

**Council for  
Higher Education  
Accreditation**

**Recognition of  
Accrediting Organizations  
Policy and Procedures**

*Approved by the CHEA Board of Directors  
September 28, 1998*

**CHEA**

*Council for  
Higher Education  
Accreditation*

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**RECOGNITION POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

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# RECOGNITION OF ACCREDITING ORGANIZATIONS POLICY AND PROCEDURES

## BACKGROUND

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1. The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) was formed in 1996 following an extensive and searching debate about the appropriate role for a national organization concerned with accreditation of higher education institutions. ("Institution" as used in this document refers to higher education universities, colleges, schools, and programs.) Presidents of American universities and colleges established CHEA to strengthen higher education through strengthened accreditation of higher education institutions. As its mission statement provides, "The Council for Higher Education Accreditation will serve students and their families, colleges and universities, sponsoring bodies, governments, and employers by promoting academic quality through formal recognition of higher education accreditation bodies and will coordinate and work to advance self-regulation through accreditation."

2. CHEA carries forward a long tradition that recognition of accrediting organizations should be a key strategy to ensure quality, accountability, and improvement in higher education. Recognition by CHEA affirms that standards and processes of accrediting organizations are consistent with quality, improvement, and accountability expectations that CHEA has established. CHEA will recognize regional, specialized, national, and professional accrediting organizations. Pending development of a CHEA recognition policy and procedures and CHEA review of an accrediting organization's application for recognition, CHEA honors recognition provided by the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA) and Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation (CORPA), predecessor organizations.

3. Accreditation, as distinct from recognition of accrediting organizations, focuses on higher education institutions. Accreditation aims to assure academic quality and accountability, and to encourage improvement. Accreditation is a voluntary, non-governmental peer review process by the higher education community. It extends the tradition of collegial governance within the decentralized and diverse higher education

enterprise. The work of accrediting organizations involves hundreds of self-evaluations and site visits each year, attracts thousands of higher education volunteer professionals, and calls for substantial investment of institutional, accrediting organization, and volunteer time and effort. Appendix A more extensively defines accreditation.

4. Recognition by CHEA shall be understood to convey only that the organization meets CHEA's recognition standards. Such recognition is not in any way intended to infringe on the right of any academic institution to determine for itself whether it should affiliate with any accrediting organization.

Recognition and accreditation occur in the context of other reviews. The federal government, through the United States Department of Education, also recognizes accrediting organizations. Federal, as distinct from CHEA, recognition aims to assure that the standards of accrediting organizations meet expectations for institutional and program participation in federal initiatives, such as student aid. State licensure reviews, too, serve important public purposes, including consumer protection in the higher education field.

## **CHEA RECOGNITION PURPOSES AND REQUIREMENTS**

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5. CHEA recognition of accrediting organizations has three basic purposes:

- **TO ADVANCE ACADEMIC QUALITY.** To confirm that accrediting organizations have standards that advance academic quality in higher education; that those standards emphasize student achievement and high expectations of teaching and learning, research, and service; and that those standards are developed within the framework of institutional mission.
- **TO DEMONSTRATE ACCOUNTABILITY.** To confirm that accrediting organizations have standards that ensure accountability through consistent, clear, and coherent communication to the public and the higher education community about the results of educational efforts. Accountability also includes a commitment by the accrediting organization to involve the public in accreditation decision-making.
- **TO ENCOURAGE PURPOSEFUL CHANGE AND NEEDED IMPROVEMENT.** To confirm that accrediting organizations have standards that encourage institutions to plan, where needed, for purposeful change and improvement; to develop and sustain activities that anticipate and address needed change; to stress student achievement; and to ensure long-range institutional viability.

6. CHEA acknowledges, respects, and is committed to the enhancement of the mission of accrediting organizations. CHEA has responsibility to advance, through the recognition process, the quality and public understanding of accreditation and of recognized accrediting organizations.

7. CHEA's primary responsibility is quality assurance. Accrediting organizations that seek CHEA recognition must demonstrate the quality of their activities and the pertinence and value of their activities to higher education and the public interest.

8. Applicants for recognition shall supply information to enable CHEA to determine whether recognition is warranted and what the scope of recognition shall be, including:

- a clear statement of proposed scope of accreditation activity;
- a clear statement of the accrediting organization's purposes and why those purposes are in the public interest; and



- a description of the accrediting organization and its activities; the quality, pertinence and value of those activities; and the ways in which those activities serve higher education and the public interest.

## **ELIGIBILITY AND RECOGNITION STANDARDS**

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9. Accrediting organizations that seek recognition by CHEA must demonstrate that they meet CHEA eligibility requirements and recognition standards.

10. **ELIGIBILITY.** To be eligible for CHEA recognition, the accreditation organization must:

- demonstrate that the organization's mission and scope are consistent with the CHEA *Institutional Eligibility and Recognition Policy* (Appendix B), including that a majority of the institutions and programs accredited by the organization grant higher education degrees. The *Policy* provides, in part, that the recognition process will place increasing emphasis on the effectiveness of accrediting organizations in assuring academic quality of institutions;
- be non-governmental;
- accredit institutions that have legal authority to confer higher education degrees;
- have written procedures that describe, officially and publicly,
  - ◆ the organization's decision-making processes, policies, and procedures, that lead to accreditation actions, and
  - ◆ the scope of accreditation that may be granted, evaluative criteria (standards or characteristics) used, and levels of accreditation status conferred;
- have procedures that include a self-evaluation by the institution and on-site review by a visiting team, or have alternative processes that CHEA considers to be valid;
- demonstrate independence from any parent entity or sponsoring entity for making judgments related to accreditation status; and
- have a specified and fair appeals process that authorizes continuation of current accreditation status of the institution until an appeal decision is rendered.

11. **RECOGNITION STANDARDS.** When seeking recognition, the accrediting organization must address five CHEA standards that correspond to CHEA purposes:

- A. Advances academic quality;
- B. Demonstrates accountability;
- C. Encourages purposeful change and needed improvement;
- D. Employs appropriate and fair procedures in decision-making; and

**E. Continually reassesses accreditation practices.**

**11A. ADVANCES ACADEMIC QUALITY.** Advancing academic quality is at the core of voluntary accreditation. "Academic quality" refers to results associated with teaching, learning, research, and service, within the framework of institutional mission. To be recognized, the accrediting organization must provide evidence that it has:

1. a clear definition of academic quality in the context of its mission;
2. clear expectations that the institutions have processes to determine whether quality standards are being met;
3. processes that encourage institutions to relate quality indicators to planning, assessment, and improvement strategies; and
4. expectations of institutional academic quality that are consistent with institutional mission.

**11B. DEMONSTRATES ACCOUNTABILITY.** The accrediting organization must demonstrate public accountability in two ways. It must have standards that call for institutions to provide consistent, reliable information about academic quality and student achievement and thus to foster continuing public confidence and investment. Second, the accrediting organization itself must maintain and encourage public involvement in its decision-making related to quality and accountability. Representatives of the public may include students, parents, persons from businesses and the professions, elected and appointed officials, and others. To be recognized, the accrediting organization must provide evidence that it has:

1. expectations that institutions routinely provide reliable data and information to the public on their performance;
2. policies and procedures that include representatives of the public in decision-making and policy setting;
3. implemented procedures that inform the public of accreditation decisions; and
4. appropriate processes to respond to legitimate public concerns and complaints.

**11C. ENCOURAGES PURPOSEFUL CHANGE AND NEEDED IMPROVEMENT.** The accrediting organization must encourage, within its institutions, planning for purposeful change, and scrutiny for needed improvement through ongoing self-examination. Such planning and self-scrutiny shall entail thoughtful assessment of quality (especially student achievement) in the context of the institution's mission. Encouragement of such planning and self-scrutiny should not be confused with a demand for additional resources. Such planning and self-scrutiny are means to enhance the usefulness of accreditation, notably

for institutions with a long history of successful accreditation that wish to use the review to help address specific institutional changes and improvement goals they have identified. To be recognized, the accrediting organization must provide evidence that it has:

1. policies and procedures that stress self-examination and self-analysis by institutions;
2. policies and procedures that stress planning and implementing strategies for change, and that call for scrutiny for needed improvement in the context of institutional mission and resources;
3. expectations that encourage responsible institutional innovation and experimentation; and
4. policies and procedures that clearly distinguish between actions required for accreditation and actions that are considerations for improvement.

**11D. EMPLOYS APPROPRIATE AND FAIR PROCEDURES IN DECISION-MAKING.**

The accrediting organization must maintain appropriate and fair policies and procedures that include effective checks and balances. The accreditation process shall include ongoing participation by higher education professionals and the public in decision-making about accreditation policies and procedures. To be recognized, the accrediting organization must provide evidence that it has:

1. policies and procedures for its decision-making that are not subject to interference from professional organizations and special interest groups;
2. policies and procedures that require participation by higher education professionals and the public; and
3. policies and procedures that foster reasonable consistency in accreditation reviews of varying institutions.

**11E. CONTINUALLY REASSESSSES ACCREDITATION PRACTICES.** Even as higher education institutions undertake self-assessment to maintain and improve quality, accrediting organizations need self-scrutiny of their accrediting activities, including review to determine if resources are adequate to accomplish the accreditor's mission. Such review should also include examination of the accreditor's impact on institutions and responsiveness to the broader accreditation community, including its willingness to conduct cooperative institutional reviews with accreditation colleagues. To be recognized, the accrediting organization must provide evidence that it has:

1. sufficient staff and financial resources to implement and sustain effective accrediting procedures;
2. ongoing critical self-review that encourages responsiveness, flexibility, and accountability when the accrediting organization works with institutions and the public;
3. working relationships, where appropriate, with other accrediting organizations to encourage cooperative reviews;
4. ongoing review of its value to institutions and the higher education community; and
5. assessed, within its resources, the impact of its criteria and procedures on institutions.

## **COMMITTEE ON RECOGNITION**

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**12. MEMBERSHIP.** The CHEA Committee on Recognition ("Committee") is appointed by the CHEA Board of Directors ("Board of Directors") upon recommendation by the President of CHEA in consultation with CHEA-recognized accrediting organizations. The Committee is responsible for considering the eligibility and recognition status of new and continuing accrediting organizations. The Committee is accountable to the Board of Directors and forwards its recommendations for eligibility and recognition to the Board. The Committee will consist of nine (9) members, each serving a three (3)-year term. Initial Committee members will serve staggered terms. The Committee will include public members, members from regional, specialized, national, and professional accrediting organizations, and members from colleges and universities. CHEA will seek participation that reflects the diversity of the accrediting community and higher education institutions.

**13. CONDUCT OF MEETINGS.** The Committee, in consultation with the President of CHEA, will establish the time, place, and procedures for its meetings. The Committee will consider all materials it deems pertinent that are generated by the recognition review. The Committee may consult external readers, deemed qualified by the Committee, who analyze and advise with regard to the accrediting organization's self study and documentation. The Committee will review an accrediting organization at regularly scheduled meetings.

**14. COMMITTEE RELATIONSHIP TO BOARD OF DIRECTORS.** The Committee advises the Board of Directors concerning eligibility and recognition of accrediting organizations. With due regard for the Committee's advice, the Board of Directors reviews the Committee's reports and recommendations and makes final determinations as to eligibility and recognition of accrediting organizations. Members of the Board of Directors are not eligible for service on the Committee.

## **RECOGNITION PROCESS**

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15. **FREQUENCY OF RECOGNITION REVIEW.** At a minimum, the accrediting organization will undergo a recognition review every ten years with an interim five year report. However, CHEA may elect to review a recognized accrediting organization out of sequence where:

- A. The accrediting organization proposes to change the scope of its activities; or
- B. There has been a pattern of documented concerns from institutions following accreditation reviews by the accrediting organization over time, and received by CHEA, and the institutions have pursued the accrediting organization's procedures for addressing complaints.

16. **STEPS IN RECOGNITION REVIEW.** The sequence of recognition review will normally be as follows:

- Accrediting organization files letter of intent and application fee to apply for CHEA recognition.
- CHEA sends accrediting organization recognition review materials.
- Accrediting organization returns eligibility portion of application to CHEA.
- Committee makes recommendation on eligibility for Board of Directors consideration.
- Board of Directors considers Committee recommendation and, if necessary, provides accrediting organization with opportunity to appear before the Board.
- Accrediting organization completes self-study portion of application and forwards to CHEA office. If requested by the accrediting organization, CHEA staff will provide consultation.
- CHEA staff sends self-study to reader, if applicable, and Committee.
- Site visitor, if applicable, sent to accrediting organization. Third-party comments due in CHEA office and forwarded to accrediting organization for comment. Reader's report and site visit reports, if any, are due in CHEA office and forwarded to accrediting

organization for comment. Accrediting organization informed of areas of concern, if any.

- Accrediting organization's response, any reader and site visit reports, and third-party comments due in CHEA office. Any reader's and site visit reports, third-party comments, and accrediting organization responses forwarded to the Committee.
- Public presentation to Committee by accrediting organization and Committee recommendation to Board of Directors.
- Accrediting organization response, if any, due to Committee.
- Board of Directors considers Committee recommendation and, if necessary, provides accrediting organization opportunity to appear before the Board.

In developing the schedule, CHEA staff will make reasonable accommodations for the accrediting organization's internal review procedures pertinent to the recognition process.

**17. CEO LETTER OF INTENT TO CHEA.** The chief executive officer of the accrediting organization shall send a letter with an application fee to CHEA. CHEA staff will acknowledge the letter of intent and supply information about the recognition process, a schedule, and a copy of the *CHEA Recognition Policy and Procedures*. The Committee will be informed of the letter of intent.

**18. TYPE OF RECOGNITION REVIEW.** CHEA will confirm the type of recognition sought by the accrediting organization: initial recognition, continuing recognition, or change of scope.

**19. CONSIDERATION OF ELIGIBILITY.** An accrediting organization seeking recognition by CHEA must demonstrate to the Committee that it meets CHEA's eligibility requirements. The Committee will review an accrediting organization's documentation and consider whether such documentation satisfies eligibility requirements.

**20.** The Committee shall make its recommendation to the Board of Directors as to the eligibility of an accrediting organization and shall notify the accrediting organization within thirty (30) days after the recommendation. If the Committee recommends that an accrediting organization should not be considered eligible for CHEA recognition, the notice shall include a statement of the reasons for that recommendation and shall identify the specific eligibility criteria that the accrediting organization did not meet.



21. If the Committee recommends that an accrediting organization should be considered eligible for CHEA recognition and the Board of Directors determines that the organization is eligible, the recognition process will proceed.

22. If the Committee recommends that an accrediting organization should not be considered eligible for CHEA recognition, the accrediting organization may request that the Board of Directors review the recommendation of ineligibility. The accrediting organization must submit a request for review in writing to the President of CHEA within 30 days after receipt of notice of the Committee's recommendation. The request for review must address any alleged procedural errors in the recognition process and any alleged errors of fact or interpretation in the Committee's recommendation and include any additional information that addresses the concerns raised by the Committee. The Committee will cease the recognition process unless, after review by the Board of Directors, the accrediting organization is determined to be eligible for CHEA recognition. The Board of Directors will review the Committee's recommendation under the procedures described below under Paragraphs 33-37.

23. Before the Committee and the Board of Directors act on the accrediting organization's application for CHEA recognition, they will confirm the accrediting organization's continuing eligibility for CHEA recognition.

24. **COSTS.** Applicant organizations will bear all fees and costs of the recognition review. These include application fee, CHEA annual participation fee, site visit costs, reader expenses, duplication, mailing, and all related costs.

25. **PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT.** Upon confirmation of eligibility and payment of the application fee, CHEA will make public through CHEA publications that the accrediting organization has requested a recognition review. The notice will be sent to the accrediting organization for publication in its newsletters.

26. **SELF-STUDY.** A self-study by the accrediting organization is required for recognition. The self-study should include evidence that the applicant meets the five standards set forth in Paragraph 11 through Paragraph 11E of the *CHEA Recognition Policy and Procedures*. CHEA staff will assist the accrediting organization to ensure that materials are presented in an appropriate format, that complete documentation is included, and that proposed innovative methods for conducting reviews are thoughtfully considered. Reader(s) of the self-study, where applicable, identified by CHEA staff and satisfactory to the Committee, will be chosen by CHEA in consultation with the accrediting organization. The accrediting organization shall have the opportunity to review any reader's report and attach comments. The full report of any reader with comments will be distributed to the Committee for consideration.

27. **SITE VISIT.** The Committee may require at any time in the recognition review that there be a site visit with the accrediting organization if:

- A. the accrediting organization is seeking initial recognition;
- B. the Committee believes that the material provided by the accrediting organization is insufficient for a fair judgment by the Committee; or
- C. the Committee believes that third-party comments received by the Committee are sufficient to raise questions that may be addressed usefully through a site visit pertinent to those questions.

The site visitor(s), identified by CHEA staff and satisfactory to the Committee, will be chosen by CHEA in consultation with the accrediting organization. The accrediting organization shall have the opportunity to review any site visitor report and attach comments. The full review of any site visitor with comments will be distributed to the Committee.

28. **THIRD PARTY COMMENT.** All third parties who intend to comment at an accrediting organization's recognition review must submit in writing to CHEA a description of the organization(s) they represent and an outline of the proposed comments. All comments must address the accrediting organization's efforts to meet the CHEA recognition standards. CHEA staff will review third-party submissions for completeness and applicability to recognition standards. Outlines of oral and written comments will be included in materials provided to accrediting organizations, the Committee, and readers. The accrediting organization shall have the opportunity to review third-party comments and attach its response. Third-party comments, with the accrediting organization's response, will be distributed to the Committee for consideration. Individuals and organizations that request the opportunity to comment will be notified of the scheduled appearance of the accrediting organization and, where in the judgment of the Committee doing so may be useful, assigned a time at which to appear. CHEA staff will notify all concerned parties of the location, date, and time of the public presentation.

29. **PUBLIC PRESENTATION TO COMMITTEE.** The Committee shall hold a public meeting at which the accrediting organization, the reader(s), the site visitor(s), and, where applicable, third parties may make oral presentations concerning the qualification of the accrediting organization for CHEA recognition. Committee members may ask questions of the accrediting organization, reader(s), site visitor(s), and third parties, who will have an opportunity to respond. The Committee shall make a transcript of the public meeting. CHEA staff will assist the accrediting organization in the format and presentation of its self-study, supporting documentation, including information on change of scope when applicable, and other pertinent information. The accrediting organization should ordinarily be represented by its executive director and elected chair.

**30. COMMITTEE ACTION.** Following the public presentation by the accrediting organization, the Committee will meet in executive session to confirm the continuing eligibility of the accrediting organization, consider the qualifications of the accrediting organization for CHEA recognition based on the record before the Committee, and take one of the following actions concerning the accrediting organization:

- A. recommend initial recognition, continued recognition, or acceptance of change of scope of the accrediting organization;
- B. recommend initial recognition, continued recognition, or acceptance of change of scope of an accrediting organization with a requirement of one or more written reports to the Committee indicating progress toward meeting the CHEA standards or other requirements related to change of scope;
- C. recommend deferral of action until:
  - 1. receipt of additional information from the accrediting organization. The information required will be clearly specified by the Committee and related to the five CHEA recognition standards;
  - 2. receipt of evidence of improvement in meeting CHEA standards as specified by the Committee; and/or
  - 3. receipt of documentation to justify more adequately the proposed change of scope.The deferral will be accompanied by deadlines for receipt of information and a response by the Committee; or
- D. recommend denial of initial recognition, continuing recognition or change of scope, including reasons for the denial.

**31. WRITTEN NOTICE BY THE COMMITTEE.** The Committee will notify the accrediting organization of the Committee's recommendation and provide the complete text of its recommendation, including a statement of the reasons for its recommendation. If an accrediting organization did not meet one or more of the recognition standards, the statement of reasons shall identify the recognition standards that the accrediting organization did not meet and the reasons for that determination. Notification to the accrediting organization will be within thirty (30) days following the Committee meeting.

**32. ACCREDITING ORGANIZATION RESPONSE.** The accrediting organization, within thirty (30) days from receipt of the report, shall forward its written response to the CHEA office. The response may:

- A. address any asserted procedural errors in the recognition process;
- B. address asserted factual errors or errors of interpretation in the report; and

- C. include additional information that addresses concerns raised by the Committee.

33. **REVIEW BY BOARD OF DIRECTORS.** The Board of Directors shall act on a recommendation of the Committee as to eligibility or recognition by:

- A. accepting the recommendation;
- B. rejecting the recommendation;
- C. returning the matter to the Committee for further consideration; or
- D. taking such other action as the Board of Directors deems appropriate.

34. **PRESUMPTION OF REGULARITY.** In considering the eligibility or recognition of an accrediting organization, the Board of Directors shall consider the recommendation of the Committee, the response of the accrediting organization, and the record before the Committee. The Board of Directors will presume that the factual findings of the Committee are accurate unless the accrediting organization demonstrates that a factual finding material to the Committee's recommendation is clearly erroneous based on the record before the Committee. If the accrediting organization wishes to provide additional information concerning any factual determinations of the Committee, the Board of Directors may return the matter to the Committee for further consideration.

35. **ACTIONS FAVORABLE TO THE ACCREDITING ORGANIZATION.** The Board of Directors may accept a recommendation of the Committee that an accrediting organization be deemed eligible or recognized without any further submission or appearance by the accrediting organization other than such submission or appearance as the Board may require to confirm the accrediting organization's continuing eligibility.

36. **ACTIONS ADVERSE TO THE ACCREDITING ORGANIZATION.** The Board of Directors will not act on a recommendation of ineligibility or non-recognition, reject a recommendation of eligibility or recognition, or take any other action adverse to an accrediting organization before providing the accrediting organization with notice and an opportunity to appear before the Board of Directors. The appearance of an accrediting organization will include an opportunity to present its written response to the recommendation of the Committee and any supplement to that response that the accrediting organization may wish to submit. At the request of the accrediting organization and with the concurrence of the Board of Directors, the accrediting organization will be afforded the opportunity to appear in person before the Board of Directors. The accrediting organization may have legal counsel present to advise it during its appearance before the Board of Directors, but not to speak unless requested to do so by the Board of Directors.

**37. WRITTEN NOTICE BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS.** The Board of Directors shall notify accrediting organizations of its actions on the recommendations of the Committee as to eligibility and recognition within thirty (30) days after taking such action. If the Board of Directors recognizes an accrediting organization, the notice shall specify the scope of the accrediting organization's recognition (including, where indicated, the geographic area, the types of higher education institutions or programs that the accrediting organization may accredit, and the degrees and certificates awarded by higher education institutions accredited by the accrediting organization) and the recognition period. If the action is adverse to the accrediting organization, the notice shall include a statement of the reasons for that action. The statement of reasons shall identify the eligibility criteria or recognition standards that the accrediting organization did not meet and the reasons for that determination.

**38. PUBLIC NOTICE.** All decisions of the Board of Directors to recognize, not recognize, or defer recognition of an accrediting organization, including initial and continued recognition of accrediting organizations and change of scope, will be public information. CHEA will publish the action of the Board of Directors.

**39. WITHDRAWAL OF RECOGNITION.** CHEA may withdraw recognition of an accrediting organization for sufficient cause, including a determination by CHEA that the accrediting organization no longer meets the requirements for eligibility or the standards for recognition. CHEA will withdraw recognition in accordance with procedures deemed sufficient by CHEA to afford the accrediting organization with appropriate notice and opportunity to respond.

**40. SUGGESTIONS FOR PREPARATION OF EVIDENCE.** The *Recognition Policy and Procedures* describes evidence pertinent to the five recognition standards set forth in Paragraph 11 through Paragraph 11E. Appendix C provides illustrative information that may assist accrediting organizations in preparing such evidence. The Committee is required to comply with the *Recognition Policy and Procedures* and is not bound by Appendix C.

## **ADDITIONAL PROVISIONS**

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**41. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST.** CHEA upholds the principle that members of the Committee, the Board of Directors, and consultants such as readers and site visitors (collectively, for purposes of this paragraph, "CHEA representatives") shall be impartial and objective in considering the eligibility and recognition of accrediting organizations.

- A. When there is an actual or apparent conflict of interest, CHEA expects its representatives to recuse themselves as a matter of personal and professional integrity from consideration of an accrediting organization. The CHEA representative shall have primary responsibility for compliance with this policy.
- B. CHEA representatives shall recuse themselves from consideration of an accrediting organization applying for CHEA recognition where the CHEA representative receives monetary compensation from the accrediting organization as an employee or consultant or otherwise; or holds a position of authority or governance role with the accrediting organization, such as commission member, director, or officer, whether paid or unpaid.
- C. In addressing conflicts of interest, CHEA representatives shall take into account whether they (i) had in the recent past or expect to have a financial relationship or governance role with the accrediting organization applying for CHEA recognition; (ii) are participating in an accreditation review by the applicant for CHEA recognition; (iii) have a financial relationship or governance role with an accrediting organization that is a direct competitor of an applicant for CHEA recognition; (iv) have or have expressed a predisposition concerning an applicant for CHEA recognition that would impair objectivity in the recognition process; (v) have a close relative with a pertinent relationship, role or predisposition concerning an applicant for CHEA recognition; and (vi) other considerations they deem pertinent.
- D. In the event a CHEA representative, with respect to an apparent or actual conflict of interest, does not voluntarily recuse himself or herself, the Board of Directors may take such action as the Board of Directors considers appropriate.

**42. PERSONAL GAIN.** In the course of their CHEA service, CHEA representatives shall observe high standards of personal integrity. For example, CHEA representatives shall not solicit or accept, for themselves or any other person, gifts, gratuities, entertainment, loans or other consideration from persons who are associated with an applicant for CHEA recognition, an institution accredited by the applicant, a direct competitor of an applicant, or any other third party that the CHEA representative knows intends to comment on the

applicant in the recognition review; provided that this paragraph does not bar acceptance of items of insubstantial value, consistent with personal integrity, in the ordinary course of service as a CHEA representative.

**43. COMMUNICATIONS AND CONFIDENTIALITY.** CHEA representatives shall maintain the confidentiality of information pertaining to the recognition process. During the recognition process a CHEA representative shall not discuss any confidential aspect of an application for CHEA recognition with the applicant, an institution accredited by the applicant, a direct competitor of the applicant, or any other third party that intends to comment on the applicant, except as required in order to discharge the responsibilities of the CHEA representative in the recognition review. CHEA representatives shall refer inquiries concerning the recognition process to CHEA staff. CHEA will communicate the results of the recognition review to the applicant and the public as provided in Paragraphs 37 and 38.

**44. AMENDMENT.** CHEA reserves the right to amend this *Recognition Policy and Procedures* from time to time when in its judgment the interests of sound and reliable accreditation, recognition of accreditors, or CHEA administration are served by doing so.

## Appendix A

### **Accreditation Defined**

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**Accreditation in higher education is defined as a collegial process based on self- and peer assessment for public accountability and improvement of academic quality. Peers assess the quality of an institution or academic program and assist the faculty and staff in improvement. An accreditation of an academic program or an entire institution typically involves three major activities:**

- **The faculty, administrators, and staff of the institution or academic program conduct a self-study using the accrediting organization's set of expectations about quality (standards, criteria) as their guide.**
- **A team of peers, selected by the accrediting organization, reviews the evidence, visits the campus to interview the faculty and staff, and writes a report of its assessment including recommendation to the commission of the accrediting organization (group of peer faculty and staff, professionals, and public members).**
- **Guided by a set of expectations about quality and integrity, the commission reviews the evidence and recommendation, makes a judgment, and communicates the decision to the institution and other constituencies if appropriate.**

**Accreditation is an integral part of our system of higher education. Our system consists of both public and private institutions with a wide range of types of missions, from national research universities and regional comprehensive institutions to liberal arts colleges and very small faith-related colleges to community colleges and vocational institutions. The genius of this system is that, unlike other countries, we do not have mandatory national curricula for colleges; we do not have a national ministry of education that regulates academic standards; and students are free to choose what type of education they pursue depending on their ability, financial resources, and educational goals. Because it developed from this diverse set of institutions, accreditation is a flexible and adaptive process. Institutions that seek accreditation can do so from a wide range of accrediting organizations - from national bodies that are oriented to a particular type of institution, to regional organizations that encompass a wide range of types of institutions, to specialized organizations that focus on a single discipline or profession.**



## Appendix B

### ***Institutional Eligibility and Recognition Policy<sup>1</sup>***

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***The Council for Higher Education Accreditation will serve students and their families, colleges and universities, sponsoring bodies, governments, and employers by promoting academic quality through formal recognition of higher education accrediting bodies and will coordinate and work to advance self-regulation through accreditation.***

**The Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) invites participation by degree-granting institutions of higher education that are accredited by a CHEA-recognized accreditation organization.**

**The goals of CHEA recognition are to advance quality assurance through accreditation to serve students and their families, colleges and universities, sponsoring bodies, governments, and employers. All eligible organizations must meet the general standards enunciated in this recognition process. The recognition process will place increasing emphasis on the effectiveness of accreditation organizations in assuring the academic quality of institutions and programs through standards, policies, and procedures that address appropriate rigor, degree nomenclature, and at the undergraduate level, a general education program designed to ensure breadth of knowledge and at all levels, advanced intellectual inquiry.**

**Recognition will be determined in accordance with established standards and rules of good practice that ensure fair treatment, promotion and maintenance of academic quality, and respect for institutional autonomy.**

**Organizations that accredit institutions will be eligible to apply for recognition by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation if the majority of their accredited institutions are degree-granting. Organizations that accredit programs will be eligible to apply for recognition by CHEA if the majority of the accredited programs are degree-granting. An accreditation organization is responsible for providing assurance of the percentage of degree-granting units within its constituency and demonstrating its general support with the goals of CHEA recognition.**

**CHEA will extend recognition previously granted by the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA) and/or Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation (CORPA) until a given organization is reviewed by CHEA for recognition estimated to begin January 1, 1999 or until an organization declines to submit to such a review. CHEA recognition reviews will begin following board consideration of the recommendations of the Recognition Task Force that was established in April 1997. By summer 1998, accreditation organizations should be advised of a new schedule of review. The priority order of reviews will be all organizations which do not appear to meet CHEA eligibility requirements as stated above; organizations seeking initial CHEA recognition; and organizations seeking continued recognition in the order of the date of their latest COPA/CORPA review.\***

**<sup>1</sup> In pursuit of its mission to advance higher education, and in light of knowledge and experience, CHEA reserves the right to amend the foregoing and/or grant recognition to such accrediting entities that in CHEA's judgment warrant such recognition.**

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\*Policy approved by the CHEA board of directors on May 12, 1997.

## Appendix C

### **Suggestions for Preparation of Evidence**

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#### **Standard A: Advances Academic Quality**

**Additional Explanation:** This standard is intended to help applicants for recognition to establish that they do indeed advance academic quality. The applicant will want to provide some background to its activities by explaining what it means by academic quality. Subsequently, it should describe what it requires of its applicant institutions to help it make a determination regarding their quality. It would be useful for applicants to explain how they take institutional mission into account in assessing academic quality and planning for its improvement. Examining institutions for academic quality is one way to advance academic quality. Applicant bodies are encouraged to describe other initiatives and activities that advance academic quality.

**Illustrative Questions.** In thinking about advancing academic quality, the accreditor might ask: how does the accrediting organization define and explain its expectations of academic quality; how does the accrediting organization address quality indicators such as student learning goals and achievement of research and service goals; how does the accrediting organization confirm that institutional mission is central to its academic quality expectations; and how does the accrediting organization encourage institutions to relate planning to quality indicators?

#### **Standard B: Demonstrates Accountability**

**Additional Explanation:** Employers, parents, students, and others look to accrediting organizations for consistent and reliable information about institutions, and increasingly, seek to participate in the process itself. There is no single model for providing the information and involvement which are so important for public accountability, and each accrediting organization will want to relate, in terms of its own structure and procedures, how it ensures this accountability.

**Illustrative Questions.** In thinking about the demonstration of accountability, the accreditor might ask: how does the accrediting organization inform the higher education community and the broader public (e.g., students, parents, general public, professionals, faculty, higher education officials, and government agencies) of its decisions; in what ways does the accrediting organization involve the public in the accreditation process; and how does the accrediting organization respond to public concerns and complaints?

#### **Standard C: Encourages Purposeful Change and Needed Improvement**

**Additional Explanation:** This standard speaks to the traditional elements of accreditation, including the self-examination and self-analysis which are part of the self-study process, and moves the process to include planning for improvements when needed. There is no one preferred method of addressing this standard. Rather, applicant organizations should explain what strategies for planning they require of institutions and what help and direction they offer in the area of planning, and describe how the process is implemented in practice. This section also explicitly recognizes the central role played by institutional mission. Thus, the "planning for change and scrutiny for improvement" which often emerge from the accreditation process, must take place in the context of institutional mission. Applicants are encouraged to expand upon this aspect of planning, referring to policies, practices, and procedures as appropriate.

**Illustrative Questions.** In thinking about planning for change and needed improvement, the accreditor might ask: how is the self-study designed to address improvements in the context of the mission of the institution; how is the accreditation self-study and site visit a part of the institution's strategic plan; how does the accrediting organization encourage institutions to use ongoing assessment processes, institutional research, and internal evaluative mechanisms in the accreditation process; and how does the accrediting organization provide institutions with a thoughtful diagnostic analysis that assists institutions to act on their own solutions and strategies for improvement?

#### **Standard D: Employs Appropriate and Fair Procedures in Decision-Making**

**Additional Explanation:** The accreditation decision-making process must be fair and appropriate if it is to merit public confidence. Applicant organizations will want to describe the steps taken to develop appropriate accreditation policies and procedures and to implement them fairly.

**Illustrative Questions.** In thinking about employing fair procedures in decision-making, the accreditor might ask: how does the accrediting organization ensure that its decision-making is not subject to interference from professional organizations and special interest groups; how does the accrediting organization ensure that representatives of the public participate in decision-making and policy setting; and what procedures does the accrediting organization employ to ensure reasonable consistency in accreditation reviews of varying institutions?

#### **Standard E: Continually Reassesses Accreditation Practices**

**Additional Explanation:** The operative word in examining staff and financial resources is "sufficient." Every applicant organization will want to establish that it has sufficient resources in terms of its own accrediting activities.

How does the organization examine its accreditation policies and procedures? The standard suggests that among the considerations to be included in such an ongoing review are: responsiveness, flexibility, and accountability when the accrediting organization is working with institutions, programs, and the public; the capacity to work with the broader accreditation community; and the impact of its criteria and procedures on institutional and program resources.

**Illustrative Questions.** In thinking about continually reassessing accreditation practices, the accreditor might ask: what kind of information does the accrediting organization routinely

collect to monitor the effectiveness and efficiency of its performance; what practices does the accrediting organization maintain to foster cooperation with other accrediting organizations; how responsive is the accrediting organization to institutional requests for cooperation to minimize duplication of effort from institutions or programs (e.g., common data formats, visits, calendars); how does the accrediting organization ensure the professional and technical competencies of those involved in the accreditation; and how does the accrediting organization determine that its criteria contribute to the usefulness of the accreditation process?

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