, as a first concern, evidence and truth, rather than particular judgments of institutional benefactors, concerns of churchmen, public opinion, social pressure, or political proscription.

Relating to this general concern and corresponding to intellectual and academic freedom are correlative responsibilities. On the part of trustees and administrators, there is the obligation to protect faculty and students from inappropriate pressures or destructive harassment.

On the part of the faculty, there is the obligation to sift and question, to be actively involved in the life of the institution, but also involved as learners at appropriate levels.

Intellectual freedom does not rule out commitment; rather, it makes it possible and personal. Freedom does not require neutrality on the part of the individual or the educational institution - certainly not toward the task of inquiry and learning, or toward the value system which may guide them as persons or as schools.

All concerned with the good of institutions will seek for ways to support their institutional integrity and the exercise of their appropriate autonomy and freedom. In particular, Commissions that have a particular responsibility to look at an institution in its totality, will always give serious attention to this aspect and quality of institutional life so necessary for its well-being and vitality.

INSTITUTIONAL PERFORMANCE WITH RESPECT TO STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

All institutions accredited by or in candidacy with the Commission must complete an Annual Report Form. In addition to general information, enrollment and financial data, program data, etc., the Annual Report Form will include completion and placement data and licensure rates.

The benchmarks used for completion, placement and licensure will be consistent with those contained in Title IV of the Higher Education Act. When the Annual Report Form is reviewed by the Director of the Commission, failure to meet one or more of these benchmarks will result in the Annual Report Form becoming an agenda item for the next meeting of the Commission. The Commission's Director will also request appropriate information from the institution that will also be forwarded to the Commission.

After consideration of the institution's Annual Report Form and supporting documentation, the Commission may take one of the following actions:

1. accept the report of the institution and continue accreditation
2. request additional information
3. place the institution on warning status

If placed on warning, the institution's annual report forms and requested appropriate information will continue to be a Commission item for the following two years. Continued failure to meet the benchmarks may then result in probationary status or loss of accreditation.

The chair of a site visit team for an institution undergoing a decennial or five-year focused visit will be given a copy of the institution's most recent Annual Report Form. The team chair will be asked to include in the site visit report a detailed section assessing the institution's performance with respect to student achievement.

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS

Accreditation is the educational community's means of self-regulation through quality assurance and improvement. The accrediting process is intended to strengthen and sustain the quality and integrity of higher education, making it worthy of public confidence and minimizing the scope of exercise of external control.

There are many ways in which institutions may affirm the value and realize the benefits of accreditation. As each undertakes its institutional self-study and participates in other aspects of the accrediting process, the Commission urges particular attention to several basic institutional responsibilities. The institution's commitment to quality and regard for accreditation fundamentals are reflected in an institution's

- integrity in dealing with its constituencies and the public
- involvement of administrators, faculty, students, and others in the self-study process
- commitment to continuous improvement

These responsibilities should be considered in the context of the Commission's **Standards of Membership for Institutions of Higher Education at the Technical or Career Level**.

DEALING WITH CONSTITUENCIES AND THE PUBLIC

An important aspect of institutional responsibility in accreditation is the integrity with which the institution deals with its constituencies and the public. The Commission on Technical and Career Institutions and its member institutions have a shared responsibility for maintaining educational quality and public confidence in higher education.

Accreditation rests on trust and good faith in the integrity of institutions and their leaders. The Commission on Technical and Career Institutions relies on the information conveyed in self-study reports, catalogs, and other institutional publications, and on the findings of visiting teams. The openness with which teams are received and the access they are given to an institution's records are a measure of the trust and good faith necessary to the effectiveness and credibility of accreditation. An institution's responsibility to provide such access and openness is a central aspect of the accrediting process.

The Commission on Technical and Career Institutions holds confidential those documents, such as the self-study and the evaluation report, that describe an institution's strengths and weaknesses and other information upon which an accreditation decision is based. Although the Commission will make available to the public summary information contained in the membership roster, it is the responsibility of the institution to provide any other information pertaining to its self-study, evaluation visit and accreditation status.

In order to ensure that the public receives accurate information about an institution and to sustain and satisfy its accountability as a recognized accrediting agency, the Commission must be kept informed of any changes, both routine and substantive, that occur between regularly scheduled

periodic evaluations. The Commission's policy statement **Substantive Change in Member and Affiliated Institutions of Higher Education** should be consulted about specific procedures for obtaining prior approval of any substantive changes or for determining if prior approval is required.

An institution's integrity also is measured by how it fulfills its responsibilities with regard to students. The primary responsibility is to assure the fair and equitable treatment of students. The following are examples of ways in which such responsibility can be demonstrated:

- Institutions must ensure that program length and tuition and fees are always appropriate to the objectives of the educational program offered by the institution. For example, when an institution increases the number of credits or hours required for the successful completion of a course or program of studies without changing course content, students should not be adversely affected by a corresponding increase in tuition.
- Students must be given the opportunity to submit complaints to the institution. Complaint procedures should be published and accessible to students and a record of complaints maintained. (See **Complaints Against Affiliated Institutions.**)
- Institutions participating in federally-guaranteed student loan programs (under Title IV of the Higher Education Act as Amended) and designating the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions as a gatekeeper agency must demonstrate diligence in keeping student default rates at an acceptable low level and must also comply with program responsibilities incumbent on institutions participating in the Title IV programs as defined by prevailing governmental guidelines. Institutions whose default rate requires a default reduction plan share with the Commission their plans to reduce the default rate through prudent institutional policies.
- In the event that an accredited institution closes, the institution is required to develop a teach-out agreement that must be submitted to and approved by the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions. (See **Policy on Teach-Out Agreements.**)
- The institution ensures that students are provided any instruction it has promised prior to its closure, at no additional charge and in close proximity to itself. An institution that enters into a teach-out agreement should be able to demonstrate the compatibility of its programs and scheduling to that of the closed institution. The document, **Considerations When Closing an Institution of Higher Education**, outlines the procedures and requirements for a closing institution.

INVOLVEMENT IN THE SELF-STUDY

Institutional commitment to quality and improvement may be manifested in many ways, but that commitment is clearly demonstrated through the institution's involvement of administrators,

faculty, students, and trustees in the self-study process. Although the size of the institution may affect the number of those participating in the self-study, involvement must be representative of the institution's constituencies.

While administrators, faculty, students, and governing board members are essential participants in self-study activities, alumni, and representatives of the local community may contribute as well. (See **Policy and Procedures for Third-Party Comments During Comprehensive Evaluations.**) Whether or not these constituencies are directly involved, an institution demonstrates its commitment through its efforts to keep all constituencies apprised of self-study activities and progress. An evaluation team quickly discovers the level of awareness of the self-study effort on any campus, and that is always an indication of the level of institutional commitment and integrity in the accreditation process.

A COMMITMENT TO CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

A fundamental aspect of accreditation is continuous improvement. Because accreditation is a process, not an end result of a self-study or periodic review report, an institution's responsibility to participate in the accrediting process persists throughout the ten-year accreditation cycle. One way in which an institution demonstrates fulfillment of this responsibility is through ongoing review of institutional effectiveness and outcomes assessment.

Outcomes assessment is a tool that allows an institution to determine the extent to which teaching and learning opportunities and outcomes are consistent with the objectives of the institution. The Commission's Standard Two on **Planning and Assessment** helps institutions design, initiate, and conduct effective outcomes assessment programs.

Institutional responsibility for continuous improvement goes beyond simply conducting outcomes assessment. It is important that the institution use the results to improve teaching, learning, and services on the campus.

OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES

There are other significant responsibilities that an institution must accept as part of its accreditation.

As a membership organization, the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions develops its policies and procedures through a democratic process. The Commission therefore encourages institutions to participate in the policy development and decision-making process within the region. Institutions are given numerous opportunities to provide input and designate the policies and procedures through which accreditation decisions are made. Institutional representatives are often invited to participate in groups for a variety of purposes, including policy and standards development. Annual meetings provide special forums and other opportunities for open and candid discussions of common as well as uncommon concerns. Should these not provide the appropriate venue for an institution's participation, it is the institution's responsibility to find a way to participate actively.

Institutions are required to meet government guidelines to be eligible to participate in Title IV and other student assistance programs. Some of these requirements are demanded of institutions directly through the Title IV Program Participation Agreement and Federal and State regulations, while others are required by government indirectly through Federally mandated accreditation standards and regulations. Examples of these requirements and responsibilities are described in the preceding section on dealing with constituencies and the public. Institutions also may be required to meet certain State or local requirements to be licensed or eligible to operate as an institution of higher education.

The Commission on Technical and Career Institutions regularly provides member institutions, other accrediting agencies, and State and Federal agencies with current copies of its **Standards of Membership and Eligibility Requirements**. The Commission, however, does not act as a clearinghouse for all State, Federal, or other requirements. It is the responsibility of the institution, therefore, to be apprised of and comply with any criteria or standards that are required directly by the Federal or State governments or by any other external organization. Information on these requirements can be obtained directly from the organizations with which the institution must establish or maintain a working relationship.

NON-DISCRIMINATION

Educational institutions should contain within their environment the essence of the qualities they endeavor to impart to students, including the essential values of non-discrimination. They have a responsibility to develop selection and promotion standards and procedures based on principles which consider qualities, aptitudes, or talents simply as they pertain to the requirements of the academic program, with due regard for affirmative action. Institutions are expected to review their policies and procedures regularly to determine their validity in keeping with these principles.

NOTIFICATION OF ACTIONS AFFECTING THE ACCREDITATION STATUS OF AFFILIATED INSTITUTIONS

Recognizing that the Federal Government, state agencies, the public, and others rely on the decisions of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, the following steps are taken to assure the timely and broad dissemination of actions taken regarding the accreditation status of affiliated institutions.

ADVERSE ACTIONS AND WITHDRAWAL FROM STATUS

The Secretary of the U. S. Department of Education is informed of a final decision to deny, withdraw, suspend or terminate the accreditation or candidate status of an institution or to take other adverse action at the same time the institution is notified.

The Secretary of the U. S. Department of Education, appropriate state agencies, and appropriate accrediting agencies are informed within thirty (30) days of any adverse action taken. Adverse actions include denial or termination of candidacy; denial or termination of accreditation; placement on probation.

The Secretary of the U. S. Department of Education, appropriate state agencies, and appropriate accrediting agencies are informed within thirty (30) days of a decision by a candidate or accredited institution to voluntarily withdraw from its status or allow its accreditation status to lapse. Notice is also included in subsequent notices of Association actions as well as on the Association's home page on the World Wide Web.

A press release is issued and widely distributed immediately following meetings of the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions specifying any adverse actions taken.

A statement summarizing the reasons for an adverse action is made available to the Secretary of the U. S. Department of Education and appropriate state agencies and to the public upon request within thirty (30) days of any adverse action.

OTHER ACTIONS

The Secretary of the U. S. Department of Education, appropriate state agencies, and appropriate accrediting agencies are informed within thirty (30) days of actions granting candidacy or accreditation, reaffirming candidacy or accreditation, and changes in accreditation status. This information is also made available on the Association's home page on the World Wide Web and is otherwise widely distributed.

No later than 60 days after a final decision, the accrediting agency makes available to the Secretary, the appropriate State postsecondary review entity, and the public upon request, a brief statement summarizing the reasons for the agency's determination to deny, withdraw, suspend, or terminate accreditation or preaccreditation of an institution, and the comments, if any, that the affected institution may wish to make with regard to that decision.

PERIODIC REVIEW OF ACCREDITED INSTITUTIONS

Accreditation is viewed by the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions as a continuing status that, once confirmed, is removed only for cause and then with scrupulous observance of due process. A responsible accrediting program necessarily includes periodic review of accredited institutions both for their benefit and for the fulfillment of the Commission's accountability to the academic community and to the public. The nature and timing of such reviews vary in accordance with the circumstances at a given institution and with the Commission's judgment as to how it can best serve the institution's needs while simultaneously meeting its broader responsibilities.

At its best, the periodic review of accredited institutions is a creative means of assisting them in the continuous assessment of their educational objectives and their success in fulfilling institutional goals. The more self-study and evaluation are seen as directly related to institutional viability and quality, the more productive the self-study and evaluation process will be.

The Commission utilizes a variety of mechanisms to periodically review the accreditation status of member institutions. At least once every ten years all institutions must undergo a comprehensive evaluation against the full array of the Commission's standards and policies for the purpose of reaffirming institutional accreditation. Preceded by institutional self-study, these evaluations are undertaken by a visiting team whose findings and recommendations are reviewed by the Commission.

The Commission on Technical and Career Institutions mandates as a matter of policy that all of its accredited institutions must undergo a focused visit no later than five years following a decennial or initial accreditation visit. The institution bears the responsibility for preparing a focused visit report to be distributed to the Commission office and to members of the focused visit team no later than four weeks prior to the date of the on-site visit by the team. The purpose of the focused visit report and the ensuing visit is to inform the Commission of significant developments and progress made by the institution since its most recent decennial on-site visit to include any progress reports or other actions required of the institution by Commission policy or specific action.

Annually every institution is required to submit a report that provides not only statistical data related to such matters as enrollment and finances, but also information about off-campus programming, contractual relationships, and any significant developments at the institution in the past year that may have a bearing on its accredited status. At its discretion, the Commission may and often does require from individual institutions, reports on specified topics. This focused report may be followed by a limited on-site evaluation for the purpose of validating the contents of the report.

If an institution undergoes a substantive change, or if its educational effectiveness is seriously questioned, the Commission, at any time, reserves the right to review that institution's accreditation without regard to any previously indicated time pattern.

POSTSECONDARY EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS CONDUCTED BY ACCREDITED OR CANDIDATE INSTITUTIONS ON MILITARY BASES

The Commission is pleased to note that the military services are very much aware of the critical need for well-educated manpower and fully endorse on military bases the development of educational programs designed to provide for the personal and professional growth of personnel, through educational courses and programs in cooperation with accredited and candidate postsecondary institutions.

Institutions are encouraged to cooperate with the military services in designing appropriate courses and programs for both military personnel and also such military-related or civilian personnel as it may be considered feasible to accept. In establishing courses or programs, institutions should recognize that special considerations frequently must be made; for example, courses designed for professional preparation in an academic discipline may not adequately meet the needs or capitalize on the experience of military personnel. The usual fixed requirements of residence and traditional methods of accumulating credits may fail to allow for the unique circumstances of the military person. Hence, it is the Commission's view that an institution offering such courses, while holding to the basic quality essential to good educational programs, should feel free to adapt methods, policies, and procedures to the regimen and conditions under which the military student must perform his duties and pursue his studies.

Providing educational opportunities for interested personnel on military bases is a dual responsibility. Certain guides and requisites can be established which may provide both incentive and direction for military officers in positions of responsibility on base. Likewise, there are helpful guides that might provide direction for those from the college campus responsible for such services. Successful programs in these situations will not be realized unless there is mutual understanding, a sharing of responsibilities, and a marshaling of resources essential for such offerings.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF INSTITUTIONS

Programs offered should relate to the purposes and adhere to the educational standards of the institution.

Provisions should be made for students to work toward completion of appropriate programs offered by the institution. Without compromising the principle that quality will be equivalent to that on campus, course offerings might be more flexible for non-traditional than those required of the campus student. Thus the educational goal of the military-based student might be given special consideration within the general education requirements of the institution without depreciation of standards. Although institutions should refrain from offering work unrelated to either their mission or resources, they may provide service or cultural courses without credit when such experiences can be of personal worth or upgrade competencies required of the military person.

In organizing and administering base programs, institutions should take into consideration the uniqueness of military situations.

The staff member assigned the responsibility of representing an institution in its military base effort must recognize the unique demands of the situation. He must realize that the first demand upon the base personnel is a military commitment, and arrangements for such individuals must fit into this demand. Although organization and administration practices need not duplicate or conform to campus routines, appropriate standards should be maintained.

Student personnel policies and services should be such as to facilitate the success of a program on a military base.

Admission requirements should reflect the demands of postsecondary level studies and requirements and at the same time take into consideration the student's background in terms of equivalencies. Registration procedures should be accommodated to the conditions under which the military works, and counseling services should be provided by relevantly prepared and experienced individuals. Special provisions should be made for program advising so students may know requirements, as well as how to make adjustments in terms of their own educational goals. Adjustments may need to be made in resident requirements and/or the substitution of courses for transfer credit or degree purposes. Provision should be made for the possibility of advanced placement or credit by examination or evaluation.

Both faculty and instruction should be of recognized quality.

For military-based education programs, the faculty are drawn from the cooperating institution, the military base staff, and from other institutions. Qualified specialists without institutional affiliation may also be employed. Instructors must be professionally competent in regard to specific preparation and recency of involvement in the field. When participating institutions employ faculty from other institutions on a part-time basis, it is recommended that they do so with permission from the faculty members' full-time employer to avoid the danger of excessive overloads.

The quality of the instruction should be comparable to that on campus, with the same degree of concern for teaching tools and learning resources. Necessary library materials must be available or accessible. Special provisions may be needed for the completion of course work when students are called from base. Regardless of departures from campus practice, grades should not be given until students meet all course requirements.

Integrity among institutions offering programs on a single base is essential.

Institutions placed in competition with each other in making bids to provide services must guard against erosion of quality of instruction. To avoid negative aspects of competition, several participating institutions on a base should consult among themselves and with the military education services officer. In all deliberations and negotiations, it is expected that a high degree of integrity will be maintained.

GUIDELINES AND OBLIGATIONS OF THE MILITARY

The military should not hesitate to initiate negotiations for the purpose of providing educational programs on base.

When postsecondary educational opportunities are not being provided, and when personnel on base express an interest in them, military officials should initiate the action necessary for securing such programs. The leadership should first assess and identify the types of programs and services desired before approaching an institution. It is always helpful to know at the outset precisely what is desired, the approximate number of students who are likely to be involved, and the resources which the base might be able to provide. Education officers should be open in making needs known to interested institutions and in inviting proposals for programs.

Memoranda of understanding or contracts should be negotiated directly between military bases and participating institutions. Where possible, it is recommended that such memoranda of understanding or contracts run for more than one year to assure program stability. Perhaps bases could work toward standardization of contracts and thus insure greater consistency in the services provided by an institution.

A joint meeting of both institution and base leadership should occur early.

After the educational needs of base personnel are determined, there should be a joint exploration and planning session of base and institution representatives. Such a meeting should define the needs, identify essential resources, describe the general nature of programs desired, and define the specific responsibilities of all parties. Written agreements should be reached prior to initiation of the program to guide both the base and the participating institution in carrying out the program.

The military will have responsibility for supplying certain essential resources.

In addition to identifying programs desired, the number of persons involved, and the costs, the military should be expected to provide certain essentials for such programs on base as follows:

- suitable and adequate classrooms
- space and facilities for a library or learning center
- adequate learning resources to support the program
- laboratory space and essential equipment for courses requiring laboratory experiments
- other equipment and supplies (e.g., computers, business machines, etc.) essential to courses offered

It is the responsibility of the educational institution to notify the military base of additional or extraordinary needs sufficiently in advance to make it possible for the base to fulfill the request.

The military must give full support and backing to the program once it is initiated.

No program will succeed without the continuing support of the post commander, his staff, and the highest officials of the respective service branch. A postsecondary program will also need the attention of an educational officer who is a qualified educator and is given time and staff to manage and evaluate the program and provide essential academic advisement. The educational officer will need the full support of all base officials. The success of such programs is highly dependent upon the experience, leadership, and resourcefulness of such an individual.

There is need for greater uniformity of policy and practice among the various branches of the military.

It has been noted that differences exist in both policy and practice among various branches of the service. The Commission urges that steps be taken to achieve the following:

- coordinated administrative organization of educational programs throughout the services
- standardized scales of tuition support
- greater understanding and agreement on what constitutes adequate classroom space and equipment

Uniformity of commitment on the part of the various branches could do much to increase comparability of programs and services among military bases, and it would improve efficiency and reduce the administrative burden on institutions providing educational programs to more than one base.

On bases where non-military personnel are permitted to take courses, it is understood that the first responsibility in terms of space and instructional services is to the military student. However, the inclusion of community people on a space-available and self-paid basis may be beneficial to all parties concerned and is encouraged.

EVALUATION OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS ON MILITARY BASES

Educational programs conducted by accredited or candidate postsecondary institutions on a military base should be evaluated by the appropriate regional accrediting commission in conjunction with an institutional evaluation.

Although informal evaluations may be made by military education staff, it is not appropriate for the military to engage in formally evaluating the programs of an accredited postsecondary institution. It is recommended, however, that appropriate military educational personnel confer with the institution in doing the relevant part of its self-study. An evaluation team may wish to confer with the military regarding the support, resources and effectiveness of a given program.

If an accredited institution offers educational programs on a military base within another accrediting region, the evaluation should be conducted jointly by the affected Commissions with primary responsibility in the parent Commission. In the case of overseas programs conducted outside the United States or its possessions, the evaluation should be conducted by the appropriate regional Commission.

Those responsible for postsecondary military base programs will be cognizant of and generally expected to meet the appropriate military, state, and Commission guidelines for operation of the programs.

CONSORTIA ARRANGEMENTS

Where two or more institutions are joined together in consortia to provide educational programs on military bases, certain common administrative arrangements and educational policies need to be agreed upon. This can be handled by a consortium board with appropriate representation from each of the participating institutions and the military. Such matters as calendar, admissions, course requirements, transfer of credits and tuition should be developed.

From the outset, the Commission should be notified of and involved in the development of the consortia. Evaluation of the consortia educational program will be in conjunction with the evaluation and accreditation process with each participating institution. Consortia arrangements will not be independently evaluated for separate accredited status.

PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE IN INSTITUTIONAL ADVERTISING, STUDENT RECRUITMENT, AND REPRESENTATION OF ACCREDITED STATUS

All institutions accredited by the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions, or individuals acting on their behalf, must exhibit integrity and responsibility in advertising, student recruitment, and representation of accredited status. Responsible self-regulation requires rigorous attention to these principles of good practice.

ADVERTISING, PUBLICATIONS, PROMOTIONAL LITERATURE

Educational programs and services offered should be the primary emphasis of all advertisements, publications, promotional literature, and recruitment activities.

All statements and representations should be clear, factually accurate, and current. Supporting information should be kept on file and readily available for review.

Catalogs and other official publications should be readily available and accurately depict

- institutional mission and its purposes and objectives
- entrance requirements and procedures
- academic calendars
- basic information on programs and courses, with required sequences and frequency of course offerings explicitly stated
- program completion requirements, including length of time required to obtain a certificate of completion
- faculty (full-time and part-time listed separately) with degrees held and the conferring institution
- institutional facilities readily available for educational use
- rules and regulations for conduct
- opportunities and requirements for financial aid
- policies and procedures for refunding fees and charges to students who withdraw from enrollment

In college catalogs and/or official publications describing career opportunities, clear and accurate information should be provided on

- national and/or state legal requirements for eligibility for licensure or entry into an occupation or profession for which education and training are offered
- any unique requirements for career paths, or for employment and advancement opportunities in the profession or occupation described

STUDENT RECRUITMENT FOR ADMISSIONS

Student recruitment should be conducted by well-qualified admissions officers and trained volunteers whose credentials, purposes, and position or affiliation with the institution are clearly specified.

Independent contractors or agents used by the institution for recruiting purposes shall be governed by the same principles as institutional admissions officers and volunteers.

The following practices in student recruitment are to be scrupulously avoided:

- Assuring employment unless employment arrangements have been made and can be verified
- Misrepresenting job placement and employment opportunities for graduates
- Misrepresenting program costs
- Misrepresenting abilities required to complete intended program
- Offering to agencies or individual persons money or inducements, other than educational services of the institution, in exchange for student enrollment (Except for awards of privately endowed restricted funds, grants or scholarships are to be offered only on the basis of specific criteria related to merit or financial need)

REPRESENTATION OF ACCREDITED STATUS

The term “accreditation” is to be used only when accredited status is conferred by an accrediting body recognized by the Council on Higher Education Accreditation and/or the U.S. Secretary of Education.

No Statement should be made about **possible** future accreditation status or qualification not yet conferred by the accrediting body.

Any reference to state approval should be limited to a brief statement concerning the actual charter, incorporation, license or registration given.

The phrase “fully accredited” should not be used since no partial accreditation is possible.

When accredited status is affirmed in institutional catalogs and other official publications, it should be stated accurately and fully in a comprehensive statement, including

- identifying the accrediting body and listing its name, address and telephone number
- indicating the scope of accreditation as
 - institutional (regional or national)
 - programmatic (curriculum or unit accredited must be specified)

The accredited status of a program should not be misrepresented.

- The accreditation granted by an institutional accrediting body has reference to the quality of the **institution as a whole**. Since institutional accreditation does not imply specific accreditation of any particular program in the institution, a statement like “this program is accredited” is incorrect and misleading.
- “Freestanding” institutions offering programs in a single field granted NEASC accreditation should clearly state that this accreditation does not imply specialized accreditation of the programs offered.

When an institution has misrepresented a visiting team report, misquoted excerpts from the report, or otherwise used the report to create a misleading impression about the institution’s accredited status, the Commission reserves the right to release the full report to the public. Excerpts must be accompanied by a note saying that a copy of the entire report is available upon request. The Commission always will endeavor to settle such issues first with the institution.

In the event that an institution misrepresents the accreditation action taken by the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions or the institution’s accredited status, the Commission reserves the right to make a public statement regarding the action or status. The Commission will always endeavor to settle such issues with the institution first.

PROVISION OF INFORMATION TO THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The Commission on Technical and Career Institutions will provide the following information to the USDOE and other appropriate agencies:

1. A copy of any annual report it prepares
2. A copy, updated annually, of the NEASC Membership Roster
3. A summary of its major accrediting activities during the previous year, if requested by the Secretary of the USDOE
4. Any proposed change in the Association and/or Commission's policies, procedures, or accreditation or candidacy standards that might alter its
 - a. Scope of recognition, or
 - b. Compliance with the criteria for recognition
5. The name of any institution or program it accredits that the agency has reason to believe is failing to meet its Title IV, HEA program responsibilities or is engaged in fraud or abuse, along with the agency's reasons for concern about the institution or program
6. If the Secretary of the USDOE requests, information that may bear upon an accredited or preaccredited institution's compliance with its Title IV, HEA program responsibilities, including the eligibility of the institution or program to participate in Title IV, HEA programs. The Secretary may ask for this information to assist the Department in resolving problems with the institution's participation in the Title IV, HEA programs.

PUBLIC DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION ABOUT AFFILIATED INSTITUTIONS

The following policy governs the release of information regarding the status of affiliated institutions and the Commission.

RELEASE OF INFORMATION BY INSTITUTIONS REGARDING THEIR ACCREDITATION FOLLOWING COMMISSION ACTION

At the conclusion of the evaluation process, institutions are encouraged to make publicly available information about their accreditation status, including the findings of evaluation reports and any obligations or requirements established by Commission action, as well as any plans to address stated concerns. While the Commission does not release copies of self-studies, other institutional reports, evaluation reports, or notification letters, it believes it to be good practice for institutions to make these materials available after notification of action on their status. Because of the potential to be misleading, institutions are asked not to publish or otherwise disseminate only selected excerpts from these materials. While the Commission does not initiate public release of information on actions of warning, show cause, or deferral, if such information is released by the institution in question, the Commission will respond to related inquiries.

If an institution releases or otherwise disseminates information that misrepresents or distorts its accreditation status, the institution will be notified and asked to take corrective action. Should it fail to do so, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, acting through its Chief Executive Officer, will release a public statement in such form and content as it deems desirable providing correct information.

PUBLISHED STATEMENT ON ACCREDITED STATUS

The Commission asks that one of the following statements be used for disclosing in catalogues, brochures, advertisements, etc., that the institution is accredited.

An institution may wish to include within its catalogue or other material a statement that will give the consuming public a better idea of the meaning of regional accreditation. When that is the case, the Commission requests that the following statement be used in its entirety:

_____ (Institution) is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc. through its Commission on Technical and Career Institutions.

Accreditation of an institution by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges indicates that it meets or exceeds criteria for the assessment of institutional quality periodically applied through a peer review process. An accredited institution is one that has available the necessary resources to achieve its stated purposes through appropriate educational programs, is doing so, and gives reasonable evidence that it will continue to do so in the foreseeable future. Institutional integrity is also addressed through accreditation.

Accreditation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges is not partial but applies to the institution as a whole. As such, it is not a guarantee of every course or program offered, or the competence of individual graduates. Rather, it provides reasonable assurance about the quality of opportunities available to students who attend the institution.

Inquiries regarding the accreditation status by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges should be directed to the administrative staff of the institution. Individuals may also contact

Director
Commission on Technical and Career Institutions
New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc.
209 Burlington Road, Suite 201
Bedford, MA 01730-1433

Tel. 781-271-0022, ext. 5416 – Fax 781-271-0950
e-mail: pbento@neasc.org

The shorter statement that an institution may choose for announcing its accredited status follows:

_____ (Institution) is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc., through its Commission on Technical and Career Institutions.

Inquiries regarding the accreditation status by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges should be directed to the administrative staff of the institution. Individuals may also contact

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Accreditation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges has reference to the institution as a whole. Therefore, statements like “fully accredited” or “this program is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges” are incorrect and should not be used.

PUBLISHED STATEMENT ON CANDIDATE STATUS

An institution granted Candidate for Accreditation status must use the following statement whenever it makes reference to its affiliation with the New England Association of Schools and Colleges:

_____ (Institution) has been granted Candidate for Accreditation status by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc. through its Commission on Technical and Career Institutions. Candidacy is not accreditation and it does not assure eventual accreditation. Candidacy for Accreditation is a status of affiliation with the Commission that indicates that the institution has achieved initial recognition and is progressing toward accreditation.

Inquiries regarding the status of an institution affiliated with the New England Association of Schools and Colleges should be directed to the administrative staff of the institution. Individuals may also contact

Director
Commission on Technical and Career Institutions
New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc.
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Bedford, MA 01730-1433

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**PUBLIC DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION ABOUT
AFFILIATED INSTITUTIONS BY THE COMMISSION**

Upon inquiry, the Commission will release the following information about affiliated institutions:

- The date of initial accreditation and/or when candidacy was granted.
- The date and nature (comprehensive or focused) of the most recent on-site evaluation and subsequent Commission action on the institution's accredited status.
- The date and nature (comprehensive or focused) of the next scheduled on-site evaluation.
- Submission date and action taken on the most recent written report required by the Commission.
- The extent of, or limitations on, the status of affiliation.

- For institutions on probation, the Commission's reasons for implementing that status and its plans to monitor the institution. The Commission, in consultation with the institution, will prepare a written statement incorporating the above information. The Commission reserves the right to make the final determination of the nature and content of the statement.
- For institutions whose candidacy or accreditation has been terminated, the date of, and reasons for, termination.

The Commission does not provide information about warning, deferments of action on candidate or accreditation status, or show-cause orders. However, if such information is released by the institution in question, the Commission will respond to related inquiries. Also, adverse actions (placement of an institution on probation, denial of candidate status or accreditation, revocation of candidacy and termination of accreditation) are not communicated until the available appeals process is completed.

The Commission recognizes that, to be fully understood, information about the accredited status of institutions must be placed within the context of the policies and procedures of the Commission and the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. In responding to inquiries, the Commission will endeavor to do so.

The Commission does not release copies of self-studies, progress reports, evaluation reports, or other documents related to the accreditation of individual institutions, but institutions are encouraged to make these materials available, in their entirety, after notification of Commission action.

RANGE AND MEANING OF COMMISSION ACTIONS AFFECTING INSTITUTIONAL STATUS

According to regulations of the United States Department of Education's Office of Postsecondary Education, the Commission is required, as part of its obligation, to honor the regulations listed below:

Whenever CTCI's review of an institution under any standard indicates that the institution is not in compliance with that standard, CTCI must

1. Immediately initiate adverse action against the institution; or
2. Require the institution to take appropriate action to bring itself into compliance with the agency's standards within a time period that must not exceed
 - a. Twelve months, if the program, or the longest program offered by the institution, is less than one year in length;
 - b. Eighteen months, if the program, or the longest program offered by the institution, is at least one year, but less than two years, in length; or
 - c. Two years, if the program, or the longest program offered by the institution, is at least two years in length.

If the institution does not bring itself into compliance within the specified period, CTCI must take immediate adverse action unless, for good cause, it extends the period for achieving compliance.

“Adverse action” is defined as termination of accreditation or candidacy status.

Consistent with the Federal regulations, CTCI has established the following time limits for various actions the Commission may take if it determines an institution is not in compliance with one or more of the standards:

Monitoring action	6-24 months*
Deferment	1-12 months
Warning	1-24 months*
Probation	1-24 months*
Show Cause	1-24 months*

* The maximum time is 12 months if the longest program offered by the institution is less than one year in length or 18 months if the longest program offered by the institution is at least one year but less than two years in length.

When the Commission takes any of the above actions after it determines that an institution does not comply with one or more of the standards, the Commission usually requires the institution to

submit a follow-up report addressing the non-compliance issues, and it may also require the institution to undergo a site visit.

The Commission is not bound by the sequence of actions listed above nor is it precluded from taking an action at any level. For example, an institution does not have to be placed on warning before it is placed on probation, and the next action following warning may be show cause.

Also consistent with Federal regulations, the maximum time an institution found to be in non-compliance with one or more of the standards may be on monitoring, deferment, warning, probation, show cause, or any combination thereof, is 12 months if the longest program offered by the institution is less than one year in length, 18 months if the longest program offered by the institution is at least one year but less than two years in length, and 24 months if the longest program offered by the institution is more than two years in length. At its discretion, the Commission may require an institution to come into compliance within a time frame that is less than the maximum allowed.

If the institution fails to bring itself into compliance within the time specified by the Commission, the Commission will initiate action to terminate the institution's accreditation. However, the Commission may extend the time frame to come into compliance for good cause. Good cause exists, for example, if the Commission determines that the institution is making a good faith effort to correct existing deficiencies and come into compliance with the standard(s) and that it is likely to be able to correct those deficiencies and be in full compliance within the period of the extension. The maximum period for an extension due to good cause is 12 months.

Actions taken by the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions relative to the status of institutions affiliated or seeking affiliation are based on the application of the Commission's standards in its evaluative processes. These criteria include the **Eligibility Requirements** and the **Standards of Membership**, which must be satisfied by institutions seeking or wishing to maintain either candidate for accreditation or accredited status. In addition, affiliated institutions are expected to adhere to those Commission policies affecting institutional conduct.

Typically, the processes by which the standards are applied begin with the institution's preparation of a self-study. The institution is then evaluated by a visiting team, which reports its findings to the Commission. Action establishing an institution's status is taken by the Commission upon consideration of the institutional self-study and visiting team reports. In uncommon circumstances, the Commission may take an action affecting institutional status apart from its usual evaluative processes. In such situations, a strict adherence to due process is maintained.

The Commission has sole discretion in determining the range and timeliness of the actions it takes with regard to the preaccredited status, initial accredited status, continued accredited status, probation or termination of accreditation of the institutions in its membership. Affirmation of the Commission's decision on candidacy or initial accreditation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges' Board of Trustees is required to ensure that due process with regard to these institutions has been followed.

INSTITUTIONS SEEKING CANDIDACY STATUS

CANDIDACY STATUS -- The Commission recommends to the Board of Trustees of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges that an institution be granted candidacy status when it is found that the institution meets the **Eligibility Requirements** and the **Standards of Membership**. While candidacy is a status of affiliation, it is not accreditation, and it does not assure eventual accreditation. Rather, it indicates that the institution has achieved initial recognition and that it is progressing toward accreditation. An institution, once granted candidacy, must achieve accreditation within five years. The continued compliance of a candidate institution with the Commission's **Standards of Membership** and its progress toward accreditation are determined by means of a biennial evaluation during the period of candidacy.

DEFERMENT OF ACTION -- Action on an institution's application for candidacy will be deferred when the Commission judges that it has insufficient data on which to base a final decision. In such cases, action is tabled until a specified time, but in no case longer than one year from the date of the Commission action. In the interim, the institution is required to submit a report and/or host a visit by Commission representatives.

DENIAL OF CANDIDACY STATUS -- The Commission will recommend to the Board of Trustees of the Association the denial of candidacy status when it is found that an applying institution does not meet the **Eligibility Requirements** and/or the **Standards of Membership**. Prior to forwarding its recommendation to the Board of Trustees, the Commission will provide an opportunity for the institution to show cause, within a reasonable time period fixed by the Commission, but in no case to exceed one year from the date of the Commission action, why the recommendation should not be made. In such cases, the burden of proof shall rest with the institution.

The Board of Trustees will act on the Commission's recommendation at its next meeting. If the Board's decision is to deny candidacy, an institution may appeal this action under the relevant policies and procedures established by the Association.

CONTINUATION OF CANDIDACY STATUS -- An institution is continued in candidacy status when it is determined through the biennial evaluation that it continues to meet the **Eligibility Requirements** and the **Standards of Membership** and demonstrates that it is making satisfactory progress toward accreditation.

TERMINATION OF CANDIDACY STATUS -- When it determines that a candidate institution no longer meets the **Eligibility Requirements** and/or the **Standards of Membership**, the Commission will terminate candidacy status. Prior to terminating candidacy status, the Commission will provide an opportunity for the institution to show cause why the action should not be taken. The burden of proof shall rest with the institution. Institutions may appeal the termination of candidacy under the relevant policies and procedures established by the Association. Until final action is taken on the appeal, the institution's candidate status is unaffected. Institutions which lose candidacy status and subsequently seek affiliation must

complete the entire process required of any applying institution as prescribed by the policies and procedures of the Commission.

INSTITUTIONS SEEKING INITIAL ACCREDITATION

INITIAL ACCREDITATION -- The Commission will recommend to the Board of Trustees of the Association that an institution seeking accreditation be granted that status when it is found that the institution meets the **Standards of Membership**. As a condition of its accreditation, the institution may be required to submit a Two-Year Progress Report on its efforts to address any recommendations for improvement the Commission and/or visiting team may have made to assist the institution as it strives to improve and also to provide the Commission with an update on any activities it has planned or is implementing to enhance institutional effectiveness.

DEFERMENT OF ACTION -- Action on an institution's application for accreditation will be deferred when the Commission judges that it has insufficient data on which to base a final decision.

Action may also be deferred when it is found that an institution seeking accreditation meets most, but not all, of the **Standards of Membership**, the identified deficiencies having the capability of being rapidly remedied.

In cases of deferral, action is tabled until a specified time, but in no case to exceed one year from the date of the Commission action or the end of the institution's five-year period of candidacy (if applicable), whichever comes first. During the deferral period, the institution is required to submit a report and/or host a visit by Commission representatives. Deferments are not included in the Commission's public announcements.

DENIAL OF INITIAL ACCREDITATION -- When the Commission finds that an institution seeking initial accreditation does not meet the **Standards of Membership** and that the deficiencies cannot be rapidly remedied, the Commission will deny initial accreditation. When the applying institution is otherwise in good standing as a candidate, it will be continued in that status.

However, if it is also determined that the institution no longer meets the **Eligibility Requirements** and/or the **Standards of Membership**, the Commission will terminate candidate status. Prior to taking an action to deny initial accreditation or to terminate candidacy, the Commission will provide an opportunity for the institution to show cause why the action should not be taken. The burden of proof shall rest with the institution. Institutions may appeal the denial of accreditation or the termination of candidacy under relevant policies and procedures established by the Association. Until final action is taken on the appeal, the institution's status is unaffected. Institutions denied accreditation and continued in candidacy must subsequently seek accreditation in keeping with the policies and procedures of the Commission. If the institution's candidacy is terminated and it subsequently seeks affiliation, it must complete the entire process required of applying institutions as prescribed by the policies and procedures of the Commission.

INSTITUTIONS SEEKING CONTINUED ACCREDITATION

CONTINUED ACCREDITATION -- An institution is continued in accreditation by the Commission when it is found that the institution continues to meet the **Standards of Membership**. Institutions whose accreditation has been reaffirmed, normally undergo comprehensive reevaluation for continued accreditation based on a decennial cycle, though the length of time between visits may be modified to reflect institutional circumstances. As a condition of its accreditation, an institution may be required to submit a Two-Year Progress Report on its efforts to address any recommendations for improvement the Commission and/or visiting team may have made to assist the institution as it strives to improve and also to provide the Commission with an update on any activities it has planned or is implementing to enhance institutional effectiveness.

If the Commission determines that an institution meets the **Standards of Membership** but the Commission has identified one or more standards where the institution's future compliance is questionable without ongoing institutional attention, the institution may be continued in accreditation. However, it will be monitored by the Commission for a period of time not to exceed 12 months if the longest program offered by the institution is less than one year in length, 18 months if the longest program offered by the institution is at least one year but less than two years in length, and 24 months if the longest program offered by the institution is more than two years in length. The institution will be required to submit a monitoring report at the end of the period documenting that it has addressed the areas of concern and remains in compliance with the standard(s). The Commission may also require the institution to undergo a site visit during the period.

DEFERMENT OF ACTION -- Action on continuing an institution's accreditation may be deferred when the Commission judges that it has insufficient data on which to base a decision. In such cases, action is tabled until a specified time from the date of the Commission action, but in no case to exceed twelve months if the program offered by the institution is less than 12 months, eighteen months if the program is at least one year but less than two years in length, or two years if the program is at least two years in length. In the interim, the institution is required to submit a report and/or host a visit by Commission representatives. Deferments are not included in the Commission's public announcements.

WARNING – Warning is a Commission action that signifies a school is deficient in meeting one or more of the **Standards of Membership**. A warning does not affect the accredited status of the institution. The school shall respond to the Commission's concerns within a reasonable time as established by the Commission, but in no case to exceed twelve months if the program offered by the institution is less than 12 months, eighteen months if the program is at least one year but less than two years in length, or two years if the program is at least two years in length.

PROBATION STATUS - Probation is an action that signifies the Commission's very serious concern about the institution's failure to meet one or more of the **Standards of Membership**. It also signifies that the Commission believes the institution is in direct and immediate danger of losing

its accreditation because of conditions that threaten its ability to comply with the **Standards of Membership** and/or other policies.

Prior to placing an institution on probation, the Commission will provide an opportunity for the institution to show cause why the action should not be taken. The burden of proof shall rest with the institution. Institutions may appeal the probation action under relevant policies and procedures established by the Association. Until the appeals process is completed, the institution's status is unaffected.

An institution on probation must bring itself into compliance with the Commission's Standards within a time period specified by the Commission; failure to do so will result in termination of accreditation. Institutions for which the longest program is at least two years will have a maximum period of two years to come into compliance with Commission Standards; institutions for which the longest program is at least one year but less than two years will have a maximum of eighteen months. In placing an institution on probation, the Commission may specify a shorter period of time during which the institution must demonstrate it has come into compliance with the Standards or face the loss of its accreditation.

Institutions on probation are subject to special scrutiny by the Commission which may include the submission of specified reports and hosting visiting teams. If conditions at the institution worsen significantly during the period of probation, the Commission may take an action terminating accreditation. If the institution on probation does not come into compliance with the Standards during the specified time period, the Commission will terminate accreditation unless the Commission, for good cause, extends the period for achieving compliance.

Probation is a public status indicated in any Association publication or communication about the affected institution. Upon inquiry, the Commission will provide the reasons for probationary status as well as plans to monitor the institution. An institution on probation is obliged to disclose its status as well as the availability of additional information on its probationary status to prospective students, those currently enrolled, and the public, in its catalog and recruitment materials, and on its website.

TERMINATION OF ACCREDITATION -The Commission will terminate the accreditation of an institution on probation if at the end of the specified time period the institution has not come into compliance with the Commission's Standards unless extended for good cause. The Commission may also terminate the accreditation of an institution not on probation if it finds that the institution is not meeting one or more **Standards of Membership** and that this non-compliance is fundamental to the institution's integrity or its ability to come into compliance within the time frame specified by the Commission.

For institutions not on probation, prior to taking the action to terminate accreditation, the Commission will provide an opportunity for the institution to show cause why the decision to terminate should not be made. The burden of proof shall rest with the institution. Institutions may appeal this action under relevant policies and procedures established by the Association. Until final action is taken on the appeal, the institution's status is unaffected. Institutions that

lose accreditation and subsequently seek affiliation must satisfactorily complete the entire process for applying institutions as required by the policies and procedures of the Commission.

REVIEW OF INSTITUTIONAL STATUS

All accredited institutions must undergo comprehensive evaluations by a Commission appointed visiting team, preceded by institutional self-study, at least once every ten years. The Commission on Technical and Career Institutions also requires as a matter of policy that all of its accredited institutions undergo a focused visit no later than five years following a decennial or initial accreditation visit. The institution bears the responsibility for preparing a focused visit report to be distributed to the Commission office and to members of the focused visit team no later than four weeks prior to the date of the on-site visit by the team. The purpose of the focused visit report and the ensuing visit is to inform the Commission of significant developments and progress made by the institution since its most recent decennial on-site visit. The focused visit report should include a response to any progress report or other actions required of the institution by Commission action or policy.

Between comprehensive evaluations, the Commission may require reports and/or evaluations focused on specified items.

Institutions may also be asked to submit other reports on specified topics. Such reports are often an expression of the Commission's concern regarding specified conditions, which affect an institution's compliance with the **Standards of Membership** and/or other policies. The report provides an opportunity for the institution to inform the Commission of action taken to address the area of concern. There are other circumstances which may result in a Commission decision which requires a special report to provide additional information, as in the case of a deferral of action, and the need to monitor anticipated significant institutional developments and substantive changes. When external validation of the report's content is believed necessary, the report is followed by an evaluation visit to the campus by a small number of Commission representatives.

RECORDS MAINTENANCE POLICY FOR THE COMMISSION

The Commission on Technical and Career Institutions will maintain complete and accurate records of its accreditation or pre-accreditation reviews of each institution.

The records will include

- Commission letters of notification to institutions concerning their accredited status
- the institution's most recent self-study report
- the last two (2) full accreditation or preaccreditation reviews
- any on-site evaluation team report
- focused visit reports
- reports of special reviews conducted between regularly scheduled reviews
- institution responses to on-site reports
- periodic review reports

REIMBURSEMENT

Out-of-pocket expenses of visiting team members, which may include the cost of travel, lodging, and meals, will be reimbursed by the institution being evaluated. The rate of reimbursement for the use of personal automobiles on New England Association business is determined by the Association's Board of Trustees.

Visiting team members are reimbursed either directly or indirectly by the school being evaluated. It is the responsibility of the institution being visited to reimburse visiting team members in a timely fashion. Prior arrangements may be made with the Commission office when local circumstances prevent timely reimbursement. In such cases, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges may reimburse team members and, subsequently, bill the school.

The above policies should be brought to the attention of appropriate personnel within both the institution to be evaluated and members of the visiting team.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GENERAL AND PROFESSIONAL OR SPECIALIZED ACCREDITING AGENCIES

BASIC PRINCIPLES

Each institution must be free to decide for itself whether or not to seek accreditation by any specialized accrediting agency.

The Commission, in granting accreditation, accredits the institution as a whole and, therefore, cannot omit from its evaluation any areas of the program of the institution, including those accredited by a specialized accrediting agency. However, the general accreditation of the institution as a whole is not, and should not be interpreted as being, equivalent to specialized accreditation of a specific program.

The Commission draws upon the experience of the specialized accrediting agencies in establishing standards of excellence in certain specialized fields and for assistance in evaluating them, and in turn is willing to provide input to the specialized accrediting agencies in the appraisal of supporting and related areas and of institutional control and management. Appropriate assistance on the part of the specialized accrediting agencies might include suggesting evaluators for the Commission's visiting teams; providing a panel of nominees from which the Commission might choose its evaluators; or providing information concerning the organization, overall governance and administration of the institution and the quality of programs which support an area of specialty.

The Commission and a professional accrediting agency may collaborate in evaluating a specialized program whenever the institution desires accreditation by both, or invites both to participate in the evaluation. The Commission is prepared to appoint a generalist as its representative in such circumstances. (See **The Role of the Generalist.**)

The Commission may, nevertheless, receive unofficial appropriate assistance from the specialized agency when the latter is not officially involved.

INSTITUTIONAL FREEDOM

An institution is free to determine which specialized accrediting agencies with which it will deal. Program accreditation by a recognized specialized accrediting agency implies that a determination has been made by the institution that a legitimate educational need exists for accreditation in that particular field.

Nevertheless, an institution may choose not to avail itself of such specialized accreditation for any one or more valid reasons. It may have reservations concerning the standards or the nature of the evaluation of the specialized accrediting agency; may not accept the appropriateness of the agency's standards, point of view, or emphasis; or may feel that the cost is disproportionate to the value of specialized accreditation. What the institution must not do, however, is to interpret its general accreditation as validating a specialized program in the same manner and to the same extent as specialized accreditation.

If in such a case the specialized agency wishes to attempt to convince the institution that it should seek specialized accreditation, it is, of course, free to do so. The Commission will take no position whatsoever on this point.

The Commission on Technical and Career Institutions will not consider or renew the accreditation or candidacy of an institution during a period in which an institution is subject to an adverse action by another institutional accrediting agency which will potentially lead to the suspension, revocation, or termination of accreditation or candidacy. Also, the Commission will not act to renew accreditation or preaccreditation of an institution if it is the subject of an interim action by a State agency potentially leading to the suspension, revocation, or termination of the institution's legal authority to provide postsecondary education. Further, if an institution has been notified of a threatened loss of its accreditation, and the due process procedures required by the action have not been completed, the Commission will not act on the accredited or preaccredited status of an institution during that period. Similarly, the Commission will not consider or act to renew accreditation or preaccreditation of an institution when it has been notified of a threatened suspension, revocation, or termination by the State of the institution's legal authority to provide postsecondary education and the due process procedures required by the action have not been completed. The Commission will review in a timely manner the status of any of its accredited or candidate institutions that are subject to an adverse action, including probation or loss of accreditation, instituted by another recognized accreditor.

RELEASE OF ACCREDITATION INFORMATION

IT IS ASSOCIATION POLICY THAT

No information regarding a Commission recommendation for candidate or accredited status that requires subsequent action by the Board of Trustees be released to the public, including the news media, by the Association or any of its agents until such action has been taken by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges' Board of Trustees.

If something is publicly released by an institution that misrepresents or distorts any one or more Commission recommendations, the Director of the Commission shall contact the chief executive officer of the institution and request that corrective action be taken. If the misrepresentation or distortion is not promptly corrected, the Director of the Commission should so notify the Executive Director of the Association who is the Chief Executive Officer of the Association and who speaks on behalf of the Association. It is his responsibility, at his discretion, to release a public statement.

The Commission may at any time communicate a recommendation to the U. S. Department of Education whenever the Commission has reason to believe such communication will best serve the institution and/or public.

Following a Board of Trustees meeting, the President of the Association shall release information to the public and the news media stating what action has been taken on each institution considered at the meeting. Institutions upon which one of the following adverse actions has been taken by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges' Board of Trustees have the right of appeal.

- denial of candidacy for accreditation
- denial of continuation of candidacy for accreditation
- denial of accreditation
- denial of continuation of accreditation
- placement of an institution on probation
- termination of accreditation

Institutions that elect to exercise this right will retain their accredited status until the appeals process of the Association is complete. Adverse actions of the Board of Trustees are not publicly announced until the right of appeal is exhausted.

Nothing in this policy is to prevent the professional staff at any time from clarifying policies and procedures used by the Association in the accreditation process.

ROLE OF THE GENERALIST

The Commission on Technical and Career Institutions views the generalist plan as an optional but desirable opportunity, upon initiation by the institution, to bring to the evaluation of professional programs by specialized accrediting agencies the background and experience of general institutional officers. During such a review, the Commission hopes that the generalist will be able to supplement the knowledge of representatives of the specialized agency and, in particular, suggest appropriate attention to purposes and policies of the institution as a whole which may have relevance to the appraisal of the particular professional program.

The generalist does not visit the institution to evaluate or accredit it for the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. Prior to, or at the beginning of the campus visit, the generalist should confer with the chairperson of the specialized visiting team to arrive at a mutual understanding of the nature and extent of the generalist's participation in the evaluation procedures. Typically, the generalist is included in conferences with faculty and administration, the session of the visiting team, and other activities related to the evaluation review.

To facilitate the generalist's potential contribution to the evaluation of the professional program, a copy of the self-study and other background materials that have been prepared by the institution in connection with the evaluation should be forwarded to the generalist in advance of the visit according to the schedule that has been established by the specialized agency.

Following the visit, the generalist has the option of preparing a brief written report for the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions. In this report, comments on the conduct of the evaluation by the specialized agency, upon the generalist's own activities, and upon the general relation of the professional school or program to the institution as a whole, are appropriate.

The institutional representative coordinating arrangements for the campus visit should ensure that the generalist receives complete information about such arrangements. Generalists, as well as all other evaluators of New England Association of Schools and Colleges, serve without honoraria. Their out-of-pocket expenses (including transportation), however, are borne by the host institution. The institution should arrange for the generalist's charges for lodging and meals during the campus visit to be billed directly to the institution. Any internal steps necessary to facilitate prompt reimbursement of the generalist's out-of-pocket expenses (signatures on forms, etc.) should be accomplished while the generalist is on campus.

SELF-STUDY AND REPORT ARCHIVING FOR ACCREDITED OR CANDIDATE INSTITUTIONS

The accredited or candidate institution will be responsible for archiving two hard copies of its self-studies and its prescribed reports to the Commission for its candidacy cycle and at least two decennial cycles. These self-studies will be made available to the Commission at its request at any time during the required storage period.

SHOW CAUSE PROCEDURAL GUIDE

PROCEDURES FOR THE COMMISSION'S REVIEW

The Board of Trustees of the Association has approved an appeals policy which calls for the due process step “**Show Cause.**” This step provides a formal opportunity for an institution, against which an adverse action is recommended by the Commission, to show cause why the adverse action should not be taken. Adverse actions are defined as, and are limited to, denial of candidacy for accreditation, termination of candidacy for accreditation, denial of accreditation, placement on probation, and termination of accreditation.

The following procedures outline the steps to be taken by the Commission and institutions in show-cause proceedings:

1. Before taking an adverse action, the Commission will inform the institution of its action in writing, specify the reasons for the action, and set a reasonable time period no later than the next regularly scheduled Commission meeting by which the institution may submit its show-cause response to the Commission. The show-cause response addresses the question of why the adverse action of the Commission should not be taken.
2. The institution will be furnished a copy of these procedures as well as the Association's **Policy and Procedure for the Appeal of Adverse Actions Affecting Institutional Accreditation or Candidate for Accreditation Status.**
3. If the institution elects to show cause, it must file a show-cause response in writing to the Commission. The response should contain all materials which the institution believes pertinent to its case. The burden of convincing the Commission not to take adverse action rests entirely with the institution. The institution may elect not to show cause, in which case it should submit a letter to the Commission indicating that it has waived its right to show cause. The candidacy or accreditation status of the institution remains unaltered during the show-cause process.
4. The Commission expects the show-cause period to be for a time certain and no more than six months in duration, except for those exceptional cases when an extension of the show-cause period is granted. The response must be submitted in accordance with the timeline established by the Commission in its letter notifying the institution of the impending adverse action. The institution may request an extension of time to prepare the report and may be asked to submit its reasons in writing. In such a case, the Commission's chair or his/her designee has sole discretion whether or not to grant the request for an extension. In no case will the show-cause period exceed one year.
5. Show-cause responses may be considered by the Commission at one of its regularly scheduled meetings or at a meeting called for that purpose by the Commission chair.

6. Commission consideration of the show-cause response may be preceded by one or more site visits to validate the contents of the materials submitted in the response. The need for any site visit is at the Commission's sole discretion. In such cases, the Commission will follow the procedures normally used for focused site visits.
7. Following a thorough review of the institution's show-cause response, the Commission may conclude that the institution has shown cause and rescind the adverse recommendation. The Commission reserves the right to determine the nature and timing of subsequent Commission monitoring activities. In such a case, the Commission may place the institution on warning until the Commission is satisfied that the institution has completely resolved those matters which were the cause of the adverse action that was recommended. If the Commission determines that the institution has not shown cause, the adverse action will be taken. According to the policies of the Association, this action may be appealed.
8. If the Commission determines there is not sufficient information to reach a decision or if it believes the institution should be afforded additional time to address stated concerns, the Commission may defer action and set a date certain for final disposition of the matter no later than the date of the next Commission meeting, thus extending the show-cause period.
9. In all cases, the institution is notified in writing of the Commission's action together with the reasons for the action no later than one month following the Commission meeting.

STANDARDS REVIEW POLICY

The Commission shall conduct, in a consultative manner, a systematic and critical review of its standards at least every five years in order to ensure that the standards are adequate to evaluate the quality of education provided by the institutions it accredits and relevant to the educational or training needs of students. This comprehensive review shall examine each of the standards, as well as the standards as a whole, and it shall involve, in an appropriate manner, the Commission's constituencies, including, but not limited to, its accredited institutions, graduates of those institutions, employers of the institutions' graduates, state licensing and/or regulatory agencies, on-site evaluators, and other accrediting agencies.

The Commission uses a combination of methodologies to conduct its systematic review of its standards. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Surveys of Institutions and On-site Evaluators after Site Visits

After each site visit, the Commission surveys institutions about their perceptions of the adequacy and relevance of the standards. In a similar fashion, the Commission surveys on-site evaluators to gain any insights they might have about the standards, their effectiveness in evaluating educational quality, and their relevance to the education and training needs of students.

While the information obtained from these activities is used by the Commission during its five-year review of standards, it is also compiled annually so that the Commission can take appropriate action if any significant problems are noted with the standards.

2. Review of Student Outcomes

An important measure of the effectiveness of the standards, both individually and as a whole, is the achievement of students. The Commission uses as tools to measure student outcomes the retention rates, job placement rates, and pass rates on state licensing examinations (as appropriate) of students who are enrolled in vocational programs at accredited institutions, as reported by institutions on their Annual Report Form.

3. Formal Review of the Standards by Institutions and Other Constituencies

Every five years, the Commission conducts a comprehensive survey of its accredited institutions regarding the standards. Following a review of the results of the survey, the Commission implements changes, as necessary, to ensure that its standards, both individually and as a whole, are both adequate to measure quality and effectiveness and relevant to the educational needs of students.

In a similar fashion, every five years the Commission surveys, or uses other methods to obtain information from, other relevant constituencies such as federal and state agencies, graduates of accredited institutions, employers of graduates, other accrediting agencies, etc., regarding the standards.

After the survey results have been compiled, the Commission conducts a review of its standards one by one. Usually, when a particular standard is being reviewed, there is a general discussion at the outset by members of the Commission about what issues are important to consider in evaluating quality in that area. This is followed by a detailed examination of the standard to determine if it adequately addresses all of the issues identified. If it does not, then proposals are developed to modify or, if necessary, replace the standard.

In a similar manner, the Commission examines the standards as a whole in light of the survey results and, if necessary, modifies one or more standards and/or adds additional standards to ensure that the standards are adequate to evaluate quality and relevant to the educational or training needs of students.

If the standards review process indicates a need to make changes to one or more standards, the Commission will initiate action within six months to make the changes. The draft of the changes will be available for review and comment by member institutions and field testing 12 months after initiating the change process. The new or revised standard will be acted upon by the Commission at its first meeting following the completion of the review and comment process.

4. Other Reviews of Standards

The Commission occasionally holds meetings with various constituencies to address issues of particular interest. After a general discussion of the issues, participants and/or Commissioners review the relevant standards and assess their viability as measures of quality related to the issue. Similarly, the Commission occasionally surveys various constituencies about issues. The Commission takes appropriate action if the discussion or survey results suggest that a revision of the standards is needed.

SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE IN MEMBER AND AFFILIATED INSTITUTIONS

INTRODUCTION

The accreditation of an institution by the Commission signifies that the institution has undergone a successful peer group review, and the members of the Commission confirm for the public interest that the institution is achieving the mission and goals which it has set for itself. When an institution is accredited -- or the accreditation is continued -- it is important to remember that the review was made of conditions and programs at the institution at a particular point in time. Since institutions grow and adapt to changes in the external environment, the Commission requires that all institutions be periodically reevaluated.

The decision by an institution to modify its mission/goals is the prerogative of the institution, and the Commission encourages its member institutions to be innovative and entrepreneurial. When an institution plans a change that is substantive in nature -- a change that is a basic alteration of the mission or scope of the institution, the control of the institution, or the ability of the institution to maintain the quality of the instructional program -- the Commission is obligated to monitor such changes to determine the impact of the substantive change on the institution's effectiveness and integrity.

POLICY

Substantive change in an institution is subject to review by the Commission prior to and subsequent to implementation. A substantive change is not automatically covered by the institution's current accreditation status (or candidacy status). A significant change that indicates a lack of concern for consistency with an institution's stated mission, quality of instruction, or ability to maintain its financial integrity might jeopardize the continuation of accreditation for the institution.

The Commission has a responsibility to the public and to the education community to seek assurance that a major institutional change, particularly one that signifies a departure from the institution's stated purposes at the time of its latest accreditation action, is both appropriate to the institution's mission and within the capability of the institution to implement the change with an emphasis on quality. Thus the Commission reserves the right to reconsider the accreditation status of member institutions at certain times.

An institution planning to make a substantive change as described below must request Commission approval prior to the initiation of the change. In the event that an unplanned substantive change occurs, this change must be immediately brought to the attention of the Commission. Commission decisions about these matters are based on recommendations that emerge from the Commission's peer review process and/or investigatory review process. If an institution is unclear if a change is substantive in nature, it should contact the Commission for consultation. Please see sample notification letter on page 150.

CATEGORIES OF SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE

The circumstances surrounding a substantive change have been placed into categories as described below. Various types of reviews can occur depending upon the nature of the change and the implications of such a change upon the institution.

A. Changes requiring an on-site visit by a peer review team or Commission staff member within six months

Contracting with non-regionally accredited institutions/organizations that provide more than 50% of the instruction in a credit-bearing program

The co-offering of programs with other institutions

The merger of a regionally accredited institution with another regionally accredited institution

The merger of a regionally accredited institution with a non-regionally accredited institution

The relocation of a campus

Any change in the established mission or objectives of the institution

The establishment of an additional location geographically apart from the main campus at which the institution offers at least 50 percent of an educational program.

B. Changes requiring either a peer review reaction to written documents or an on-site peer review visit or Commission staff visit within six months

The initiation of a new program that requires either the infusion of substantial new funding or the substantial reallocation of existing financial resources. The concern here is the degree to which an institution may harm existing programs/majors by removing financial and other resources from existing programs/majors to fund the costly new program/major

The establishment of a new program that changes the mission of the institution (an institution with a career orientation adding a program that is primarily transfer in nature, for example)

The opening of a new instructional site

A change from clock hours to credit hours or vice versa

A substantial increase in the number of clock hours or credit hours awarded for successful completion of a program or the length of a program

The addition of courses or programs that represent a significant departure either in content or method of delivery from those that were offered when the Commission most recently evaluated the institution

C. Changes requiring a report from a Commission staff member to the Commission following an on-site visit within six months

A change in ownership, control, and/or legal status of the institution

Any action seeking to merge or to transfer the accreditation status of two or more institutions

Any financial circumstances that jeopardize the stability of the institution: bankruptcy, a declaration of financial exigency due to budget cuts, or other reasons

An announcement of the closure of an institution

D. Institutional circumstances that may require action after a review by the Commission

The existence of highly publicized, divisive controversies between, among or within the governing board, the administration, the faculty, and/or the students

Significant unplanned reductions in program offerings, faculty and/or enrollments during the past two years

Notification of sanctions applied by governmental agencies and/or by other institutional or professional accrediting groups that threaten the viability of the institution

Serious legal, financial, or ethical investigations

Natural disasters that jeopardize the institution's physical infrastructure that make it "impossible" for the institution to continue to operate

Serious misrepresentation to students and/or the public regarding such matters as the financial condition of the institution; the authority the institution has to offer certificates or diplomas; the education and experience of the faculty; and similar concerns

**NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES
COMMISSION ON TECHNICAL AND CAREER INSTITUTIONS**

SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE NOTIFICATION FORM

Name of Institution: _____

Address: _____

Name and Title of Individual
Reporting the Change: _____

Date of Change or Projected Change: _____

Please complete and return this form by checking the type of substantive change that your institution is reporting to the Commission.

PART I

GROUP A

- _____ Contracting with non-regionally accredited institutions/organizations that provide more than 50% of the instruction in a credit-bearing program
- _____ The co-offering of programs with other institutions
- _____ The merger of a regionally accredited institution with another regionally accredited institution
- _____ The merger of a regionally accredited institution with a non-regionally accredited institution
- _____ The relocation of a campus
- _____ Any change in the established mission or objectives of the institution
- _____ The establishment of an additional location geographically apart from the main campus at which the institution offers at least 50 percent of an educational program.

Group B

- _____ The initiation of a new program that requires either the infusion of substantial new funding or the substantial reallocation of existing financial resources. The concern here is the degree to which an institution may harm existing programs/majors by removing financial and other resources from existing programs/majors to fund the costly new program/major
- _____ The establishment of a new academic program that changes the mission of the institution (an institution with a career orientation adding a program that is primarily transfer in nature, for example)
- _____ The opening of a new instructional site
- _____ A change from clock hours to credit hours or vice versa
- _____ A substantial increase in the number of clock hours or credit hours awarded for successful completion of a program or the length of a program

Substantive Change Notification Form

_____ The addition of courses or programs that represent a significant departure either in content or method of delivery from those that were offered when the Commission most recently evaluated the institution

Group C

_____ A change in ownership, control, and/or legal status of the institution

_____ Any action seeking to merge or to transfer the accreditation status of two or more institutions

_____ Any financial circumstances that jeopardize the stability of the institution: bankruptcy, a declaration of financial exigency due to budget cuts, or other reasons

_____ An announcement of the closure of an institution

Group D

_____ The existence of highly publicized, divisive controversies between, among or within the governing board, the administration, the faculty, and/or the students

_____ Significant unplanned reductions in program offerings, faculty, and/or enrollments during the past two years

_____ Notification of sanctions applied by governmental agencies and/or by other institutional or professional accrediting groups that threaten the viability of the institution

_____ Serious legal, financial or ethical investigations

_____ Natural disasters that jeopardize the institution's physical infrastructure that make it "impossible" for the institution to continue to operate

_____ Serious misrepresentation to students and/or the public regarding such matters as the financial condition of the institution; the authority the institution has to offer certificates or diplomas; the education and experience of the faculty; and similar concerns

PART II

Please describe in detail the change itself and your assessment of the impact on the institution. Please include financial data, planning documents, enrollment data, and other pertinent information. Feel free to use additional sheets as needed.

Signature

Date

Return to

Paul Bento, Director
NEASC Commission on Technical and Career Institutions
209 Burlington Road, Suite 201
Bedford, MA 01730-1433
e-mail: pbento@neasc.org Tel # 781-271-0022, ext. 5416 - Fax # 781-271-0950

SAMPLE NOTIFICATION LETTER

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FAILURE TO REPORT A SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE

NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES, INC.

209 Burlington Road, Suite 201, Bedford, MA 01730-1433

Tel. (781) 271-0022, ext. 5416 - Fax (781) 271-0950

COMMISSION ON TECHNICAL AND CAREER INSTITUTIONS

Paul Bento
Director of the Commission
781-541-5416
pbento@neasc.org

Dear _____

While we are gratified by the Institution's success with its new program, we are concerned that the program at the new location started without Commission approval. We remind you of our policy on Substantive Change which specifies that such changes are to be submitted to the Commission at least six months before the planned implementation. Should the Institution contemplate any additional off-campus locations or other substantive changes, you are encouraged to work closely with the Commission's staff. Failure to do so may result in an adverse action by the Commission.

Sincerely,

Paul Bento

TEACH-OUT AGREEMENTS

Federal regulations implementing the 1992 Higher Education Act Amendments require that accrediting agencies approve any teach-out agreements between institutions prior to their implementation in the event that an accredited institution closes or terminates a program. A “teach-out agreement” is defined by federal regulations as “a written agreement between accredited institutions that provides for the equitable treatment of students if one of those institutions stops offering an educational program before all students enrolled in that program complete the program.” This policy has been developed to implement that requirement for those institutions which determine to enter into such agreements.

If an institution deciding to close or to discontinue a program before enrolled students have completed their studies enters into a teach-out agreement with another institution, it must submit the agreement to the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions for approval prior to its implementation. An agreement will be approved if it meets the following criteria:

1. It is consistent with Commission standards.
2. It provides for the equitable treatment of students by ensuring that students are provided, without additional charge, all of the instruction promised by the closed institution prior to its closure but not provided to the students because of the closure, and the teach-out institution is geographically proximate to the closed institution and can demonstrate compatibility of its program structure and scheduling to that of the closed institution.

The Commission is committed to work with the U. S. Department of Education and the appropriate state agency, to the extent feasible, to insure that students are given reasonable opportunities to complete their education without additional charge.

POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR

THIRD-PARTY COMMENTS DURING COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATIONS

The Commission on Technical and Career Institutions is concerned with institutional integrity and with performance consistent with its standards and policies. For that reason, in compliance with federal regulations, the Commission publishes the year when an institution is undergoing a comprehensive evaluation for accreditation or candidacy and provides an opportunity for third-party comments in writing concerning the institution's qualifications for accreditation or candidacy.

The Commission on Technical and Career Institutions has adopted the following procedures to provide the means by which such announcements are made and to describe the process by which any resulting comments received are taken into consideration during each institution's comprehensive review.

PROCEDURES FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF THIRD-PARTY COMMENTS

1. With the purpose of providing an opportunity for third-party comments, institutions undergoing a comprehensive evaluation for continued accreditation are asked to publicize the Commission's review at least one month before the visit will take place. Appropriate publications for this announcement are those whose readership includes substantial numbers of persons who are knowledgeable of and interested in the institution, such as alumni magazines, campus newspapers, and local newspapers.

The Commission does not prescribe specific language for the public notification of an impending visit. However, at a minimum, the announcement should include the following elements:

- The purpose of the forthcoming visit
- The dates of the visit
- The institution's current accreditation status with the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions
- The year of the most recent comprehensive evaluation and an invitation to send comments directly to the Commission, which includes the Commission's address and the date by which comments must be received (no later than the final date of the visit)

A sample notice is provided with these procedures.

2. The names of institutions undergoing comprehensive reviews for accreditation or candidacy are listed on the NEASC home page of the World Wide Web as follows:

OPPORTUNITY FOR THIRD-PARTY COMMENTS

The federal regulations require that accrediting agencies provide for public comments on the qualifications of those institutions under consideration for initial accreditation or reaffirmation.

Interested parties are invited to submit written comments on those institutions, listed below, which will be considered by the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions at its (date) meeting. The list is accurate as of the date of this publication. Under special circumstances, an institution may be removed from the list and considered by the Commission at a later date. To receive the most up-to-date information about any institution, you may contact the Commission office.

Comments must address substantive matters related to the quality of the institution or its academic programs. The Commission on Technical and Career Institutions cannot settle disputes between individuals and institutions, whether those involve students, faculty, administration, or members of other groups.

All comments are due in the Commission office by (date). In keeping with Commission policy, the written comments, along with the name(s) of the person(s) submitting those comments, will be forwarded to the institution, which will be given the opportunity to reply prior to the Commission meeting.

A copy of the relevant Commission policy may be obtained from the Commission office.

List of Institutions

3. A comment received by the Commission is acknowledged in writing upon receipt.
4. The comment is reviewed by the Director of the Commission who takes one of the following actions:
 - If the comment is found not to be within the scope of Commission policy, as articulated in the public announcement, the author of the comment will be so informed and the matter closed.
 - If the comment appears to be within the scope of Commission policy, a copy of the comment, including the identity of its author, will be forwarded to the institution's chief executive officer, who will be asked to provide a response. The author of the comment will be notified of the action at that time.
5. The institution is asked to provide a response to any comments forwarded by the Director of the Commission within one month of their receipt.

6. The comments and any institutional response will be referred to the Commission for consideration as a part of its review of the comprehensive evaluation of the institution.
7. The Commission will make every effort to adhere to the above time line. In cases where circumstances beyond its control necessitate its modification, the involved parties will be so informed.

The following statement is offered as sample language that could be used in the announcement of a forthcoming evaluation:

SAMPLE ANNOUNCEMENT

(Name of Institution) will undergo a comprehensive evaluation visit (date of visit), by a visiting committee representing the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges.

The Commission on Technical and Career Institutions is one of eight accrediting commissions in the United States that provide institutional accreditation on a regional basis. Accreditation is voluntary and applies to the institution as a whole. The Commission, which is recognized by the U. S. Department of Education, accredits institutions in the six-state New England region and Europe.

(Name of Institution) has been accredited by the Commission since (year of initial accreditation) and was last reviewed in (date of last comprehensive evaluation). Its accreditation by the New England Association encompasses the entire institution.

For the past year and a half, (name of institution) has been engaged in the process of self-study, addressing the Commission's Standards of Membership. A committee will visit the institution to gather evidence that the self-study is thorough and accurate. The visiting committee will recommend to the Commission a continuing status for the institution; following a review process, the Commission itself will take the final action.

The public is invited to submit comments regarding the institution to the following address: **Public Comment on (name of institution)**

**Commission on Technical and Career Institutions
New England Association of Schools and Colleges
209 Burlington Road, Suite 201
Bedford, MA 01730-1433
e-mail: pbento@neasc.org**

Comments must address substantive matters related to the quality of the institution. Comments will not be treated as confidential.

Written, signed comments must be received by (last day of evaluation). The Commission cannot guarantee that comments received after that date will be considered. Comments

should include the name, address, and telephone number of the person providing the comments.

The Commission cannot settle disputes between individuals and institutions, whether those involve faculty, students, administrators, or members of other groups. Individuals considering submitting complaints against an affiliated institution should request the separate policy and procedures, **Complaints Against Affiliated Institutions**, from the Commission office.

TRANSFER AND AWARD OF ACADEMIC CREDIT

This statement is directed to higher education institutions and others concerned with the transfer of academic credit among institutions and award of academic credit for extra-institutional learning. **Basic to this statement is the principle that each institution is responsible for determining its own policies and practices with regard to the transfer and award of credit.** Institutions are encouraged to review their policies and practices periodically to assure that they accomplish the institution's objectives and that they function in a manner that is fair and equitable to students. Any statements, this one or others referred to, should be used as guides, not as substitutes, for institutional policies and practices.

Transfer of credit is a concept that involves transfer between dissimilar institutions and curricula and recognition of extra-institutional learning, as well as transfer between institutions and curricula of similar characteristics. As their personal circumstances and educational objectives change, students seek to have their learning, wherever and however attained, recognized by institutions where they enroll for further study. It is important for reasons of social equity and educational effectiveness, as well as the wise use of resources, for all institutions to develop reasonable and definitive policies and procedures for acceptance of transfer credit. Such policies and procedures should provide maximum consideration for the individual student who has changed institutions or objectives. It is the receiving institution's responsibility to provide reasonable and definitive policies and procedures for determining a student's knowledge in required subject areas. All institutions have a responsibility to furnish transcripts and other documents necessary for a receiving institution to judge the quality and quantity of work. Institutions also have a responsibility to advise the students that the work reflected on the transcript **may** or **may not** be accepted by a receiving institution.

INTER-INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFER OF CREDIT

Transfer of credit from one institution to another involves at least three considerations: the educational quality of the institution from which the student transfers; the comparability of the nature, content, and level of credit earned to that offered by the receiving institution; and the appropriateness and applicability of the credit earned to the programs offered by the receiving institution, in light of the student's educational goals.

ACCREDITED INSTITUTION

Accreditation speaks primarily to the first of these considerations, serving as the basic indicator that an institution meets certain minimum standards. Users of accreditation are urged to give careful attention to the recognition conferred to accrediting bodies recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). CHEA has a formal process of recognition, which requires that any accrediting body so recognized must meet the same standards. Under these standards, CHEA has recognized a number of accrediting bodies, including the following:

- Regional accrediting commissions (which historically accredited the more traditional colleges and universities, but which now accredit proprietary, vocational, technical and single-purpose institutions as well)

- National accrediting bodies that accredit various kinds of specialized institutions
- Certain professional organizations that accredit freestanding professional schools in addition to programs within multipurpose institutions (CHEA annually publishes a list of recognized accrediting bodies, as well as a directory of institutions accredited by these organizations)

Although accrediting agencies vary in the ways they are organized and in their statements of scope and mission, all accrediting bodies that meet CHEA standards for recognition function to assure that the institutions or programs they accredit have met generally accepted minimum standards for accreditation.

Accreditation affords reason for confidence in an institution's or a program's purposes, in the appropriateness of its resources and plans for carrying out these purposes, and in its effectiveness in accomplishing its goals, insofar as these things can be judged. Accreditation speaks to the probability, but does not guarantee that students have met acceptable standards of educational accomplishment.

COMPARABILITY AND APPLICABILITY

Comparability of the nature, content and level of transfer credit and the appropriateness and applicability of the credit earned to programs offered by the receiving institution are as important in the evaluation process as the accreditation status of the institution at which the transfer credit was awarded. Since accreditation does not address these questions, this information must be obtained from catalogs and other materials and from direct contact between knowledgeable and experienced faculty and staff at both the receiving and sending institution. When such considerations as comparability and appropriateness of credit are satisfied, however, the receiving institution should have reasonable confidence that students from accredited institutions are qualified to undertake the receiving institution's educational program.

ADMISSIONS AND DEGREE PURPOSES

At some institutions there may be differences between the acceptance of credit for admission purposes and the applicability of credit for degree purposes. A receiving institution may accept previous work, place a credit value on it, and enter it on the transcript. However, that previous work, because of its nature and not its inherent quality, may be determined to have no applicability to a specific degree to be pursued by the student.

Institutions have a responsibility to make this distinction and its implications clear to students before they decide to enroll. This should be a matter of full disclosure with the best interests of the student in mind. Institutions also should make every reasonable effort to reduce the gap between credits accepted and credits applied toward an educational credential.

NON-ACCREDITED INSTITUTIONS

Institutions of higher education that are not accredited by CHEA recognized accrediting bodies may lack that status for reasons unrelated to questions of quality. Such institutions, however, cannot provide a reliable, third-party assurance that they meet or exceed minimum standards. That being the case, students transferring from such institutions may encounter special problems in gaining acceptance and transferring credits to accredited institutions. Institutions admitting students from non-accredited institutions should take special steps to validate credits previously earned.

FOREIGN INSTITUTIONS

In most cases, foreign institutions are chartered and authorized by their national governments, usually through a ministry of education. Although this provides for a standardization within a country, it does not produce useful information about comparability from one country to another. No other nation has a system comparable to voluntary accreditation by peer review found in the United States. Efforts are made by various groups to develop international compacts for the acceptance of educational credentials. At the operational level, the Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE) often can assist institutions by distributing general guidelines on admission and placement of foreign students. Equivalency or placement recommendations are to be evaluated in terms of the programs and policies of the individual receiving institution.

VALIDATION OF EXTRA-INSTITUTIONAL AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING FOR TRANSFER PURPOSES

Transfer of credit policies should encompass educational accomplishment attained in extra-institutional settings as well as at accredited postsecondary institutions. In deciding on the award of credit for extra-institutional learning, institutions will find the services of the American Council on Education's Office of Educational Credit helpful. One of the Office's functions is to operate and foster programs to determine credit equivalencies for various modes of extra-institutional learning. The Office maintains evaluation programs for formally structured courses offered by the military and civilian non-collegiate sponsors such as business, corporations, government agencies, and labor unions. Evaluation services are also available for examination programs, for occupations with validated job proficiency evaluation systems, and for correspondence courses offered by schools accredited by the Distance Education and Training Council. The results are published in a Guide Series. Another resource is the General Education Development (GED) Testing Program, which provides a means for assessing high school equivalency.

For learning that has not been validated through the ACE formal credit recommendation process or through credit-by-examination programs, institutions are urged to explore the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) procedures and processes. Pertinent CAEL publications designed for this purpose are also listed.

USES OF THIS STATEMENT

Institutions are encouraged to use this statement as a basis for discussions in developing or reviewing institutional policies with regard to transfer. If the statement reflects an institution's policies, that institution might want to use this publication to inform faculty, staff and students.

UNOFFICIAL OBSERVERS OF VISITING COMMITTEES

From time to time the Commission permits individuals to observe evaluation visits. Such participation is solely for the professional development of the individual and for the benefit to be gained by the observer's institution. The observer's objective is to understand the evaluation process rather than to appraise a particular institution, and his or her role is therefore different from that of the visiting committee appointed by the Commission.

To avoid confusion or misunderstanding about the role and responsibilities of an observer, the Commission has established the following procedures:

- The institution and visiting committee chair are always consulted in advance before an observer is permitted to join the visiting committee.
- Before the visit, the institution provides the observer with the same self-study materials as those sent to the visiting committee, and the committee chair makes available necessary information about the schedule and other arrangements for the visit. The Commission provides a copy of its policies and procedures to the observer.
- The observer may attend the visiting committee orientation session and other committee meetings and may accompany committee members on their interviews with various institutional groups. It is understood, however, that the institution, committee chair, or any committee member may decline to have the observer present at specific interviews or meetings where the presence of an observer could adversely affect the productivity of the meeting. At appropriate times, the observer may ask questions of the committee members about the evaluation process, but may not conduct interviews with institutional representatives or offer observations or judgments to the institution.
- The observer notifies the committee chair of his or her schedule during the visit.
- The institution or committee chair may at any time withdraw the privilege of the observer to participate.
- The observer does not take part in committee discussions related to the evaluation of the institution and does not vote on accreditation recommendations and does not participate in the preparation of the visiting committee's report.
- Institutional information disclosed to or in the presence of the observer is held in the strictest confidence.
- The institution is not responsible for any hotel, food, transportation or other expenses of the observer; all such costs are borne directly by the observer.