



**AdvancED Accreditation Policies and Procedures  
for Postsecondary Schools  
Effective Date 2008-09 School Year**

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**POLICY I: ACCREDITATION**

**1.01 Accreditation.** In order to earn and/or maintain AdvancED postsecondary accreditation, a school must: 1) meet the accreditation standards, policies, and procedures of AdvancED; 2) host an external team review team at least once every five years; 3) engage in continuous improvement; 4) submit all required accreditation reports; and 5) pay required accreditation fees. The revision and adoption of the accreditation policies and procedures of AdvancED shall be the responsibility of the AdvancED Postsecondary Recognition Council with review and approval from the AdvancED Board of Trustees.

**POLICY II: TERM AND REQUIREMENTS OF ACCREDITATION**

**2.01 Term.** A school is accredited for a five year term, as long as the school continues to satisfy the conditions for accreditation:

- a. The school adheres to the AdvancED accreditation standards and policies, engages in continuous improvement, and documents results.
- b. The school annually completes required reports.
- c. The school hosts an external team review at least once every five years.
- d. The school pays accreditation fees as required.

**2.02 Additional Requirements.** In addition to satisfying the conditions outlined in 2.01, a school must adhere to the following:

- a. **Compliance with State Requirements.** If the school is so required, it must be approved or accredited by the legally constituted or recognized accrediting/accountability agency in the state. If a school loses its approval or accreditation by the legally constituted or recognized accrediting/accountability agency within the state, it becomes subject to the accredited-warned or dropped procedures outlined in this document.
- b. **Non-discriminatory Admission of Students.** Schools accredited by AdvancED shall not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, sex, national or ethnic origin, age, or disabilities or act unlawfully in the administration of their educational policies, scholarship, admission, and loan programs.
- c. **Records Retention.** Schools/districts are required to maintain and implement a records retention system that meets state and federal requirements for all operating, financial, personnel, and student records. The records retention system applies to paper and electronic records, includes appropriate back-up systems, and details consistent processes for records destruction. Schools/districts must identify processes for the ongoing access and maintenance of all relevant records in the event of school/district closure.

- d. **Institutional Integrity.** A school is required to represent itself accurately in all aspects of the accreditation process. If a school misrepresents itself, including accreditation status, to the public; has any condition that may be detrimental to the clientele of the school; or falsely reports its compliance with the policies and standards for accreditation; the school's accreditation can be revoked. If a school's accreditation is recommended to be revoked, the school shall be afforded due process in consideration of such action.
- e. **Substantive Change.** A school must report to AdvancED within sixty (60) days of occurrence any substantive change in the school, which changes the scope and/or has an impact on the school's ability to meet the AdvancED standards and policies. The report of a substantive change must describe the change itself as well as detail the impact of the change on the quality of education in the school. Substantive change areas include, but are not limited to, the following:
- Consolidation or reorganization of the school
  - Mission and purpose of the institution including any request to change the applicable category of accreditation standards
  - Governance structure of the school including changing to a charter school, subject to a state takeover, or a change in ownership
  - Grade levels served by the school
  - Staffing, including administrative and other non-teaching professional personnel
  - Available facilities, including upkeep and maintenance
  - Level of funding
  - School day or school year
  - Establishment of an additional location geographically apart from the main campus
  - Student population that causes program or staffing modification(s)
  - Available programs, including fine arts, practical arts and student activities
  - Change to Degree-Granting Status
- f. **Credits or Grade Placement.** An AdvancED accredited school shall accept and classify transfer credits earned or grade placement from schools that are accredited by a recognized national, regional/trans-regional,<sup>1</sup> or state accrediting agency without further validation based on the school's policies and procedures governing such offerings. The school's policies and procedures should be designed to ensure proper academic placement of the student.

A school may accept credits or grade placement from non-accredited schools when validated by one or more of the following procedures: a review of the student's academic record, an analysis of a sending school's curriculum, a review of a portfolio of student work, or through an assessment of scholastic performance. The receiving school must

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<sup>1</sup> Recognized regional/trans-regional accrediting agencies include the Commission on International and Trans-regional Accreditation (CITA), Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, New England Association of Schools and Colleges, North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, Northwest Association of Accredited Schools, and the Western Association of Schools and Colleges.

maintain policy and procedures to govern the acceptance of credit or grade placement from non-accredited sources.

A school should provide prompt and accurate transcript services for students entering or leaving the school in accordance with local policy.

**2.03 Organization Responsibilities.** In carrying out the accreditation policies and procedures, AdvancED is responsible for ensuring school adherence to the standards and policies, conducting an external team review to every school at least once every five years, reviewing all school reports, granting accreditation status for all schools/districts, responding to complaints by and about schools/districts, and maintaining accurate, complete, and timely records.

- a. **Code of Ethics.** In performing the responsibilities outlined above, all agents of AdvancED shall adhere to the AdvancED Code of Ethics.
- b. **Gifts.** Members of external team reviews and other agents of AdvancED who provide services to schools/districts are prohibited from accepting gifts, other than school logo items of minimal value, from schools/districts.
- c. **Investigations.** In performing its duties, AdvancED may investigate an accredited school on any matter related to possible violations of AdvancED standards and policies. Investigations will only be initiated when supported by substantial evidence and when they involve matters that could seriously hinder or disrupt the educational effectiveness of the institution. All investigations shall be conducted with proper attention to due process, and procedures shall be followed to protect the rights of all parties. The results of an investigation shall be reported to the AdvancED Postsecondary Recognition Council for appropriate action.
- d. **Maintenance of and Public Access to School/District Records.** AdvancED maintains a record retention system which includes procedures for maintenance and access to school/district records. AdvancED maintains permanent records of school/district accreditation status histories. In addition, AdvancED retains all school/district accreditation reports and documentation for a 10-year period, documenting two full terms of accreditation. AdvancED makes available for public access the school's/district's most recent Quality Assurance Review report, the school's/district's current accreditation status and historical accreditation statuses, the school's/district's term of accreditation, and the school's/district's date of initial accreditation.

### POLICY III: ACCREDITED AND NON-ACCREDITED STATUSES

**3.01 Accredited Status.** A member school shall be classified in one of the following categories:

#### **Accredited Statuses**

- a. **Accredited.** A school shall be classified as accredited when it meets the requirements of policies, the standards, or when, in the opinion of the AdvancED Board of Trustees, it fails to meet one or more of the standards but the resulting deficiency does not detract to a serious degree from the quality of the school's educational program. The cause for noncompliance must be corrected within 12 months for programs lasting less than one year, 18 months for programs lasting at least one year but less than two years, or two years if the program is at least two years in length. The AdvancED Board of Trustees may extend the time period only for good cause and documentation of progress toward coming into compliance. If sufficient progress is not noted within the noted time period, the AdvancED Board of Trustees shall move the school to accredited-warned status or drop the school from membership.
- b. **Accredited – On Advisement.** A school shall be classified as accredited – on advisement when, in the opinion of the AdvancED Board of Trustees, it meets the requirements of policies, the standards, but indicators suggest that the school needs to take immediate action to prevent falling into noncompliance. A school receiving an accredited – on advisement status will be required to develop and submit a plan to improve the area of concern. The submitted plan will be reviewed by the Postsecondary Recognition Council and the AdvancED Board of Trustees, with action by the Board of Trustees. The plan shall be submitted within 60 days following the receipt of the notice of concern. Progress will be monitored according to the timelines provided in the approved plan.

#### **Sanctions**

- c. **Accredited-Warned.** A school shall be classified as accredited-warned when, in the judgment of the Board of Trustees it fails to meet critical policies or standards. The school shall receive written notification of the decision and details on the justification for such action.

If the cause for warning is not corrected within 12 months for programs lasting less than one year, 18 months for programs lasting at least one year but less than two years, or two years in the program is at least two years in length, the school will be dropped from membership in the Association, except under extraordinary circumstances when a second warning may be given. The Board of Trustees may give a second warning only after receipt of written documentation from the school, including endorsement by the superintendent, attesting to the fact that it is the intent of the school to remove the cause for warning prior to the next meeting. A second warning may be given only by means of a three-fourths majority vote of members of the Board of Trustees present at the meeting.

When all schools within the district are warned for a violation beyond the control of the individual school, such as the deterioration of board/staff relationships, the warning shall not be additive as far as the individual school is concerned. However, only under the most extenuating circumstances will a second warning be granted for a district-wide violation.

**3.02 Non-accredited Status.** There are three non-accredited statuses that may be conferred on a school.

- a. **Applicant.** The school has submitted formal application for accreditation but has not yet hosted the readiness visit. A school may also be in the applicant category if it has submitted formal application, hosted a readiness visit, and been found by the readiness team and postsecondary office to not have the capacity to meet the standards required to earn accreditation. A school may remain an applicant for no more than two years.

An applicant school may not project future or expected accreditation status. Such a school is not accredited until such status is officially granted. In any public announcements regarding the school's pursuit of accreditation, the applicant school must avoid any implication that applicant status equates with accreditation or automatically leads to accreditation.

- b. **Candidate.** The school has submitted formal application and has hosted a candidacy visit. The candidacy team and AdvancED Postsecondary Office find that the school has the capacity to meet the standards required to earn accreditation, but the school has not yet hosted an external team review. A school may remain in candidacy for no more than two years. During candidacy, the school pays full accreditation fees.

A candidate school may not project future or expected accreditation status. Such a school is not accredited until such status is officially granted. In any public announcements regarding the school's pursuit of accreditation, the candidate school must avoid any implication that candidacy status equates with accreditation or automatically leads to accreditation.

- c. **Dropped.** The school finds it is no longer able to meet the AdvancED standards and/or accreditation policies, notifies the AdvancED Postsecondary Office that it wishes to have its accredited status removed, fails to pay accreditation fees, or refuses to adhere to the standards and policies in successive years.

The dropped status is effective on the date of official action to drop the school. A school that has been dropped from accreditation must remove all references to its accredited status from school diplomas, certificates, websites, buildings, literature, and the like.

A dropped school may seek reinstatement within one year of receiving the dropped status. After one year, the dropped school must reapply and follow the same procedures as new schools/districts.

- 3.03 Ongoing Monitoring.** The accredited/non-accredited status of a school is regularly monitored by AdvancED and may be changed based on new or corrected information provided by the school, external team review reports, reports from special visits, complaints submitted, or other sources.

#### **POLICY IV: PROCEDURES FOR INITIAL ACCREDITATION**

- 4.01 Overview.** Schools seeking initial accreditation must demonstrate that they meet the AdvancED standards and policies, have the capacity to support school improvement, and are committed to growth in student learning and organizational effectiveness.

- 4.02 General Guidelines.** Following are general guidelines for all schools seeking initial accreditation:

- a. A school must offer non-degree granting postsecondary educational programs to students.
- b. A school must be in compliance with all United States Department of Education guidelines related to accreditation.
- c. A school must be in operation for at least two years with demonstrated financial stability before it may be accredited.
- d. A school must certify that it possesses the appropriate licenses to operate if licensing is required by local or state statutes.
- e. A school must demonstrate administrative and financial resources to support the educational opportunities offered to students.
- f. A school must host a readiness visit within three months after applying.
- g. A school must host an external team review visit within two years after becoming a candidate.
- h. A school that does not host the external team review visit within the prescribed time period must re-apply.

- 4.03 Application Process.** The school must complete and submit all required application materials, including application dues/fees.

The new school application fee applies to any new school that is making application as a single school. Schools that apply as part of a group of schools at the same time pay one application fee for the full group.

- 4.04 Candidacy Status.** Upon receipt and review of completed application materials and the candidacy assessment, the AdvancED Postsecondary Office coordinates a candidacy visit to the school. The purpose of the visit is to:

- a. Determine if the school has the capacity to meet the AdvancED standards.

- b. Determine if the school has the capacity to support continuous school improvement.
- c. Make a determination if the school should become a candidate for accreditation or remain as an applicant.

Upon achievement of candidate status, the school prepares for the external team review visit to be held within two years.

**4.05 External Team Review and Accreditation Recommendation.** Each school shall conduct a comprehensive self-study in preparation for each accreditation visit. The self-study shall include the effectiveness and quality of each of the programs offered by the school, the ways the school is addressing each criterion, achievement, follow-up studies of students including employment statistics, acceptance at degree granting institutions and professional studies, strengths and weakness identified by the self study and the steps taken to address the weaknesses. Each self-study will address both the high school and adult population within the institution. Prior to the accreditation visit Commission staff members will review the self-study to determine completeness.

The candidate school hosts an external team review within two years of receiving candidacy status. The external team makes an accreditation recommendation that is reviewed, along with other documentation, at the AdvancED Postsecondary Office and by the AdvancED Postsecondary Recognition Council. An accreditation recommendation is made by the Postsecondary Recognition Council and is forwarded to the AdvancED Board of Trustees for review and action..

**4.06 Earning Accredited Status.** Upon achieving accredited status, the school engages in the tasks required of all schools to maintain their accredited status.

**4.07 Remaining in Candidacy Status.** If accreditation is not conferred on the school, the school remains as a candidate for accreditation. To achieve accreditation, the school must meet the requirements specified in the QAR report within one year. It must submit documentation to the AdvancED Postsecondary Office which will coordinate an external team review team. The team will make a recommendation for review and approval by the appropriate governing board. If the school fails to meet the requirements specified in the QAR report, its candidacy status will be removed.

#### **POLICY V: ANNUAL REPORTING BY THE SCHOOL**

**5.01 Adherence to Standards.** A member school must satisfy conditions for continuing membership through continued compliance with the *AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools* and an orderly and sustained plan for growth and development of its educational program. These conditions will be reflected through a system of established annual reporting.

**5.02 Submission of Annual Report.** A school desiring to continue membership shall submit an annual report and such supplementary information and reports as the Postsecondary Recognition Council finds necessary in order to make accreditation decisions.

**5.03 Review of Annual Report.** Each year the AdvancED Office shall distribute the annual report forms with supplementary instructions and suggestions, check the receipt of reports, and make an initial review of the reports in preparation for review by the Postsecondary Recognition Council and AdvancED Board of Trustees, with necessary action taken by the Board. The Council shall examine the annual reports and other member school data in its annual review of the status of member schools.

The Postsecondary Recognition Council and Board of Trustees will also review the annual reports of a sample of schools that have no reported violations on an annual basis.

**5.04 Previously Reported Violations.** Each member school in its annual report to the Agency is required to list all violations of standards cited the previous year and to indicate action that has been taken to correct the deficiencies and provides substantive evidence of the actions taken.

**5.05 Review of Financial Stability.** All income and expenditures are safeguarded through proper budgetary procedures and are audited annually, according to GAAP by an outside agency, or as required by law. The independent audit is submitted to AdvancED on an annual basis.

**a. Public Institutions**

Sources of funds and revenue are identified to show evidence of fiscal stability as reported on the independent audit. The audit should indicate that the school operates within their annual budget.

**b. Non-Public Institutions**

The following conditions exist to indicate financial stability:

- 1.Total assets are equal to or exceeds total liabilities.
- 2.Positive equity as illustrated on the balance sheet.
- 3.Positive net income as illustrated on the income statement.

Separate income statements must be included for each branch campus.

**POLICY VI: DETERMINATION OF ACCEPTABLE RATES FOR PROGRAM COMPLETION, PROGRAM PLACEMENT, AND LICENSURE EXAMINATION SUCCESS**

**6.01 Overview.** The School's program completion rate, licensing pass rate, and job placement rate for program completers meet the established AdvancED acceptable rates. The acceptable rate in each area shall be reviewed and revised annually to reflect the percentage rate equal to one standard deviation below the average rate calculated from the data for the most recent reporting year. Procedure 3 illustrates rates for the upcoming school year. Rates for each reported statistic and acceptable rates for compliance are defined as follows:

## 6.02 Monitoring

- a. Program Completion Rates shall be calculated annually based on the percent of students that enrolled in programs and completed the program with 150% of the time designated for program completion. Example: A student that enrolls in a program designated for completion in 24 months is considered a program completer if he/she completes the program within 36 months.
- b. Program licensing pass rates shall be calculated annually based on the percent of student that were program completers (as defined in 5.65 part a) and have earned or received a license in the program area completed. Example: A student that completes a program that offers a licensing process fails the exam twice but passes and earns the license on the third attempt 23 months after completing the program is counted as having passed licensure. Only students completing programs that offer licensing processes or exams shall be counted in the Program licensing pass rate.
- c. Program completer placement rates shall be calculated annually based on the percentage of students that completed a program and have been employed within 24 months of completion in their program area. Example: A student that completes a program in Nurses Aide passes the licensure exam, and works as a clerk in a pharmacy for two years following completion is **not** counted in the program completer placement rate. Further education and military placement should be considered positive placements with no detriment to calculating placement rates.
- d. Rates for completion, placement, and licensure rates that are five (5) or less percentage points above the required rate will receive a status of “Accredited – On Advisement”. Example: If the required program completion rate is 60% of enrolled students complete their program within 150% of the time designated for completing the program. If a school submits a rate of 60-65% for the program completion rate, the school be receive a notice indicating that the Postsecondary Recognition Council will take action regarding a recommended status of “Accredited – On Advisement”. A school receiving this notice will be required to develop and submit a plan to increase the rate of completion, placement, or licensure. The plan shall be submitted within 60 days following the receipt of the notice.

## 6.03 Sanctions. Sanctions for schools with unacceptable completion, placement, or licensure rates shall be as follows:

1. A school shall be allowed to submit a statement of explanation concerning the unacceptable rates and seek an extension in meeting the standards. The Board of Trustees may consider unusual or mitigating circumstances and allow a school a defined length of time, not to exceed the period equal to the longest program at the school, to adjust to the circumstances cited in the statement. The Board of Trustees may establish an acceptable rate that is specific to the school and not dependent on the rate annually established for a period equal to the longest program at the school. Such an extension may not be granted to a school in any category (completion, placement, or licensure) more than once in a consecutive five year period of time. Examples of unusual circumstances for consideration

by the Board of Trustees may include closure of a major employer that previously placed large numbers of the school's graduates, regional or national changes in economic conditions that clearly and directly impacted employment opportunities for a program(s), or a major change in opportunities of students to continue training at a higher level.

2. A school failing to meet the required rates shall be required to develop and submit a plan to increase the rate of completion, placement, or licensure to the acceptable level. The plan shall be submitted within 60 days following notification of an unacceptable rate. A recommendation for Accredited-Warning Status for the school shall be made to the Board of Trustees.
3. If the school does not attain the acceptable rate within one year, or within the period defined by the longest program offered at the school if said program is shorter than one year, in accordance with Policy 6.03 [Sanctions], the school shall be dropped from membership in compliance with the *Accreditation Policies for Schools Approved for Postsecondary Accreditation*.

## **POLICY VII: SCHOOL STRUCTURE**

- 7.01 School Consolidation or Reorganization.** With the approval of the AdvancED Postsecondary Recognition Council, a consolidated school may claim continuing membership provided that at least one of the schools involved in the consolidation was a member at the time of the consolidation. There must be no break in membership.
- a. A new school or schools formed by reorganization of a member school may claim membership with the concurrence of the AdvancED Postsecondary Recognition Council. The new school or schools shall be expected to meet all membership requirements as fully as would any other member school. The Postsecondary Recognition Council shall determine whether the reorganized school must undergo a full accreditation visit.
- 7.02 Branch Campuses.** Any school planning to develop a branch campus shall notify the AdvancED within 30 days of its decision to do so. It shall submit a business plan which contains a description of the programs to be offered at the branch; projected revenues, expenditures and cash flow; and operation, management and physical resources. Candidacy status or accreditation status shall be extended to branches only after a review of the business plan and a determination that the branch has sufficient educational, financial, operational, management, and physical resources to meet the *AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools*.
- 7.03 Change of Ownership.** Any school planning to change ownership shall notify AdvancED within 30 days of its decision to do so. It shall submit a plan that contains any changes in programs; projected revenues, expenditures and cash flow; and changes in operation, management and physical resources. Within six months of a change in ownership a team shall visit the school to determine the effect on the school.

**7.04 Additional Locations.** Any school planning to offer more than 50% of the coursework for one of its approved programs at an additional location shall notify AdvancED within 30 days of its decision to do so. It shall submit a description of the programs to be offered at the additional location; projected revenues, expenditures and cash flow; and operation, management and physical resources. Approval shall be extended to the new location only after a review of the documentation and a determination that the additional location has sufficient educational, financial, operational, management, administrative and physical resources to meet the *AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools*. A special site visit may be recommended by staff for any school opening a new location.

Any school that experiences the addition of two or more additional locations in a calendar year will be subject to an on-site visit to the additional locations to determine if the quality of the education being provided to students has been maintained. Such visits will take place within six months of the addition of the second location within a calendar year.

**7.05 Teach-Out Agreement.** Any school that is closing or discontinuing a program or closing the school must submit to AdvancED for approval, its teach-out agreement with other institutions accredited or preaccredited by a nationally recognized agency. The teach-out agreement must ensure equitable treatment of students; that students are provided, without additional charge, all the instruction promised by the closed institution prior to its closure but not provided to the students because of the closure. The teach-out institution must be in close geographic proximity to the closed school and demonstrate compatibility and quality of its program content, structure and scheduling to that of the closed school. The teach-out institution must have the necessary experience, resources, and support services to serve students from the closing or discontinued program.

#### **POLICY VIII: PUBLIC REFERENCES TO ACCREDITATION STATUS**

**8.01 Overview.** In any public announcements regarding the school's accreditation status, the accredited school: (a) must avoid using the term "fully accredited;" AdvancED does not grant partial accreditation; (b) must avoid any future projection of the term of accreditation; AdvancED procedures require an annual review of accreditation.

**8.02 Public Announcements.** In any public announcements regarding the school's accreditation status, the candidacy status school must avoid any implication that candidacy status equates with accreditation or automatically leads to accreditation.

In any public announcements regarding its accreditation status the school must include the name, address and telephone number AdvancED.

#### **POLICY IX: COMPLIANCE WITH USDOE REGULATIONS**

**9.01 Notification of Accreditation Statuses.** AdvancED shall submit the following to the United States Secretary of Education, appropriate state agencies, and other appropriate accrediting agencies at the same time the school is notified and that notification can take no longer than 30 days. The public will be notified on the AdvancED web page within 24 hours of the decision.

- a. Written notification of final decisions to grant initial or continuing accreditation or candidacy status to a school; final decision to deny, withdraw, suspend, or terminate accreditation or candidacy status; final decision to take adverse action against; final decision to place a school on warned status; a decision by an accredited school or program to withdraw voluntarily from accreditation or candidacy status; or decision by an accredited institution or program to let its accreditation or candidacy lapse. Any notification of adverse action shall be accompanied by documentation, a full explanation of the reasons for such action, and the comments that the school makes regarding the decision. All notifications will be made at the same time the school is notified which must be within 30 days of the final decision.
- b. A list of schools approved for postsecondary education to the Secretary.
- c. A copy of its annual report to the Secretary.
- d. The name of any school accredited by AdvancED that it has reason to believe is failing to meet its Title IV, HEA program responsibilities or is engaged in fraud or abuse and the reason for the concern.
- e. Proposed AdvancED policies, procedures, or standards that might alter its scope of recognition or compliance with USDOE requirements.

**9.02 USDOE Responsibilities of AdvancED.** AdvancED shall comply with the following regulations for schools approved for postsecondary education or training in non-degree, certificate granting institutions and associate degree granting institutions.

- a. To have on record the self-studies, the on-site accreditation team reports, the school's response to on-site reports, any reports of special reviews conducted between regular accreditation visits, and accreditation decisions for each school for the last two accreditation cycles.
- b. AdvancED may conduct an unannounced on-site inspection at an institution that is approved for postsecondary education or training for the purpose of determining whether the school has the personnel, facilities, and resources it claimed to have either during the previous on-site review or in subsequent reports to the agency.
- c. When a school provides incorrect or misleading information regarding its accreditation status, content of accreditation visitation reports, or accreditation decision, the school will be notified that it is required to make a public correction of the information using the same vehicle as used for disseminating the incorrect or misleading information. In a circumstance where the school does not correct the misinformation, the agency will provide a public correction.
- d. If notified by another accrediting agency or state agency that a postsecondary school has lost its approval or accreditation, is the subject of an interim action by a recognized institutional accrediting agency and the action could potentially lead to the suspension, revocation, or termination of accreditation or candidacy; is 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; if notified of a threatened loss of accreditation and the due process procedures required by the action have not been completed, the AdvancED Board of Trustees will review the decision of the other agency and take the information into account in making the accreditation decision on the school. If the AdvancED Board of Trustees grants accreditation or candidacy status to the institution, a thorough and reasonable explanation will be forwarded to the Secretary within 30 days of the action taken by the AdvancED Board of Trustees. The rationale for the decision will be consistent with the standards and policies for schools approved for postsecondary education.

- e. The agency shall establish procedures for sharing accreditation information with other accreditation agencies and state agencies on a regular basis.
- f. The following written materials must be maintained by the AdvancED Postsecondary Office and made available to the public upon request:
  - 1. Each type of accreditation and preaccreditation it grants.
  - 2. The procedures that institutions or programs must follow in applying for accreditation and preaccreditation.
  - 3. The standards and procedures it uses to determine whether to grant, reaffirm, reinstate, restrict, deny, revoke, terminate, or take any other action related to each type of accreditation and pre-accreditation the agency grants.
  - 4. The institutions and programs that the agency currently accredits or pre-accredits and, for each institution and program, the year the agency will next review or reconsider it for accreditation or pre-accreditation.
  - 5. The names, academic and professional qualifications, and relevant employment and organizational affiliations of the members of the agency's policy and decision making bodies and the agency's principal administrative staff.

**9.03 Standards Review and Application.** At least once in every five years AdvancED shall conduct a review of all postsecondary standards to determine clarity, specificity, validity, reliability, consistency for measuring quality of education and training, and relevancy to type of program and training needed by students. The review process shall include a sample of current and past employers, professional associations, state agencies, licensing bodies, representatives of business and industry, and current students. These data shall be used by the Standards Review Committee to revise the standards as appropriate. Drafts of the revisions shall be circulated to members of the same groups for feedback and further refinement. Any new or revised standard shall also be circulated to these groups for comment two months prior to their adoption. Policy and standard changes will be initiated at the time of the next AdvancED Postsecondary Recognition Council and finalized at the following meeting. At no time will the interval between the availability of data from the program review and the finalization of changes be more than 12 months. The AdvancED Board of Trustees shall review and approve the adoption of new postsecondary standards.

**9.04 Public Information.** The agency shall make available to the public information regarding the accreditation status of member schools.

Each school shall publish a public notification of regular accreditation visits and provide a venue for public input concerning its qualifications for candidacy or accredited status. These

third-party comments shall be forwarded to the AdvancED Postsecondary Office and made available to the accreditation team to use in making their accreditation status recommendation and to the Postsecondary Recognition Council in making accreditation decisions.

The agency shall make available the type of accreditation and candidacy granted by the agency; procedures for applying for accreditation and candidacy; the standards and procedures used for determining whether to grant, reaffirm, reinstate, deny, restrict, revoke or take any other action related to each type of accreditation and candidacy; the names, academic and professional qualifications and relevant employment and organizational affiliations of the members of its policy and decision-making bodies as well as its principal administrative staff; the schools currently accredited or in candidacy and the date when the Agency will review or reconsider the accreditation or candidacy of each school.

## **POLICY X: PROCEDURES REGARDING COMPLAINTS BY AND ABOUT ACCREDITED SCHOOLS**

- 10.01 Written Complaints.** Any complaints submitted by and about schools must contain an original signature (except as noted in 11.02 below) and be submitted in writing. All complaints must include the following information before any action will be taken:
- a. The name, address, phone number, and other pertinent contact information of the complainant.
  - b. Citation of the standard or policy violated.
  - c. A description of the circumstances or events and any relevant documentation that support the complaint.
  - d. A statement of relationship with the individual involved, if the complainant is not the aggrieved individual. Complaints concerning individual students will only be investigated or sent to the school if the complaint is made or authorized by a student of majority age or by an individual that has the legal authority and right to represent the student.
  - e. The name, address, and other contact information for the individual at the school that has been contacted by the complainant to resolve the problem or situation.
  - f. Permission for representatives of AdvancED to access any records concerning the complainant if such records are not available to the public.
  - g. A statement of first-hand knowledge of the substance of the complaint, unless the complaint is supported by documents available to the public.

- 10.02 Complaints Regarding Child Abuse, Sexual Harassment, or Discrimination.** Any complaint that identifies potential child abuse, sexual harassment, or discrimination on the part of a student or staff member, shall be forwarded immediately to the appropriate agency authorized to investigate such complaints. Unsigned complaints concerning potential child abuse, sexual harassment, or discrimination will be forwarded to the principal and the superintendent or other similar official in the school's organization. Findings by the appropriate agency may result in action by the AdvancED Postsecondary Recognition Council and AdvancED Board of Trustees.

- 10.03 Individual Grievances.** Isolated and individual grievances between a school and person are not adjudicated. Complaints of that nature, documented and signed by the person initiating the complaint, will be forwarded to the school. The school shall respond to the complaint within 30 days. A copy of the complaint and the school's response to it will be retained by

the AdvancED Accreditation Office. If several individual complaints against a school suggest a particular violation or pattern of violations which might affect the school's ability to meet AdvancED standards or policies, further investigation may be authorized and shall occur within 60 working days of such authorization.

**10.04 Investigation of Complaints.** Complaints that identify potential violations of AdvancED standards or policies will be investigated.

- a. If the investigating body believes that a school's response to a complaint does not address the complaint or if a school fails to address the complaint in a timely manner, the information about the complaint will be shared with the external team review scheduled for the next review of the school or with representatives of an investigation team being sent to the school to conduct a special inquiry.
- b. The findings from an investigation of a complaint may result in changes to a school's accreditation status. The AdvancED governing boards do not have civil authority to impose any order of settlement on a school or its representatives. Complainants seeking a settlement, payment, or compensation should pursue their concern through the channels offered by a State Department of Education or other legal authority in the state.

#### **POLICY XI: RIGHT TO APPEAL**

**11.01 Right to Appeal.** A school has the right to appeal a decision to drop its accreditation status. An accredited school remains accredited until the final disposition of the appeal.

**11.02 Appeal Procedures.** A school wishing to appeal shall do so in accordance with the procedures set forth below:

- a. The school shall file its intent to appeal an accreditation decision within ten (10) days of receipt of the decision. The intent to appeal shall be submitted to the AdvancED Accreditation Office.
- b. The school's written grounds for appeal shall be submitted within thirty (30) days of receipt of the decision. The school's written grounds shall set forth the basis for its appeal. Only evidence previously submitted to AdvancED may be included in the submission. New evidence will not be considered.
- c. The school shall submit to the AdvancED Accreditation Office a bond for costs of the appeal in the amount of ten thousand dollars (\$10,000.00) that accompanies the written grounds for appeal. After the costs of the appeal have been deducted from the amount of the bond, any unused portion of the bond shall be returned to the school/district. If the costs of the appeal exceed the amount of the bond, the school shall pay the additional costs to AdvancED.
- d. A Panel of three impartial educators shall be selected by the AdvancED President/Chief Executive Officer, and confirmed by the Chair AdvancED Board of Trustees. The panel shall be selected from a standing appeals body appointed by the AdvancED Board

of Trustees to serve for staggered three year terms. The standing appeals body shall be comprised of educators who are knowledgeable about accreditation requirements but do not hold any other appointed, paid, or elected position with AdvancED. At least one member of the standing appeals body shall be a public member. If the school/district has good cause to believe that any member of the standing appeals body should not hear the school/district's appeal, it shall notify the President/Chief Executive Officer in writing of the basis for its objection at the time it submits its grounds for appeal. Objections to the composition of the Panel shall be heard and ruled upon by the Chair the AdvancED Board of Trustees in consultation with the President/Chief Executive Officer.

- e. The Appeals Panel will meet within sixty (60) days of receipt of the school's intent to appeal. The school has the option of sending representatives to the hearing, including the school's legal counsel. However, the institution shall not have the right to cross-examine individual agents of AdvancED staff. If counsel represents the institution, AdvancED may request that its legal counsel be present to advise the panel members. The school must provide notice of whom it intends to send to the hearing at the time it submits its grounds for appeal. The school may request that the appeal hearing be transcribed. No audio-taping or video-taping of the appeal is permitted. The panel may visit the institution before or after the hearing to confirm information relevant to the appeal.
- f. All expenses of the appeal, including all expenses of the members of the Appeals Panel, are to be borne fully by the school/district submitting the appeal.
- g. The Appeals Panel can either uphold the decision of the AdvancED Board of Trustees or remand the decision to the appropriate governing board for reconsideration. If the Appeals Panel upholds the decision of the appropriate governing board, the action of that board is final.
- h. If the Appeals Panel remands the decision to the appropriate governing board for further consideration and the board adheres to its original decision, the matter shall be considered final.

## **Procedures for Schools Approved for Postsecondary Education**

### **PROCEDURE 1: PROCEDURE FOR POSTSECONDARY STANDARDS REVIEW**

**In accordance with AdvancED Postsecondary Policy 9.03 regarding the Standards Review and Application process, the following outlined procedure will provide guidance throughout the review process.**

#### **Standards Review and Application**

**10.03 Standards Review and Application.** At least once in every five years AdvancED shall conduct a review of all postsecondary standards to determine clarity, specificity, validity, reliability, consistency for measuring quality of education and training, and relevancy to type of program and training needed by students. The review process shall include a sample of current and past employers, professional associations, state agencies, licensing bodies, representatives of business and industry, and current students. These data shall be used by the Standards Review Committee to revise the standards as appropriate. Drafts of the revisions shall be circulated to members of the same groups for feedback and further refinement. Any new or revised standards shall also be circulated to these groups for comment two months prior to their adoption. Policy and standard changes will be initiated at the time of the next AdvancED Postsecondary Recognition Council and finalized at the following meeting. At no time will the interval between the availability of data from the program review and the finalization of changes be more than 12 months. The AdvancED Board of Trustees shall review and approve the adoption of new postsecondary standards.

#### **Review Process for All Postsecondary Standards (5 year process)**

1. Create matrix comparing AdvancED standards to the standards of several other accrediting agencies that accredit schools (as opposed to program accreditors).
2. Seek input from students, staff, and business concerning:
  - a. Standards are adequate to evaluate the quality of the training
  - b. Relevant to the training needs of the students
3. Seek input from staff and business concerning:
  - a. Standards are adequate to evaluate the quality of the training
  - b. Relevant to the training needs of the students
4. Prepare recommended standard changes based on data gathered through gap analysis, staff, student, and business input.
5. Postsecondary Recognition Council (PRC) reviews results of comparison to other agencies and input from noted groups and recommends new standards or changes in current standards identified in the process.
6. New or revised standards are recommended to the Board of Trustees.
7. Upon Board approval notify constituents of proposed changes.

8. Post proposed changes on the web for public comment.
9. PRC reviews comments and forwards recommendation to the Board of Trustees.
10. Board of Trustees takes final action.
11. Revise Standard Manual.
12. Distribute updated manual.

**Review Process for Individual Standards (Can be initiated at any time throughout a cycle) *This process must begin within 12 months of the requested change.***

1. The Commission receives a comment from any interested constituency (school representative, business representative, public representative) regarding concern with a postsecondary standards.
2. The Commission sends the interested party a Standard Change Request Form (SCRF). The SCRF is Attachment A.
3. The interested party returns the SCRF with a specific request for a standard change.
4. Commission staff reviews the request and completes the Standard Change Form (SCF). The SCF is Attachment B.
5. The SCRF and the SCF are forwarded to the PRC at their next scheduled meeting or conference call for action.
6. The PRC reviews the initial request and the Commission staff recommendation. The following three options are available:
  - a. The request is validated by the staff and by PRC and will move forward for first review by the Board of Trustees.
  - b. The request expressed a valid concern but was rewritten by staff and PRC and will move forward for first review by the Board of Trustees.
  - c. After a thorough review by the staff and PRC, the current criterion was deemed appropriate at this time. The Standards Review Committee will review the requested change and make a final determination.
7. A letter will be send to the standard change initiator indicating the status of the request.
8. If the decision is either 6a or 6b, new or revised standard are recommended to the Board of Trustees.
9. Upon Board approval notify constituents of proposed changes.
10. Post proposed changes on the web for public comment.

11. PRC reviews comments and forwards recommendation to the Board of Trustees.
12. Board of Trustees takes final action.
13. Revise Standard Manual.
14. Distribute updated manual.

## **Attachment A**

## Standard Change Request Form



Date
Name
School/Position
Address/Phone/e-mail
How did you come to identify this standard issue: (i.e. preparing self study; serving on a site visit, etc?)

Standard reference:	
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Why do you think the standard should be changed? (justification)
--

What is/are the change/s you propose? (please be specific)
--

Signed by:
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Please return to:  
AdvancED Office of Postsecondary Education  
Cedar Lakes Conference Center  
HC 88 Box 21  
Ripley, WV 25271  
1-800-525-9517  
[misaacs@ncacasi.org](mailto:misaacs@ncacasi.org)

**Attachment B**

## Standard Change Form

### 1. Change Information

<b>Date of AdvancED Receipt</b>	
<b>Initiator</b>	
<b>School/Position</b>	
<b>Address/Phone/e-mail</b>	
<b>Standard reference:</b>	
<b>Requested change:</b>	

### 2. Staff Review

<b>Reviewed by:</b>		
<b>Reviewer Recommendation:</b>	<b>Change as requested:</b>	
	<b>Change as edited:</b>	
	<b>Add new standard:</b>	
	<b>Delete current standard:</b>	
	<b>No change</b>	
<b>Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<b>Rationale for Comments:</b>		

**3. PRC Review**

<b>Date of PRC Review/Action</b>		
<b>PRC Recommendation to Board of Trustees:</b>	<b>Change as requested</b>	
	<b>Change as edited</b>	
	<b>Add new standard</b>	
	<b>Delete current standard</b>	
	<b>No change – Return to initiator</b>	
<b>PRC Comments:</b>		
<b>Rationale for Comments:</b>		

**4. Standards Review Committee Review**

<b>Date of Standards Review Committee Review/Action</b>		
<b>Standards Review Recommendation to Board of Trustees</b>	<b>Change as requested</b>	
	<b>Change as edited</b>	
	<b>Add new standard</b>	
	<b>Delete current standard</b>	
	<b>No change – Return to initiator</b>	
<b>Standards Review Committee Comments:</b>		
<b>Rationale for Comments:</b>		

**5. BOT First Review**

<b>Date of BOT First Reading</b>		
<b>BOTE Recommendation:</b>	<b>Change as requested</b>	
	<b>Change as edited</b>	
	<b>Add new standard</b>	
	<b>Delete current standard</b>	
	<b>No change – Return to initiator</b>	

<p><b>BOT Comments:</b></p>  <p><b>Rationale for Comments:</b></p>
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**6. Review Cycle**

<b>Date of public comments posting:</b>	
<b>Date of return to PRC with public comments:</b>	
<b>Final PRC Action:</b>	
<b>Date to BOT:</b>	
<b>Final BOT Action:</b>	
<b>Date Standard Updated:</b>	
<b>Date Materials Requested:</b>	

## **PROCEDURE 2: PROCEDURE FOR CHOOSING VISITING TEAM MEMBERS AND EXPECTATIONS OF MEMBERS**

For further clarification to Policies 4.04 and 4.05 in the *AdvancED Accreditation Policies and Procedures for Postsecondary Schools* the following guidelines are being provided.

### **Guidelines for Selecting Qualified Team Members**

1. Each accreditation team shall be responsible for reviewing the degree to which the school meets each criterion. The accreditation team shall also review school publications, student, faculty and staff records, finances, and supporting documentation for the school's self study. The accreditation team will also evaluate the findings of the Department of Education and comment on them in relation to their findings.
2. The accreditation team shall include members with expertise in postsecondary school review, student services, and other areas as required by the program offerings of the school. The team shall include practitioners and academic and administrative personnel.
3. Special evaluations or visits shall be conducted when in the opinion of the Commission systemic changes may result in the school not meeting standards. Information from such visits will be forwarded to the Board of Trustees with recommendations for action.
4. The written accreditation team report shall include at a minimum the degree to which the school meets each criterion; a section which reviews, evaluates, analyzes and draws conclusions regarding student achievement; school strengths and weaknesses; areas in need of improvement; the school improvement plan; and an accreditation recommendation.
5. Prior to serving in the capacity of accrediting team chair, each person will have served as a accreditation team member on at least one accreditation visit, be recommended by the chairperson of the team on which he/she served, and have undergone further comprehensive training on the *AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools*, postsecondary policies, and the duties and responsibilities of the external team chair.
6. Prior to serving as an accreditation team member each person will undergo comprehensive training on the policies and standards for schools approved for postsecondary education and the duties and responsibilities of the position.
7. In consideration of team selection for candidacy and site evaluation visits, the potential team members must meet one of the following qualifications to be considered as a subject area representative.
  - a. Education pertinent to the subject area under consideration
  - b. Significant experience pertinent to subject area under consideration
  - c. Appropriate credentials for licensure and/or certification pertinent to subject area under consideration

School administrators shall use these qualifications when selecting staff members to attend the AdvancED training for postsecondary schools.

### **PROCEDURE 3: Institutional Financial Stability**

AdvancED requires that all accredited and candidate postsecondary institutions submit an audit on an annual basis that has been prepared by an outside agency and in accordance with GAAP procedures. In accordance with Policy 5.05 of the *AdvancED Accreditation Policies and Procedures for Postsecondary Schools*, the following procedure will be used when reviewing audits received.

#### Part A: Public Institutions

- A1. Commission staff will review, on an annual basis, the independent audit submitted by each candidate and accredited postsecondary institution. The following documents will be reviewed as part of the submitted audit.
1. auditor's report
  2. balance sheet
  3. income statement
  4. appropriate footnotes to the financial statements
- A2. The staff will verify that the school operates within their annual budget.

#### Part B: Non-Public Institutions

- B1. Commission staff will review, on an annual basis, the independent audit submitted by each candidate and accredited postsecondary institution. The following documents will be reviewed as part of the submitted audit.
1. auditor's report
  2. balance sheet
  3. income statement
  4. statement of cash flow
  5. appropriate footnotes to the financial statements
- B2. Commission staff will review the submitted audit to test the three conditions below.
4. Total assets is equal to or exceeds total liabilities.
  5. Positive equity as illustrated on the balance sheet.
  6. Positive net income as illustrated on the income statement.
- B3. The three conditions listed in B2 will be applied to each branch campus.

#### **PROCEDURE 4: Procedure for Determining Yearly Student Achievement Rates**

In accordance with Policy VII of the *AdvancED Accreditation Policies and Procedures for Postsecondary Schools*, student achievement rates will be established on an annual basis according the following method:

**7.01 Overview.** The School's program completion rate, licensing pass rate, and job placement rate for program completers meet the established AdvancED acceptable rates. The acceptable rate in each area shall be reviewed and revised annually to reflect the percentage rate equal to one standard deviation below the average rate calculated from the data for the most recent reporting year.

Rates for the 2008-09 school year are:

- a. Program Completion Rate: At least 70% of enrolled students complete their program within 150% of the time designated for completing the program.
- b. Licensing Pass Rate: At least 76% of students within two years of completing their program.
- c. Program Completer Placement Rate: At least 72% within two years of completion of the program.