

# What's New in the World of Accreditation Standards & Policies?

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# Important Resources to Track Changes

- <https://www.abhe.org/accreditation/accreditation-documents/>
- Click on COA Manual – CHANGES
- This document will include ALL CHANGES from the previous FEBRUARY up until the present time. (The current COA Manual – CHANGES document is for February 2022-last week)
- New changes that were initiated this week will be in the February 2023 edition which will be released as soon as it is feasible

# Review of Changes to Accreditation Standards

FEBRUARY 2022-FEBRUARY 2023

# Definition of Accreditation Standard

- A written statement of the criteria by which an institution can measure its educational effectiveness and the COA can determine an institution's accreditation status. (COA Manual, page 228)



# Procedure for Standards Changes

- Recommendations for addition, deletion, or modification to the COA's accreditation policies, procedures, or Standards may originate from any source.
- Recommendations are then studied by the Committee on Criteria. If the committee agrees with the worthiness of a recommendation, it will express the proposal in language that is consistent in style and format with existing accreditation policies, procedures, and Standards, and recommend it to the COA for approval.
- Recommendations from the Committee on Criteria are then considered by the COA. If the COA agrees with the worthiness of a recommendation, it will recommend it to the ABHE membership.



# Procedure for Standards Changes (cont'd)

- Recommendations released by the COA are then circulated by electronic means or mail to the Association's constituency. Recommendations related to Standards are also circulated to member institutions, states, provinces, other recognized accrediting bodies, and the public and published on the Association's website.
- Standards recommendations that have gained final approval from the COA are placed before the COA Delegate Assembly for a vote.
- Unless otherwise specified by the COA, institutions or programs have **two years to comply** with newly adopted Standards.



# Recent Changes – Standard 3 (Institutional)

- Editorial/grammatical changes are not reflected here if not considered substantive for interpretation/application

## **NEW ESSENTIAL ELEMENT: EE 3**

**Evidence of effective policies that address protection of student privacy, transparency in safety and on-campus crime, and provision for redress of harassment (including sexual harassment) that might be experienced by institutional stakeholders (e.g., students, staff, faculty, administration, and board).**



# Recent Changes – Standard 3 (Institutional)

- ADDED TO ESSENTIAL ELEMENT 4 (FORMERLY ESSENTIAL ELEMENT 3):  
An institutional culture that fosters respect for diverse backgrounds and perspectives consistent with the institution's mission.



# Recent Changes – Standard 6b (Institutional)

- ADDED TO ESSENTIAL ELEMENT 4:

Risk management policies and procedures sufficient to safeguard assets and promote effective stewardship of resources.

# Recent Changes – Standard 9a (Institutional)

- EDITS TO ESSENTIAL ELEMENT 9:

Support for the professional advancement and development of **its** core and adjunct faculty, ~~including the pursuit of terminal degrees~~ as appropriate to the institutional mission.



# VOTED ON YESTERDAY – Standard 10 (Institutional)

- TITLE CHANGE- from “Library and Other Learning Resources” to “Learning Resources and Services”
- OVERALL STANDARD CHANGE

The institution ensures the availability of and access to learning resources and services of appropriate form, range, depth, and currency to support the ~~curricular offerings and meet student and faculty needs, regardless of location or instructional delivery system~~ curriculum regardless of location, instructional modality, or language of instruction.



# VOTED ON YESTERDAY – Standard 10 (Institutional)

- **Instructional Modalities and Language of Instruction** added to the following Essential Elements:
  - EE 2 (Policies and Procedures)
  - EE 3 (Funding, Staff, Technology Infrastructure, Acquisition Policies)
  - EE 4 (Reference, Technical, Circulation Services, and other means of Support)
  - EE 5 (Promotion to Enhance Student and Faculty Awareness)
  - EE 9 (Collection)
  - EE 13 (Information Literacy)

# VOTED ON YESTERDAY – Standard 10 (Institutional)

- ADDITION TO ESSENTIAL ELEMENT 1:

A written learning resource purpose statement **and objectives** consistent with the institutional mission and educational outcomes.

# VOTED ON YESTERDAY – Standard 10 (Institutional)

- EDITS TO ESSENTIAL ELEMENT 3:

Sufficient funding, staff, ~~facilities~~, technology infrastructure, virtual or physical presence, and ~~practices~~ policies to procure and maintain ~~needed~~ appropriate learning resources and services for all instructional modalities ~~used by the institution~~ and languages of instruction.



# VOTED ON YESTERDAY – Standard 10 (Institutional)

- EDITS TO ESSENTIAL ELEMENT 7:

Joint participation of **library personnel** and faculty in curriculum planning, the analysis of resource **and service** adequacy, the selection of ~~resource materials~~ learning resources, and review of ~~library policy~~ learning resource policies for all instructional modalities.



# VOTED ON YESTERDAY – Standard 10 (Institutional)

- EDITS TO ESSENTIAL ELEMENT 8:

Policies, procedures, ~~and facilities~~, technology infrastructure, and virtual or physical presence that ensure access to and security of learning resources and the privacy of patron data.





# VOTED ON YESTERDAY – Standard 10 (Institutional)

- DELETION IN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT 10:

Effective leadership by a credentialed director ~~who has~~ with faculty status. ~~and who normally typically reports to the chief academic officer.~~



# VOTED ON YESTERDAY – Standard 10 (Institutional)

- ADDITION IN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT 11:

Effective collaboration between ~~the librarians~~ library and information technology personnel for the development, maintenance, and enhancement of the technology infrastructure to provide access to all learning resources and services.

# VOTED ON YESTERDAY – Standard 10 (Institutional)

- CLARIFICATION IN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT 12:

~~Evaluation of learning resource utilization~~ Ongoing outcomes assessment of learning resources and services and their utilization by the learning community for the purpose of improvement.



# Programmatic Changes

- Standard 3, two new essential elements:
  - EE2- A program culture that fosters respect for diverse backgrounds and perspectives, consistent with the institution's mission.
  - EE3- Equitable and consistent treatment of employees and students consistent with appropriate published policies.
- Standard 9a, Essential Element 8 Edit:
  - Support for the professional advancement and development of core and adjunct faculty, ~~including the pursuit of terminal degrees~~ as appropriate to the institutional mission.
- Standard 10, All Changes Mirror Those In Institutional Standards (but there are only 4 Essential Elements)

# Explanation of New or Revised Accreditation Policies

FEBRUARY 2022-FEBRUARY 2023



# Definition of a Policy

- Commission on Accreditation policies provide supplemental guidance regarding implementation of the Standards for Accreditation. Institutions are expected to use the policies to understand how the Commission on Accreditation interprets various aspects of the Standards. Evaluators may use the policies as a basis for “Suggestions” to institutions, but “Recommendations” by evaluators may only be attached to Standards. (COA Manual, p 42)
- The Policies are organized into three sections:
  - 1) Policies Relating to Commission on Accreditation Standards (Institutional & Programmatic)
  - 2) Policies Relating to Commission on Accreditation Procedures
  - 3) Policies Providing General Institutional Guidance

# Procedure for Policy Changes

- Recommendations for addition, deletion, or modification to the COA's accreditation policies, procedures, or Standards may originate from any source.
- Recommendations are then studied by the Committee on Criteria. If the committee agrees with the worthiness of a recommendation, it will express the proposal in language that is consistent in style and format with existing accreditation policies, procedures, and Standards, and recommend it to the COA for approval.
- Recommendations from the Committee on Criteria are then considered by the COA. If the COA agrees with the worthiness of a recommendation, it will recommend it to the ABHE membership.

# Procedure for Policy Changes (cont'd)

- Recommendations released by the COA are then circulated by electronic means or mail to the Association's constituency.
- Policy and procedural recommendations adopted by the COA do not require further approval by the COA Delegate Assembly.
- Institutions or programs have one year to comply with newly adopted policies.





# Recent Policy Change List

- Policy on Alternative Academic Patterns (deleted, replaced with Policy on Instructional Modalities)
- Policy on Instructional Modalities
- Policy and Procedures for Branch Campuses and Additional Locations
- Policy on Exceptions due to COVID 19 (deleted, relevant other policy is the Policy on Exceptions due to a Regional Crisis or Pandemic)
- Policy on Compliance with USDE Regulations
- Policy on Conflicts of Interest



# Recent Policy Change List (cont'd)

- Policy and Procedures for Institutional Accreditation
- Policy on Public Notification of Comprehensive Evaluation Visit
- Policy and Procedures for Reviews and Appeals
- Policy on Semi-Autonomous Institutions

## Also Changed

- Constitution
- Bylaws
- Glossary of Terms

# Policy on Alternative Academic Patterns

- This policy served as a “catch all” for “various forms of learning in which education is offered apart from the main campus.”
- As a result, its scope overlapped many other policies (branch campuses/additional locations, etc.).
- Even the title (“alternative”) was in need of review due to the changing landscape of higher education.
- In June 2021, the CRIT Committee proposed to the COA the creation of a taskforce to address possible revisions to the policy, and the proposal of the taskforce (subsequently approved by CRIT and the COA) was the new Policy on Instructional Modalities.



# Policy on Instructional Modalities

- The key feature of the policy, retained from the previous policy with significant revision, is the chart “Definitions of Instructional Modalities” (example- “Mixed Modality”)
- Rather than restating details of other policies related to these modalities (distance education, competency-based education, etc.), this policy now cross-references to those locations for more information.
- The policy is clear that ABHE Accreditation Standards and Essential Elements apply to all modes of delivery, and that institutions must comply with the Policy on Substantive Change when changes are made.

# Policy and Procedures for Branch Campuses and Additional Locations

- The definitions for extension sites, additional locations, and branch campuses were “tidied up” and enumerated at the beginning of the policy for easy access.
- A major point of emphasis for the revision was to offer better clarity with regards to the distinction between branch campuses and additional locations and the processes used in evaluation of each.
- The list of items required as part of the substantive change to establish an additional location or branch campus was clarified to include a list of all programs offered at the location and evidence that the location will meet all pertinent Standards of Accreditation.

# Policy on Exceptions due to COVID 19

(deleted, relevant other policy is the Policy on Exceptions due to a Regional Crisis or Pandemic)

- The Policy on Exceptions due to COVID-19 was very targeted in response to the pandemic. After multiple extensions of the policy, in November 2020 the Policy on Exceptions due to a Regional Crisis or Pandemic was adopted.
- The new policy outlines measures that can be taken by the Executive Director when exceptions are needed to typical processes and procedures either by an institution or the Commission, as well as instructions for how to submit requests for these exceptions.

# Current USDE- and CHEA-Specific Concerns

# USDE

- July 2022 Dear Colleague letters to agencies/institutions about adding an accreditor, which now requires prior approval from the DoE
  - <https://fsapartners.ed.gov/knowledge-center/library/dear-colleague-letters/2022-07-19/procedures-institutions-seeking-approval-request-change-or-add-accrediting-agencies-updated-sept-26-2022>
  - <https://www.naicu.edu/news-events/washington-update/2022/july-22/new-guidance-on-changing-accreditors-released>
- January 2023 Request for Information Regarding Public Transparency for Low-Financial-Value Postsecondary Programs
  - <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/01/11/2022-28606/request-for-information-regarding-public-transparency-for-low-financial-value-postsecondary-programs>
  - February 8, 2023 NAICU Response
- Updated Guidance and Procedures for Changes in Ownership
  - <https://fsapartners.ed.gov/knowledge-center/library/electronic-announcements/2022-09-15/updated-guidance-and-procedures-changes-ownership#>



# CHEA

- New CHEA standards (October 2021)
  - Implement and enforce standards, policies, and procedures which support implementation of innovative practices
  - Manifest a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Accountability for public provision of student learning outcomes and/or achievement data
  - Disaggregation of data by race/ethnicity, gender (sex)
- International quality standards
- STUDENT SUCCESS

# A Look Ahead

Examining the Climate and Currents in the World of Accreditation,  
Including a Brief Note Regarding the In-Process 10-Year Standards Review



# Biden Administration Regulatory Agenda

|  |   |  |  |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|--|--|
| Federal TRIO Programs  | <b>Accreditation and Related Issues</b>   | <b>State Authorization</b>   | Return to Title IV   | Cash Management  | <b>Third-Party Servicers and Related Issues</b>        |
| Improving use of Deferments and Forbearances                                   | <b>Distance Education</b>   | <b>Ability to Benefit</b>  | <b>Gainful Employment</b>  | <b>Factors of Financial Responsibility</b>   | <b>Standards of Administrative Capability</b>          |
| Partnerships With Faith-Based and Neighborhood Organizations                   | Direct Grant Programs, State-Administered Formula Grant Programs  | Certification Procedures   | Improving Income Driven Repayment  | Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Fellowship Program  | Public Service Loan Forgiveness – Employer Eligibility |
| <b>Pre-Rule Stage</b><br><b>Proposed Rule Stage</b><br><b>Final Rule Stage</b> | Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex and Disability in Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Financial Assistance | Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Disability in Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Financial Assistance From the Department of Education | Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex in Athletics Education Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Financial Assistance | Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex in Education Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Financial Assistance |  |

<https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/eAgendaMain>; choose Department of Education in dropdown menu



# Update on the 10-year Standards Review

- **General objectives**
  - Eliminate overlap
  - Reduce total # of standards/essential elements
  - Support innovation
  - Consistent approach to standards vs. policies
- **Emerging themes**
  - Assessment/planning
  - Spiritual/ministry formation
  - Service to constituency/public good
  - Technology
  - Diversity



# Update on the 10-year Standards Review

## Collecting Input

- Listening sessions (2022 and 2023 Annual Meetings; May 2022 Virtual)
- Member survey (Spring 2022)
- Initial call for comment (November 2022)
- Standard taskforce reports (February 2023)

## Draft Development

- CRIT Committee review (February 2023)
- Steering committee draft (March-May 2023)

## Approval/Adoption

- CRIT/COA review and action (June 2023)
- Call for Comment on draft (August 2023)
- CRIT/COA review and action (November 2023)
- Publication for Delegate Assembly Action (December 2023)
- Delegate Assembly Action (February 2024)

# Q&A