



AdvancED Policies and Procedures
for Accreditation and Certification

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The AdvancED policies and procedures outlined in this document represent the unified policies and procedures for accreditation and certification from AdvancED and its Accreditation Divisions:

POLICY II: TERM AND PROCESS REQUIREMENTS OF ACCREDITATION AND CERTIFICATION

2.01 Eligibility for Accreditation and Certification.

- a. Accreditation only. Accreditation may be conferred to an institution or a system. For systems accreditation, all schools managed by the system must be accredited or in the accreditation process, and the system-level is conferred accreditation in addition to the accreditation that is conferred to each institution.
- b. Certification only. Certification may be conferred to an institution but not to a system. All institutions within a system may be certified, but such a circumstance does not mean the system-level is conferred a certification in addition to its institutions. Certification is conferred under the name of the institution whether the certification was earned by the institution as a whole or by a program(s) within the institution.
- c. Simultaneous Accreditation and Certification. An institution may be both accredited and certified. The expiration dates for any accreditation status or any certification status may be the same or may be different. An institution must earn accreditation and certification separately and may maintain or lose either accreditation or certification without automatically jeopardizing the status of the other. Accordingly, any AdvancED actions to drop accreditation or certification must be applied to each status separately.
- d. Accreditation is not a requirement for certification. An institution may earn and maintain certification without any intent to pursue accreditation.

2.02 Term of Accreditation or Certification. The term of accreditation and/or certification is five years as long as the institution or system continues to satisfy the following:

- a. General Requirements of Policy 2.03.
- b. Accreditation Requirements of Policy 2.04 for institutions or systems seeking to achieve and maintain accreditation.
- c. Certification Requirements of Policy 2.05 for institutions seeking to achieve and maintain certification.
- d. Additional Requirements of Policy 2.06

- institution or system will remain a member of AIN and must host another Readiness Review in order to pursue accreditation.
- ii. If AdvancED determines the institution or system has the capacity to meet policies, Standards and Assurances required to achieve accreditation, the institution or system will be conferred with the status of candidate.
 - e. Host an Engagement Review within a timeframe established by the AdvancED Accreditation Office after achieving the status of candidate and at least once every five years thereafter.
 - f. Between twelve months and four weeks prior to a scheduled Engagement Review, submit to AdvancED documentation to support the Engagement Review.
 - g. Submit a progress report(s) on Improvement Priorities as identified by the Engagement Review Team within timeframes as defined by the institution's or system's accreditation status and/or as prescribed by the AdvancED Accreditation Office.
- 2.05 Certification Requirements. In order to achieve and maintain certification, an institution must meet the following criteria in addition to the general requirements listed in 2.04:
- a. Notify AdvancED of its intent to pursue certification by submitting an application or by written notification if already an AIN member.
 - b. Meet the appropriate set of certification Standards and Assurances.
 - c. If desired, host an optional pre-visit(s) to the institution by AdvancED.
 - d. Host a certification review within a timeframe established by the AdvancED Accreditation Office and at least once every five years thereafter.
- 2.06 Additional Requirements. In addition to satisfying the conditions outlined in 2.02, an institution or system must adhere to the following:
- a. Compliance with Applicable Governmental Requirements. The institution or system must comply with all applicable governmental requirements, including any requirements for governmental approval, recognition, or accreditation. An institution's or system's loss of its governmental approval, recognition, accreditation, or certification may be grounds for an accreditation review, monitoring review, or certification review that may result in a change in accreditation or certification status in accordance with the procedures outlined in this document.
 - b. Non-discriminatory Admission of Students. Institutions and systems accredited or certified through 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. Institutions and systems are required to maintain and implement a records retention system that meets applicable government 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.
 - i. Institutions and systems must have written procedures for the ongoing access and maintenance of all relevant records in the event the institution or system ceases operation.

- ii. The institution or system must document to AdvancED via the process for Substantive Change the location of where the records will be housed and contact information for that location.

- d. Institutional Integrity and Due Process. An institution or system is required to represent itself accurately in all aspects of the accreditation process and/or certification process. If an institution or system misrepresents itself, including but not limited to the following: misrepresentation of its accreditation or certification status to the public; has any condition that may be detrimental to the students and/or clientele of the institution or system; or falsely reports its compliance with the policies and Standards for accreditation and/or certification; the institution's or system's accreditation and/or certification may be dropped. If an institution's or system's accreditation and/or certification is recommended to be dropped, the institution or system shall be afforded due process in consideration of such action.

- e. Substantive Change. An institution and system must report to AdvancED within sixty (60) days of occurrence any substantive change in the institution and system, which changes the scope and/or has an impact on the institution's or system'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 institution or system. Substantive change areas include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - i. Cease of operation/closure of the institution or system. Include the location of where student records will be housed and the contact information for that location.
 - ii. Change in physical location of the institution or system.
 - iii. Consolidation or reorganization of the institution.
 - iv. Change in mission and purpose of the institution.
 - v. Governance structure of the institution or system, including changing to a charter school or charter school system, being the subject of a governmental takeover, or a change in ownership.
 - vi.

- i. The institution shall accept and classify transfer credits earned or grade placement from institutions that are accredited by a recognized national, regional, or state accrediting agency without further validation based on the school's policies and procedures governing such offerings.
- ii. The institution may accept credits or grade placement from non-accredited institutions when validated by one or more of the following procedures: a review of the student's academic record, an analysis of a sending institution's

3. Confidentiality and Privacy. We treat information obtained through institutions' or systems' participation in the accreditation and/or certification process as confidential and shall not disclose such information except in a manner that is consistent with AdvancED policies, governmental regulation, or judicial procedure. We respect the privacy rights of all individuals in the performance of AdvancED duties.
4. Transparency. We are committed to providing timely, complete, and accurate information to the public and appropriate stakeholders. All information about the organization will fully and honestly reflect the policies and practices of AdvancED.
5. Legal Compliance. We are knowledgeable of and comply with all applicable laws, regulations, and requirements.
6. Responsible Stewardship. We manage the organization and its resources responsibly and prudently. We use organizational resources only for AdvancED purposes.

- b. Participate in any type of AdvancED Review of the institutions or systems wherein the conflict of interest may exist or in discussions regarding issues that may involve a possible conflict of interest.
 - 5. Signing of the Conflict of Interest Statement. All AdvancED Representatives shall be advised of the Conflict of Interest Policy and shall sign the statement using procedures as provided by AdvancED.
 - 6. Violations of the Conflicts of Interest Policy. If the Chief Accreditation Officer has reasonable cause to believe an AdvancED Representative has failed to disclose actual or possible conflicts of interest, he/she shall inform the Representative of the basis for belief and afford the Representative an opportunity to explain the alleged failure to disclose.
 - a. If, after hearing the Representative's response and after making further investigation as warranted by the circumstances, the Chief Accreditation Officer determines that the Representative has failed to disclose an actual or possible conflict of interest, the Chief Accreditation Officer shall take appropriate disciplinary and/or corrective action.
- iii. Confidentiality Statement. As part of the accreditation and/or certification process, or other AIN member services, institutions and systems submit to AdvancED information considered to be of a proprietary and confidential nature. Other than granting a limited license to use said information for the purposes of providing accreditation, certification, and/or other AIN member service to the institution or system, AdvancED recognizes that the submission of information does not transfer ownership of said property to AdvancED.
- 1. AdvancED retains all rights, title, and interest in the work product produced, including but not limited to supporting notes, analyses, interpretations, and impressions compiled by agents of AdvancED as part of the accreditation and/or certification process and other AIN member services.
 - 2. Any and all information provided to or collected by AdvancED as part of the processes for accreditation, certification, and/or AIN membership shall be safeguarded in a manner comparable to a standard of reasonable care exercised by other agencies engaged in accreditation and school improvement activities. AdvancED will maintain the documentation and evidence submitted by the institution or system in a password controlled, access restricted environment.
 - 3. If AdvancED is required by legal, judicial, or administrative process to disclose information beyond the institution's or system's Executive Summary, Engagement Review Report, Certification Review Report, Progress Assessment Report, and any special or interim accreditation or

for public access the institution's and system's accreditation and certification status,
institution's and system's term of accreditation and certification,

monitoring review within one year of the previous review, and host subsequent monitoring reviews as prescribed by AdvancED.

An institution or system having

(1) Continue the institution's or system's status of Accredited Under Conditions not to

accreditation or certification status. All candidate institutions or systems are not accredited or certified until such status is officially granted by the appropriate AdvancED Regional Commission and ratified by the AdvancED Global Commission. In any public announcements regarding the institution's or system's pursuit of accreditation or certification, the institution or system must avoid any implication that the AIN membership or candidate status equates with accreditation or certification or automatically leads to accreditation or certification. AdvancED's Global Commission shall have full authority and discretion to deny accreditation or certification status to any institution or system determined by AdvancED to be in violation of this policy.

d. Ongoing

AdvancED Accreditation Office forwards the Request for Reinstatement form, the rationale for reinstatement with its substantiating evidence and improvement plan, accreditation and/or certification actions or recommendations for review, and action to the appropriate AdvancED Regional Commission with final ratification by the AdvancED Global Commission at the next scheduled AdvancED Regional and Global Commission meetings.

- d. Upon AdvancED Regional Commission action and AdvancED Global Commission ratification to reinstate the institution's or system's accreditation and/or certification status, the institution or system is reinstated with an expiration date not to exceed one year from the date of Commission ratification. AdvancED may extend the institution's or system's status of Accreditation Under Conditions or Certification Under Conditions for one year at a time until the institution or system has successfully documented sufficient progress to warrant a change in status to Accredited Under Review or higher or Certified Under Review or higher.
- e. Upon the institution or system being reinstated to the status of accredited and/or certified, the institution or system is reinstated to the original accreditation term and/or certification term. The institution or system must satisfy all requirements of the accreditation and/or certification term in which it is being reinstated.
- f. An institution or system that dropped in its fifth year of the accreditation or certification term and reinstates must host an Engagement Review for accreditation and/or a certification review for certification upon reinstatement.

POLICY IV: PROCEDURES FOR INITIAL ACCREDITATION AND/OR CERTIFICATION

- 4.01 Overview. Institutions or systems seeking initial accreditation must demonstrate that they meet the AdvancED Standards, policies, and Assurances for accreditation and/or certification, have the capacity to support institution or system improvement and are committed to growth in student learning and organizational effectiveness.
- 4.02 General Guidelines. Following are general guidelines for all institutions or systems seeking initial accreditation or certification: An institution or system must:
 - a. Demonstrate financial stability before it may be accredited or, in the case of an institution, certified.
 - b.

- e. For certification, an institution must host a Certification Review within the timeframe established by the AdvancED Accreditation Office.

4.03 Application for Accreditation and/or Certification and Review Fees. The institution or system

- b. Host a follow-up onsite Engagement Review within the timeframe established by the Accreditation Office to address, at a minimum, the requirements specified in the Engagement Review Report.
- c. Provide documentation to the Engagement Review Team that addresses the

- 5.04. Schools within a School. Schools within a school are treated as separate schools and are required to comply with all AdvancED accreditation requirements if the state education agency has provided them with distinct school numbers. If the schools share the same state-provided school number, they may be treated as one school by AdvancED.

POLICY VI: PROCEDURES R

6.03. 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 institution's or system's organization. Findings by the appropriate agency may result in action by AdvancED's Global Commission.

6.04 Individual Grievances. Isolated and individual grievances between an institution or system and person are not investigated by AdvancED. AdvancED will acknowledge to the person filing the complaint, in writing, the receipt of the complaint.

a. AdvancED Accreditation Office will contact the complainant to review the requirements of Policy 6.01 if the complaint received by AdvancED does not meet such requirements and to inform the complainant that the substance of the complaint will be shared with the institution or system according to 6.03(b). This contact may be made by AdvancED through written, email and/or telephone conversation. This contact affords the complainant the opportunity to append additional information as necessary and proceed with the complaint to AdvancED or to withdraw a submitted complaint. Under no circumstances will AdvancED encourage the complainant to withdraw a complaint. Rather, this is to transparently communicate AdvancED procedures to the complainant.

b. AdvancED will notify the institution or system of each complaint that is of an individual grievance. AdvancED reserves the right to:

- i. Share with the institution or system the substance of the complaint, or
- ii. Notify the institution or system according to the requirements of Policy 6.03(c).

c. The AdvancED notification to the institution or system may request the institution or system to:

- i. Within 30 days, respond in writing to AdvancED communicating its handling of the complaint, or
- ii. Address the complaint according to the institution's own policy and procedure for managing complaints but that no written response is required to AdvancED.
- iii. A copy of the complaint and the institution's or system's response to the complaint, if required, will be maintained by the appropriate AdvancED Accreditation Office.

d. If several individual complaints are submitted to the institution or system the institution or system shall respond in writing to AdvancED within 30 days of receipt of the complaint.

- a. Within 30 days, respond in writing to AdvancED communicating its handling of the complaint.
- b. If AdvancED determines that an institution's or

- a. Within fourteen (14) calendar days after the adverse decision is ratified by the AdvancED Global Commission, AdvancED shall notify the institution or system in writing, delivered by overnight service or Certified Mail, Return Receipt Requested.
- b. The written notification shall specify the Standards, policies, and/or Assurances not met. A copy of this Policy shall be provided to the institution or system along with the notice of the adverse decision.
- c. After the AdvancED Regional Commission vote for an adverse decision and following ratification by the AdvancED Global Commission, if no notice of intent to appeal is filed as provided in Section 7.04 , the decision becomes final.

7.03 Grounds for Appeal. The grounds on which an appeal may be taken are:

- a. Departure by the AdvancED Global Commission from the procedures established by written policy, or agreement, or by recognized custom which is of such significance as to affect materially the adverse decision;
- b. The citing by the AdvancED Global Commission of factually incorrect information as basis for its decision which is of such significance as to affect materially the Commission's adverse action;
- c. Bias, as evidenced by a demonstrable intent on the part of evaluators, the AdvancED Global Commission, or the AdvancED Global Commission's professional staff to prejudice the evaluation or other review of the institution's status of accreditation, such bias being of such significance as to affect materially the AdvancED Global Commission's adverse accrediting action; or
- d. The adverse action is arbitrary and capricious.

7.04 Appeal Procedures. An institution or system wishing to appeal shall do so in accordance with the procedures set forth as follows:

- a. Within ten (10) calendar days of receipt of the written notice of the decision for adverse action, the institution or system shall file its intent to appeal the decision to place the institution or system on any of the listed statuses:
 - i. Accredited Under Conditions
 - ii. Drop of Accreditation
 - iii. Certified Under Conditions
 - iv. Drop of Certification

See Section 7.03 for grounds for an appeal.

- b. A notice of an intent to appeal shall be filed only with the prior authorization of the governing authority of the institution or system and documentation or evidence of such authorization shall be included in the notice of intent to appeal.

- c. The notice of intent to appeal shall be submitted via overnight service or Certified Mail, Return Receipt Requested to the Chief Accreditation Officer of AdvancED.
- d. The notice of intent to appeal shall contain a statement of the ground(s) on which the appeal will be made but need not provide evidence in support of the appeal.
 - i. The institution or system shall submit to the Chief Accreditation Officer of AdvancED a bond for costs of the appeal in the amount of twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000.00) that accompanies the notice of intent to appeal.

