



## **Public Disclosure of Accreditation Documents and Commission Actions Policy**

The Commission supports the principles of transparency and accountability in accreditation and, therefore, makes key documents relating to accreditation available to the public as described below.

### **PUBLIC DISCLOSURE OF COMMISSION ACTION LETTERS AND EVALUATION TEAM REPORTS**

A Commission action letter is sent to the institution's chief executive officer and the accreditation liaison officer to provide notification of official actions taken regarding the institution's accreditation status and any related follow-up and/or reporting required. A copy of the action letter is also sent to the system head, if the institution is part of a system, and to the chair of the governing board. Once the institution has been notified of the Commission's action, the action letter and the evaluation team report are posted on the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) website.

Evaluation team reports and Commission action letters have been made public since June 2012. The publication of the Commission action letter serves as the public notice of the action as required by 34 CFR §602.26. If the institution wishes to post a response to the Commission action on its own website, the Commission will provide a link to the response on the WSCUC website.

The Commission considers its action letters and the reports of evaluation teams to be foundational for institutional accountability and improvement. Therefore, it expects institutions to disseminate these documents throughout the institution for the purposes of promoting ongoing engagement and improvement and encouraging internal communications about specific issues identified in evaluation team reports and action letters. The Commission also expects its action letters to be reviewed by the institution's governing board as part of its governance and oversight responsibilities to an institution seeking or maintaining accreditation with WSCUC. Under ordinary circumstances, it is up to each institution to determine how best to disseminate reports and action letters to the institutional community.

In all cases, the accreditation process is not to be treated as a series of events intended to demonstrate basic compliance with the accreditation standards. Rather, the accreditation process is designed for and requires ongoing institutional improvement.

Institutions should avoid publication or distribution of selected excerpts of evaluation team reports or action letters that quote only statements that are favorable to the institution or that take statements out of context. This does not preclude schools and departments within an institution from quoting individual portions relating only to them. When selective quotations are made in public documents, the institution must also indicate that a copy of the entire report and/or Commission action letter, as the case may be, can be obtained from the institution and is posted on the WSCUC website.

### **PUBLIC DISCLOSURE OF COMMISSION DECISIONS RELATED TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES, STRUCTURAL CHANGES, AND INTERIM REPORTS**

Since June 2010, the Commission posts on the WSCUC website final decisions on substantive changes and

structural changes. In addition, Commission action letters are publicly available for those structural changes that involve organizational changes in legal status, mission, or control, or affiliation of an unaccredited institution with an accredited institution.

A list of actions taken by the Interim Report Committee, and approved by the Commission, are also posted on the WSCUC website (effective January 2017).

## **PUBLIC DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION ABOUT INSTITUTIONS**

The Commission makes available on the WSCUC website the following information about candidate and accredited institutions:

1. Contact information and key personnel
2. Locations
3. The year the institution achieved candidacy and/or initial accreditation
4. Size, type and characteristics of the institution
5. Degrees offered by modality
6. The term and year of upcoming reviews and interactions with WSCUC
7. Team reports and Commission action letters (since June 2012)

In addition, a list of institutions that were formerly accredited or had formerly achieved candidacy are posted on the website.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

### Institutional reports and materials

Institutional reports and other materials produced by the institution are generally considered confidential. While the Commission does not make institutional reports available to the public, the Commission encourages colleges and universities to distribute throughout the institution its reports, materials, data exhibits, portfolios, and relevant correspondence that are submitted to the Commission. With prior approval of the institution, the Commission may make available institutions' reports to educators who are conducting research about accreditation or to other institutions.

### Accreditation materials

The accreditation process depends on the willingness of those who are knowledgeable about the institution, including students, faculty, members of administration, and the general public, to disclose, openly and candidly, information that reveals the institution's weaknesses, areas in need of improvement, and strengths. The Commission has found that maintaining the confidentiality of its records is an important factor in preserving that candor and openness and will not ordinarily release documents relating to the accreditation process other than those identified in this policy.

### Release of confidential documents

Nothing in this policy or any other Commission publication regarding confidential treatment of information concerning an institution, its related parties, or its accreditation, shall restrict the Commission from disclosing any such information in connection with legal proceedings, lawfully issued subpoenas,

government investigations or requests for information, and other similar circumstances. The Commission will make reasonable efforts to provide the subject institution with notice of the information sought pursuant to any such instrument, proceeding or request if the institution is not a party to the proceeding, is otherwise unlikely to be aware of the request, and the Commission is not restricted by lawful authorities or advice of counsel from providing such notice.

**PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY INSTITUTIONS**

If an institution uses a public forum to take issue with an official action of the Commission relating to the institution, the Commission may provide any further information available to it that has not previously been made available to the public and that the Commission believes is needed to provide adequate context, correct misstatements or misrepresentations. If the institution merely notes that it has sought a review or filed an appeal, the Commission will not release further information on the matter.

Further, if an institution releases inaccurate or misleading information about its eligibility, candidacy, or accreditation status, the contents of evaluation team reports, or the Commission’s decisions with respect to the institution, the Commission will take steps to correct the misinformation.

When an institution discloses its accredited status, the Commission, by federal regulation, requires institutions to identify WSCUC by name, including WSCUC’s contact information (address, telephone number, and website).

**TIMEFRAME FOR NOTIFICATION OF COMMISSION ACTIONS**

In compliance with 34 CFR §602.26 (Notification of Accrediting Decisions), the Commission adheres to the following schedule.

<b>Commission Action</b>	<b>Notify Institution</b>	<b>Notify Secretary of Education and Other Accreditors, State Licensing Agencies</b>	<b>Post Commission Action Letter on WSCUC Website</b>
Grant Candidacy, Continue Candidacy, Grant Initial Accreditation	Within 30 days	Within 30 days	Within 30 days
Reaffirm Accreditation	Within 30 days	Within 30 days	Within 30 days
Impose a Sanction* (Warning, Probation, Show Cause)	Within 30 days	At the same time as notification of the institution	Within 24 hours of notification of the institution
Take an Adverse Action* (Deny Candidacy, Deny Accreditation, Withdraw Accreditation)	Within 30 days	At the same time as notification of the institution	Within 24 hours of notification of the institution
Acknowledge Voluntary Withdrawal or Lapse of Accreditation	Within 30 days	Within 30 days	Within 30 days

\*Only applies to “final decisions” meaning that the institution has exhausted its opportunity and process for appeal of the Commission action under Commission policy. In the instance of a sanction or termination of accreditation, the Commission will provide a link to any official institution response to the Commission action on the WSCUC website. In the case of a sanction or termination of accreditation, the Commission makes available to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education and to relevant state and other accrediting agencies the nature of the action, the reasons for the action, and any official response of the institution if known to the Commission.

---

*Approved by the Commission, February 2013*  
*Revised, November 2013*  
*Revised, November 2016*