

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.