



Commission on Colleges
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
1866 Southern Lane
Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097

**STANDING RULES:
COMMISSION ON COLLEGES, EXECUTIVE COUNCIL,
AND THE COLLEGE DELEGATE ASSEMBLY**

- Policy Statement -

Executive Council of the Commission on Colleges

1. Composition, Selection, Terms of Office

The Executive Council of the Commission on Colleges shall consist of thirteen members: one institutional representative from each state within the region of the Southern Association, one public representative, and one from a state within the region who shall serve as the Chair. All Executive Council members shall be members of the Commission on Colleges.

Members of the Executive Council shall serve one-year terms after nomination by the Nominating Committee of the Commission and election by the Commission at the annual business session. Nominations may also be made from the floor at the annual business session of the Commission. Members of the Executive Council may serve a maximum of three successive one-year terms so long as they are members of the Commission and are duly nominated and elected with the exception of the public representative who serves a one-year term only.

2. Duties

The Executive Council shall serve as the executive body of the Commission and shall act for the Commission while it is not in session; however, the actions of the Council shall be subject to the revision and approval of the Commission. The Chair of the Commission shall be the chief executive and presiding officer of the Executive Council and shall appoint all *ad hoc* and standing committees of the Commission. The Chair is a non-voting member of the Executive Council.

The Executive Council serves as the executive arm of the Commission; interprets its policies and procedures; develops procedures for and supervises the work of *ad hoc* and standing committees of the Commission; approves goals and objectives of the Commission; reviews and approves the Commission's budget; selects, supervises, and annually evaluates the work of its President; and initiates new programs, projects, and policy proposals. It receives and acts on reports from all *ad hoc* committees. Recommended actions on accreditation made by the Committees on Compliance and Reports are forwarded to the Council for review and approval. The Council submits its recommendations on these institutions to the Commission for final action.

At its discretion, the Executive Council may serve as the review body for both the candidacy and accreditation of new types of institutions which may apply. It may develop and approve guidelines for the accreditation of various types of institutions and submit these to the Commission for approval.

When complaints against institutions are received that the staff feels are of substance and properly documented, the Executive Council may be asked to render a decision as to whether an investigation should be conducted.

Executive Council members serve as state chairs of the Commissioners within their respective states and coordinate their state's nomination process for electing Commissioners.

Officers of the Commission on Colleges

There shall be two officers of the Executive Council: a Chair and Vice-Chair/Secretary. Each must be a member of the Executive Council.

1. Chair of the Commission

The Chair of the Commission on Colleges shall serve as Chair of the Executive Council, the Commission, and the College Delegate Assembly. The Chair shall serve a one-year term after nomination by the Nominating Committee of the Commission and election by the Commission. The election of the Chair shall be governed by the same rules which govern the election of Executive Council members.

Duties: The Chair of the Commission on Colleges shall preside at all meetings of the Executive Council, the Commission on Colleges, and the College Delegate Assembly. The Chair shall also appoint persons to fill vacancies on the Commission on Colleges which occur between its sessions. He or she shall appoint a replacement for any member of the Commission who fails to attend two consecutive meetings of the Commission or of committees of the Commission on which that member serves. In certain exceptional cases, the Commission member may appeal to the Chair and the Executive Council for reinstatement. (See the Commission's "Ethical Obligations of Commissioners and Peer Evaluators.") The Chair shall appoint the Chair of the Appeals Committee and appoint replacements to fill vacancies on the appeals Committee after all alternates have been used.

The Chair of the Commission on Colleges shall serve as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

2. Vice-Chair/Secretary

The Vice-Chair/Secretary of the Commission shall serve a one-year term after nomination by the Nominating Committee of the Commission and election by the Commission. The election of the Vice-Chair/Secretary shall be governed by the same rules which govern the election of Executive Council members.

Duties: The Vice-Chair/Secretary shall be responsible for the minutes of the Executive Council, the Commission on Colleges, and the College Delegate Assembly, and for any duties or responsibilities which may be delegated by the Chair of the Commission on Colleges or the Executive Council. In the event that the Chair is unable to discharge the duties of that office, the Vice-Chair automatically becomes Chair of the Commission on Colleges, with all the duties, rights, and privileges of that office including the right to vote as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. In the event that the Vice-Chair is unable to discharge the duties of that office or becomes Chair of the Commission on Colleges, an acting Vice-Chair/ Secretary shall be appointed by the Executive Council until such time as a permanent Vice-Chair/Secretary can be elected.

Commission on Colleges

1. Nomination to the Commission on Colleges

The nomination of new members to the Commission on Colleges may be submitted by members of the College Delegate Assembly to the Nominating Committee of the Commission *vis a vis* the state chair of the Commissioners.

- a. Membership. The Commission on Colleges shall consist of seventy-seven members as follows:
1. Thirty-three persons connected with or employed by member institutions at Levels II-VI. At least two persons shall be chosen from each state.
 2. Twenty-two persons connected with or employed by member institutions at Level I. At least one person shall be chosen from each state.
 3. Ten persons at-large connected with or employed by any member institution in the geographical territory of the Commission. The at-large delegation shall represent appropriately the various types of member institutions and shall represent proportionally the states and region of the Commission.
 4. One person at-large representing the international member institutions.
 5. Eleven persons representing the public. One shall be chosen from each state.
- b. Elections.

Members of the Commission on Colleges shall be elected for terms of three years by a majority vote of the members of the College Delegate Assembly present and voting at the Annual Business Session after nomination by the Nominating Committee of the Commission on Colleges.

1. The terms of one-third of the members of the Commission representing degree-granting institutions shall expire each year and, after two successive terms, members shall be ineligible to succeed themselves for a period of three years. Not more than one member of the Commission shall be connected with or employed by the same institution.
2. Public representatives shall serve only one three-year term and are not eligible to succeed themselves for a period of three years.

Representative of the public means a person who is not (1) an employee, member of the governing board or the coordinating board, owner, or shareholder of, or consultant to, an institution that either is accredited by the Commission or has applied for accreditation, (2) a member of any trade association or membership organization related to, affiliated with, or associated with the accrediting agency, or (3) a spouse, parent, child, or sibling of an individual identified in (1) or (2) above."
3. The at-large representative for international institutions is not eligible to succeed her or himself for a period of three years.

c. Vacancies.

The nomination of a new member to fill an unexpired term on the Commission is made by the delegates of the state where the vacancy occurs. From among the nominees, the Chair shall appoint a person to fill the vacancy on the Commission which occurs between sessions. If a Commissioner is appointed to fill an unexpired term of two or more years, that person shall be eligible for nomination to one additional three-year term. If a Commissioner is appointed to fill an unexpired term of fewer than two years, that person shall be eligible for nomination to two additional three-year terms. The maximum number of consecutive years which a Commissioner can serve is seven.

Commission members are expected to have had experience in serving as members of visiting committees or, absent such experience, are expected to serve as members or as official observers on visiting committees during the first year of service on the Commission.

2. Duties. The Commission on Colleges shall have the following duties:

- a. It shall prepare, subject to the approval of members of the College Delegate Assembly present and

voting at the Annual Business Session of the Assembly, a statement of the standards for membership for collegiate institutions. The action of the College Delegate Assembly shall be final. The standards shall provide for diversity of purpose among institutions.

- b. It shall make such visits and investigations as it deems necessary.
- c. It shall take final action on the accreditation of applicant, candidate, and member institutions and shall report to the College Delegate Assembly at its Annual Business Session those institutions approved for accreditation and those which have not been approved for accreditation. The final action of the Commission on Colleges shall be based on its determination of an institution's compliance with Commission standards, policies, and procedures. The list of collegiate institutions approved for accreditation shall be published. In the event of an appeal from an adverse action by the Commission on Colleges, final action on accreditation may be taken by the Appeals Committee of the College Delegate Assembly.
- d. It shall give to any member institution, or institution applying for membership, notice of failure to conform to the standards as soon as possible after action has been taken by the Commission. If adverse action has been taken, such institutions may avail themselves of the appeals procedures of the Commission on Colleges through the Appeals Committee of the College Delegate Assembly.
- e. It shall nominate to the College Delegate Assembly persons to succeed those members of the Commission whose terms expire.
- f. It shall elect an Executive Council of the Commission which in general will act for the Commission while it is not in session; however, the acts of this Council shall be subject to the revision and approval of the Commission.
- g. It shall appoint special and *ad hoc* study committees as are needed.
- h. It shall publish lists of its accredited institutions.
- i. It shall prepare and approve policies and procedures consistent with the Association's Charter and Bylaws.

3. Disclosure of Voting Practices

No record shall be kept, in the minutes of the proceedings of the Commission and its standing committees, of the names of those who move a motion or those who second a motion; neither shall the number of votes either for or against a motion be recorded; nor shall the names of those be recorded who are for or against a motion. The Commission's Vice Chair will record the names of those who abstain from vote for reasons of conflict of interest during the Commission's Executive Session.

College Delegate Assembly

1. Special Studies

Proposals for special studies may be acted on by the College Delegate Assembly only as they bear on the *Principles of Accreditation* or on membership dues and special fees. Proposals relating to membership dues and special fees shall be submitted to the Chair of the Commission on Colleges at least 30 days before the summer meeting of the Executive Council. If a proposal is approved by the Council, it will be forwarded to the Commission at its next meeting for action and, if approved, will be voted on by the College Delegate Assembly at its business session.

2. Procedures for Revision to the *Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement*

In order to provide sufficient time for reflection, to promote more effective use of the limited time available at the business session of the College Delegate Assembly, and to fulfill the mandate of the Standing Rules that the Commission on Colleges prepare and approve any changes in the standards before they are forwarded to

the Assembly, the following rules outline procedures for proposing changes to the *Principles*:

- a. Every three years, the Chair of the Commission on Colleges will appoint a Committee, representing at least every institutional level, to serve on the Standards Review Committee. The Committee will solicit comments from the membership and relevant constituencies regarding the *Principles* and will consider all comments and recommendations received since the last review period. After soliciting reaction to the draft of any proposed changes as distributed in written form or through the Web, the Committee will consider comments received regarding the proposal, modify the proposal as is appropriate, and present its final report to the Executive Council and to the Commission on Colleges. Following review and endorsement, the Commission will forward the report to the membership for review and vote during the business session of the College Delegate Assembly.

If editorial clarifications are needed during the interim three-year period, the Executive Council, in consultation with the Commission on Colleges, may review and approve those changes. Following such a change, the Commission will formally notify the membership in writing.

- b. Proposals for changes of substance in the *Principles of Accreditation* may be submitted in writing at any time to the President of the Commission by the chief executive officer or designated representative of a member institution, by a committee of the Commission, or by any of the Commission's constituents. If a proposal is to be considered for action at the Annual Meeting, it must be submitted at least thirty days prior to the preceding Summer Meeting of the Executive Council and the Commission on Colleges. Proposed changes to the *Principles* shall be reviewed by the Commission or one of its committees and, if approved, shall be forwarded in writing to the membership and posted on the Web for other Commission constituents at least 30 days prior to the annual business session of the College Delegate Assembly.
- c. During vote on the proposed modifications to the *Principles*, the College Delegate Assembly may take only three actions: (1) approve all or part of the proposal, (2) defeat approval of all or part of the proposal, or (3) remand proposals to study or change particular parts or aspects of the *Principles*. Such actions may be made from the floor during the annual business session of the College Delegate Assembly by the chief executive officer or designated representative of a member institution. Proposals to remand shall be forwarded to the Commission on Colleges for review at its next regularly scheduled meeting.

Changes to the proposed modifications to the *Principles of Accreditation* may not be made from the floor of the College Delegate Assembly.

- d. Every seven years, the Chair of the Commission on Colleges will appoint a Committee, representing each state and every institutional level, and representing the public, to serve on the Accreditation Review Committee. The Committee will conduct a comprehensive study of the standards to ascertain whether they are adequate to evaluate the quality of the education or training provided by institutions and relevant to the educational needs of students. In conducting the study, the Committee, or its subcommittees, will examine each of the standards and the standards as a whole, will solicit comments from the membership and other interested parties, and will consider comments and recommendations received since the last review period. After soliciting reaction to the draft of any proposed changes, the Committee will present its final report to the Executive Council and Commission on Colleges. Following review and endorsement, the Commission will forward the report to the membership for review and vote during the business session of the College Delegate Assembly.

For the Commission's purpose, interested parties are those relevant constituencies that include, in part, other regional, national, and specialized accrediting bodies; governing and coordinating boards from the region; U.S. Department of Education personnel; representative students; and the public (as far as communication can be extended by means of the internet).

3 Authority of the College Delegate Assembly

In accord with the Bylaws of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and the Standing Rules of the College Delegate Assembly, the College Delegate Assembly has the following responsibilities:

- a. Approves standards for accreditation,
- b. Provides for appeals and review processes on all matters pertaining to accreditation, with the provision that the decision of the process established by the Commission on Colleges shall be final,
- c. Approves significant changes to the annual dues assessment formula and to special fees which shall be paid by each member and candidate institution, and
- d. Elects members of the Commission on Colleges and of the Appeals Committee of the College Delegate Assembly.
- e. Elects Commission representatives to the Board of Trustees of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

Committees on Compliance and Reports

1. Duties of the Committees on Compliance and Reports

Other than those elected to serve on the Executive Council, all other Commissioners shall serve on one of the following Committees on Compliance and Reports (C & R Committees):

Committee A (Committee on Admissions and Substantive Change) will deal exclusively with the following cases: all institutional applicant cases not approved by staff; all candidacy and accreditation committee reports and institutional responses to the reports; all monitoring reports submitted by candidate institutions; all substantive change cases referred by staff for approval; all substantive change cases involving initiation of programs at a more advanced degree level and all cases initiating merger/consolidations; and other cases as deemed appropriate by the President of the Commission. It can either operate as one Committee (with twelve members) or, pending the work load of the Committee, as two subcommittees (each with six members): one dealing with applicant and candidate institutions, and one dealing with substantive changes. The subcommittees will be composed of six members: three elected Commissioners and three members appointed by the Chair of the Commission. Each member will serve a three-year term with a two member rotation each year.

Committees B-D or B-E will deal with the following cases: reports from reaffirmation committees; reports from substantive change committees; reports from special committees as previously authorized by the C & R Committee or by the President of the Commission; monitoring reports from reaffirmations and substantive changes, all Fifth-Year Follow-Up Reports, and other cases as deemed appropriate by the President of the Commission.

Each of the Committees on Compliance and Reports has the authority to recommend action on the accreditation status of institutions, to recommend the imposition of public sanctions (Warning and Probation), and to review and act on all monitoring reports. Nothing stated above shall preclude any of the Committees on Compliance and Reports from meeting in joint session to hear the accreditation cases of institutions as may be appropriate.

The recommendations of the Committees on Compliance and Reports are forwarded to the Executive Council. The Council receives and acts on the recommendations and submits its recommendations on institutions to the total Commission on Colleges for final action. In accord with the Commission's policy on disclosure, actions taken by the Commission are reported to the College Delegate Assembly at its Annual Business Session and are posted on the Commission's Web page. In the event of an appeal from an adverse action taken by the Commission on Colleges, final action on accreditation may be taken by the Appeals Committee of the College Delegate Assembly.

2. Non-Commission Members

With the exception of C & R- Group A, as many as five non-Commission members may also be appointed to membership on each of the Committees. These non-Commission members shall be full voting participants in the review activities of the Compliance and Reports Committees and shall be assigned similar responsibilities to those members of the Committees who are also members of the Commission. The non-Commission members will be selected because of their special expertise useful to the Committees on Compliance and Reports.

Non-Commission members of the Committees on Compliance and Reports shall not be present at the executive session of the Commission on Colleges unless invited to provide information on special cases. If present they shall not vote.

Non-Commission members shall be appointed to the Committees on Compliance and Reports for a one-year term with a maximum of six years service. Reappointment is automatic unless the Chair of the Commission decides that the service of a non-Commission member is no longer needed.

3. Dealing with Unsolicited Information

Three circumstances warrant Commission review of unsolicited information about a candidate or member institution: (1) information revealed about an institution during its off-site or on-site committee reviews; (2) information revealed about an institution between periods of scheduled review; and (3) information revealed by an institution during its meeting on the record with the Committees on Compliance and Reports.

- (1) The Commission shall give appropriate consideration to significant accreditation-related information revealed about an institution during its off-site and on-site committee reviews. Following submission of a committee report, the institution will be given an adequate period of time to respond to the information before any action is taken by the Committees on Compliance and Reports.
- (2) The Commission shall give appropriate consideration to significant accreditation-related information revealed about an institution between periods of scheduled review. Following review of the information by staff, the institution will be given an adequate period of time to respond to the information. If, after reviewing the response, Commission staff determines that the information is of factual substance and is accreditation related, the information and documentation, along with the institution's response, will be forwarded to the Committees on Compliance and Reports for formal review.
- (3) The Commission shall give appropriate consideration to significant accreditation-related information revealed by an institution during its meeting on the record with the Committees on Compliance and Reports. (See "Administrative Procedures for the Meetings of the Committees on Compliance and Reports" for procedures.) .

4. Site Visits to Institutions Placed on Warning or Probation

If the Committees on Compliance and Reports recommend to the Commission that an institution be placed on Warning (or continued on Warning) or Probation (or continued on Probation) and the Commission on Colleges approves the recommendation, then the letter to the institution announcing the decision of the Commission on Colleges will automatically include the following references:

- a. That an institution placed or continued on Probation for one year must receive a Special Committee visit prior to its next consideration by the Committee on Compliance and Reports. When an institution on Probation is continued on Probation for six months and has had a committee visit within twelve months prior to the Commission meeting at which it is continued on Probation for six months, the Committee on Compliance and Reports, in consultation with the staff representative assigned to the institution, must stipulate whether or not a Special Committee visit will be required prior to the next consideration by the Commission. If the Committee on Compliance and Reports stipulates that a Special Committee visit is not required, the institution may request such a visit.
- b. That an institution placed or continued on Warning for six months or for one year will be required to receive a Special Committee visit prior to the next consideration by the Committee on Compliance and Reports only if the C & R Committee stipulates such a requirement.

- c. If an institution is placed on Warning or Probation for one year but an interim report is required, the Committee on Compliance and Reports must stipulate whether or not a Special Committee visit will be required during that six-month period. If the Committee on Compliance and Reports stipulates that a Special Committee visit is not required, the institution may request such a visit.

Staff Relationship to the Commission on Colleges and its Committees

1. Policy Statement

Staff members of the Commission on Colleges are expected to advise and inform the Commission and its committees on matters relative to an institution. They should offer advice or provide information at their own initiative or at the request of the Commission or its members. Such advice and information do not supplant the peer review process, but rather provide additional insight in reaching an informed judgment.

2. Procedural Guidelines

- a. Staff members provide information and advice as is appropriate when assisting the Commission with regard to making a decision on the accreditation status of an institution. Since the Commission operates through its members and committees, Commission staff members provide the readers of accreditation cases with information and advice. Particularly germane are historical information on similarly situated institutions and procedural and substantive advice on how the policies and accreditation requirements/standards have been interpreted and could be applied to an institution's case, including possible action and follow up. This information is presented in writing to the readers in the form of a memorandum along with other documents to be reviewed by the Commission. It may also be presented orally.

Staff members provide information and advice to the readers (and others) in order to maintain the strength and consistency of the process.

- b. Staff members advise and inform the Committees on Compliance and Reports as well as the readers. The staff role in the deliberations is an active role. Staff members provide information and advice, which may include opinions on institutional patterns, institutional progress, and suggested action.
- c. Staff members provide information and advice during on-site visits to institutions. However, the staff's role in the process should not supplant the peer review and decision process.

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