



# ***Recognition of Accrediting Organizations Policy and Procedures***

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

*Approved by the CHEA Board of Directors January 23, 2006*

*Approved by the CHEA Board of Directors June 28, 2010*

*Approved by the CHEA Board of Directors September 24, 2018*

© Copyright 2019. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from publisher.

Council for Higher Education Accreditation  
One Dupont Circle NW • Suite 510  
Washington, DC 20036-1135  
Tel: 202-955-6126  
Fax: 202-955-6129  
e-mail: [chea@chea.org](mailto:chea@chea.org)  
[www.chea.org](http://www.chea.org)

# **RECOGNITION OF ACCREDITING ORGANIZATIONS POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

## **Table of Contents**

<b>KEY TERMS</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>BACKGROUND</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>CHEA RECOGNITION PURPOSES</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>CHEA-RECOGNIZED SCOPE OF ACCREDITATION</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>RECOGNITION STANDARDS</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>COMMITTEE ON RECOGNITION</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>RECOGNITION REVIEW</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>APPLICATION PROCESS</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>ADDITIONAL PROVISIONS</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>AMENDMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION</b> .....	<b>14</b>

The references to the CHEA *Recognition of Accrediting Organizations Policy and Procedures* and the CHEA *Recognition Policy and Procedures* are used interchangeably and refer to the same document.

# KEY TERMS

This section describes key terms in the CHEA *Recognition Policy and Procedures*. The terms apply only to the *Recognition Policy and Procedures* and are not intended for use with any other statement or policy.

**Academic Quality:** The results associated with teaching, learning, research and service, including the integrated way in which learning, practice and discovery are fostered by institutions and programs. Intellectual rigor, honesty and integrity, as well as the thoughtful linking of mission and goals to pathways toward achieving those goals, are critical characteristics of academic quality. Academic quality includes the nature of the expectations institutions or programs have of their students and the attention, expertise and effort those institutions and programs give to engendering student success.

**Accountability:** The responsibility of an accrediting organization to (1) have standards, policies and procedures that require accredited institutions and programs to provide, at a minimum, readily accessible, accurate and consistent aggregate information to the public about institutional or program performance, student achievement and the reasons for accreditation decisions; and (2) make its accreditation standards, policies, processes and decision-making outcomes readily accessible to the public.

**Accreditation Action:** The decision made by the accrediting organization, as the result of an institution or program review, to grant, reaffirm, deny, withdraw or defer accreditation or to award candidacy or pre-accreditation or to impose notice, warning, show cause, or probation status.

**Accreditation Status:** The accreditation granted to an institution or program by the accrediting organization as a result of a review, including the period of time accreditation is expected to be in effect. Such status may include, but is not limited to, accredited or reaffirmed, candidacy or pre-accreditation, provisional accreditation, probationary accreditation or other classification defined in the accrediting organization's policy.

**Conflict of Interest:** A set of circumstances that creates a risk that professional judgment or actions may be inappropriately influenced. A conflict of interest includes all significant conflicts of interest, financial and other, and is deemed to exist if reasonable observers, having knowledge of all the relevant circumstances, would conclude that the individual has an actual or apparent conflict of interest in the matter.

**Institutions and Programs:** Colleges, universities, and if and to the extent permitted by CHEA, other degree-granting providers (i.e., organizations or other entities, other than colleges or universities, which offer degrees at the associate or higher level upon completion of educational activities).

**Readily Accessible:** The ease with which information provided on institution or program or accrediting organization Websites can be identified, located and obtained by the public. Ease of access includes obvious and accurate labeling of links to pertinent information, no required self-identification or membership and as few steps as possible needed to access the information.

**Recognition or Recognized:** The status granted by the Board after an accrediting organization successfully completes the CHEA review process.

**Recognition Standards:** The basis on which CHEA considers an application for recognition and renders its decision.

**Sponsoring Organization:** An organization with a direct or indirect affiliation or agreement, including any management or financial or other oversight capacity, with the accrediting organization. Such organizations may not limit, influence or control development of accreditation standards, policies or procedures, conduct of accreditation reviews, functions, or operations or determination of accreditation status.

**Transparency:** Public accessibility to information about the accreditation process, the results of accreditation reviews and student achievement.

# **RECOGNITION OF ACCREDITING ORGANIZATIONS POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

## **BACKGROUND**

1. The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) was formed in 1996 as an organization committed to enhancing higher education through strengthened accreditation. Accreditation is a process of external quality review created and used by higher education to scrutinize institutions and programs for quality assurance and quality improvement. "CHEA 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." (CHEA Mission Statement)
2. Accrediting organizations are non-governmental organizations structured and organized to review and evaluate institutions or programs and render judgments about their accreditation status. CHEA recognizes regional, national career- or faith-related and programmatic accrediting organizations. Recognition by CHEA affirms that the standards, structures and practices of accrediting organizations promote academic quality, improvement, accountability and needed flexibility and innovation in the institutions or programs they accredit.
3. Recognition by CHEA conveys only that the accrediting organization meets the recognition standards with respect to institutions or programs included in the CHEA-recognized scope of accreditation. Such recognition is not intended to infringe on the right of any institution or program to determine for itself whether to affiliate with an accrediting organization.
4. CHEA recognition may occur alongside and is independent of other reviews. For example, the federal government, through the U.S. 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 programmatic participation in federal initiatives, such as student aid. State licensure reviews, too, serve important public purposes, including consumer protection.

## **CHEA RECOGNITION PURPOSES**

5. Recognition signifies that the accrediting organization embraces the value of periodic external review of its accreditation activities. Recognition:
  - Holds accrediting organizations responsible for meeting all CHEA standards of academic quality, accountability, transparency and effective organization and practice;
  - Affirms the fitness of accrediting organizations to promote academic quality and serve higher education, students and the public, now and in the foreseeable future; and
  - Serves as evidence to the public that the recognized accrediting organizations are credible sources of judgment about academic quality in higher education.
6. A CHEA-recognized accrediting organization bases accreditation judgments principally on the performance of institutions or programs in relation to student achievement. In addition, an accrediting organization bases accreditation judgments on the institution's or program's mission, structure, operation and capacity. The *Recognition Policy and Procedures* emphasizes self-study and peer review as central to judging institutions or programs based on quantitative or qualitative information with external

verification, as appropriate. Accrediting organizations also sustain effective means of communicating with the public and within the profession about their accreditation judgments. Recognized accrediting organizations provide evidence that their standards and policies are implemented and enforced. A recognized accrediting organization carries out its accrediting activities while acknowledging and valuing institution or program mission and independence.

A CHEA-recognized accrediting organization:

- Awards or continues accredited status only for institutions or programs that demonstrate effective performance in relation to student learning and that make information on this public. Effective performance with regard to students will entail a wide range of evidence, as pertinent, such as completion, graduation, retention, success with academic transfer, success with entry to graduate school, success in moving into the world of work and other evidence, as appropriate. This policy does not establish explicit quantitative indicators for performance expectations. Performance expectations may emanate from the accrediting organization working with its institutions or programs, or from an institution or program or from both.
- Provides to the public readily accessible and easily understandable information about the accreditation status of institutions or programs and what this accreditation status signifies, including length of a term of accreditation, reasons for awarding accreditation status, information about any deficiencies in relation to accreditation standards and policies and reasons for conditioning or denying accreditation.
- Requires that all accreditation standards be met in order for an institution or program to obtain and maintain accredited status.
- Utilizes means to identify and act on institutions or programs that are ineffective with regard to student learning, based on expectations set by the accreditor, the institution or program or from both.
- Maintains a strong quality improvement capacity.
- Sustains ongoing attention to mission and appropriate innovation in institutions and programs and in the carrying out of its own standards, policies and procedures.

## CHEA-RECOGNIZED SCOPE OF ACCREDITATION

**7. CHEA-RECOGNIZED SCOPE OF ACCREDITATION.** CHEA recognizes accrediting organizations for work in judging the quality of U.S. institutions and programs and, where permitted under this policy, other institutions and programs at the associate degree level or above.

The accrediting organization submits evidence of its capacity and competence to carry out accreditation activities identified in the scope statement.

The accrediting organization submits a clear statement of its proposed scope of recognition, which will be used to inform the public of the accreditation activities for which the accrediting organization holds recognition. The scope statement includes the following information about the accreditation activities for which recognition is sought: (1) types of institutions or programs; (2) degree levels; (3) geographic boundaries of accreditation activity, including specification of United States and international locations; and (4) degree areas or professional fields of study.

Recognition is available only if a majority of institutions or programs the organization accredits grant degrees at the associate degree level or above. The CHEA-recognized scope of accreditation also may or may not include additional offerings, such as internships, clinical training and post-doctoral work.

However, such offerings are not counted when determining whether the accrediting organization meets the degree-granting requirement.

Separate from the scope statement, the accrediting organization identifies any accreditation activities it conducts for which it is not seeking recognition. These activities are not part of the CHEA-recognized scope of accreditation.

**8. CHANGES IN THE CHEA-RECOGNIZED SCOPE OF ACCREDITATION.** Proposed changes in the CHEA-recognized scope of accreditation are considered by the Committee on Recognition (Committee) during or outside a regular recognition review. Changes in CHEA-recognized scope of accreditation include but are not limited to: (1) change in the type(s) of institutions and programs to be accredited; (2) addition or removal of a degree level; (3) change of geographical boundaries of accreditation activity, such as an expansion to include activity outside the United States; and (4) addition or removal of a degree area or professional field of study.

To be considered for a change in the CHEA-recognized scope of accreditation, the recognized accrediting organization submits:

- A. Its current statement of CHEA-recognized scope of accreditation;
- B. A clear statement of the proposed change in the CHEA-recognized scope of accreditation;
- C. The reasons for the proposed change, including evidence that the accrediting organization's decision-making body has authorized the change;
- D. Evidence of the accrediting organization's capacity and competence to carry out accreditation reviews under the new proposed scope, including evidence from the results of pilot reviews;
- E. A timetable for implementation of the new CHEA-recognized scope of accreditation, including impact on currently enrolled students affected by the change; and
- F. Evidence of consultation with appropriate constituencies.

The decision of the Committee with respect to a requested change in CHEA-recognized scope of accreditation will be final unless the Committee refers the matter to the Board of Directors (Board). The Board in its discretion also may act on an accrediting organization's scope of accreditation in the recognition review process or incident to a requested change of scope.

If a recognized accrediting organization alters its CHEA-recognized scope of accreditation in non-substantive ways, e.g., editorial revisions, it promptly notifies CHEA staff and includes a brief description of what led the accrediting organization to make the alterations. CHEA will modify its documents that include the CHEA-recognized scope of accreditation.

## RECOGNITION STANDARDS

**9. RECOGNITION STANDARDS.** CHEA requires that an accrediting organization comply with this policy and meet all parts of each of three recognition standards, as administered and interpreted by CHEA, in order to be recognized. A recognized accrediting organization provides evidence that it:

- A. Promotes academic quality and advances student achievement;
- B. Demonstrates public accountability for performance and transparency; and
- C. Sustains an effective accreditation structure and organization.

## **10. PROMOTES ACADEMIC QUALITY AND ADVANCES STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT.**

Advancement of academic quality is at the core of accreditation. To be recognized, the accrediting organization provides evidence that it implements and enforces standards, policies or procedures which:

- A. Articulate the accrediting organization's expectations for academic quality and results associated with institutional or program performance, including student achievement, consistent with institution or program mission.
- B. Require institutions or programs to establish and make public their expectations for achievement of academic quality and indicators of student success, to implement processes to determine whether students and graduates meet the stated expectations and to make public, in aggregate form, evidence of student success. (Also see Standard 11B1)
- C. As a central part of the accrediting organization's decision-making about accreditation status, address how well institutions or programs meet the accrediting organization's performance expectations, including, at a minimum, performance expectations consistent with institution or program mission and type. Performance expectations may emanate from the accrediting organization working with its institutions or programs, or from an institution or program or from both.
- D. Refer to institutional or programmatic resources only to the extent required for students to emerge adequately prepared or to address health and safety in the delivery of programs.
- E. Apply its quality standards and policies in ways that respect the institution's or program's mission and prerogative to set priorities and to control how the institution or program is structured and operates.
- F. Encourage and assist institutions and programs in ongoing improvement of academic quality and performance, including a commitment to flexibility and appropriate innovation in promoting academic quality.

## **11. DEMONSTRATES PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY FOR PERFORMANCE AND**

**TRANSPARENCY.** Public accountability for performance and transparency includes expectations related to the following three elements: (A) performance of accrediting organizations, (B) performance of accredited institutions or programs, and, if applicable, (C) performance of accrediting organizations engaged in international activity.

- A. The accrediting organization implements and enforces standards, policies or procedures that:
  - 1. Inform the public of the reason(s) for the accrediting organization's accreditation actions (i.e., decision made by the accrediting organization, as the result of an institution or program review to grant, reaffirm, deny, withdraw or defer accreditation, or award candidacy or pre-accreditation, or to impose notice, warning, show cause or probation status) in a timely and readily accessible manner, including the institutional or program comments if any. (Also see Standard 12D3. This information also needs to be included in a directory.)
  - 2. Provide for substantive and timely response by the accrediting organization to legitimate public concerns and complaints about an institution, program or the accrediting organization.
  - 3. Provide a procedure for the accrediting organization to take timely action to prevent substantially underperforming institutions or programs from achieving or maintaining accredited status. The procedure includes application of indicators to determine

institution or program performance weakness, procedure for intervention and options for action by the accrediting organization in such cases.

4. Include ongoing attention to appropriate innovation in demonstrating public accountability.
- B. Institutions and programs accredited by the recognized accrediting organization:
1. Provide timely, readily accessible, accurate and consistent aggregate information to the public about institutional or programmatic performance and student achievement, as such information is determined by the institution or program, based on quantitative or qualitative information with external verification as appropriate;
  2. Distinguish accurately between programs that are accredited and those that are not; and
  3. Provide evidence of ongoing attention to appropriate innovation.
- C. Recognized accrediting organizations, with respect to institutions or programs located outside the United States:
1. Communicate and consult with appropriate in-country governmental and non-governmental accreditation or quality assurance entities regarding the accrediting organization's current and proposed activities;
  2. Provide evidence of the accrediting organization's capacity and competence to engage in international accreditation activities, including language and cultural differences, consideration of ongoing quality assurance activities in the country, national and local factors that would affect the accreditation process and attention to the safety of all those involved;
  3. Provide evidence of substantially comparable application of standards, practices, capacity and expectations of results to U.S. and non-U.S. institutions and programs alike; and
  4. When describing the accreditation status of international institutions and programs, provide notice to the public of the nature and content of the accommodations that were made for local conditions and alternative evaluation standards or practices that were used as part of the accreditation process and decision-making.

**12. SUSTAINS AN EFFECTIVE ACCREDITATION STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION.** A

recognized accrediting organization provides evidence that it implements standards, policies and practices and sustains organizational characteristics consistent with CHEA requirements. To be recognized, the accrediting organization demonstrates that it:

- A. Has legal authority to operate.
- B. Accredits institutions or programs that have legal authority to operate as higher education institutions or programs and to confer higher education degrees at the associate level or above. For non-U.S. institutions or programs in countries in which legal authority to award degrees is not available, the U.S. accrediting organization meets this requirement if it demonstrates that it accredits only those institutions or programs that have standing and significant support in the local community or other communities of interest, e.g., well-known professional organizations and other respected entities that support the institution program.
- C. Accredits institutions or programs, a majority of which grant degrees at the associate level or above.

- D. Has written bylaws, policies, procedures and standards readily accessible to the public that describe officially:
  - 1. The scope of accreditation that may be granted, evaluative standards used and levels of accreditation status conferred;
  - 2. The organization's operating and decision-making processes, policies and procedures; and
  - 3. In a readily accessible directory, all currently accredited institutions or programs and the corresponding levels of accreditation and accreditation status, including any accreditation status conditions imposed by the accrediting organization (i.e., restrictions or other specifications affecting an accreditation status, including but not limited to, the length of a term of accreditation, warning, show cause, suspension or other conditions defined in the accrediting organization's policy).
- E. Requires that all accreditation standards be met for an institution or program to obtain and maintain accredited status.
- F. Maintains clearly described and published operational separation from any parent or sponsoring organizations, including independence with respect to accreditation standards, policies and procedures, in the conduct of all accreditation reviews, functions, operations and all accreditation actions.
- G. Is operational and has conducted more than one accreditation review for each type of institution or program identified in the proposed statement of CHEA-recognized scope of accreditation.
- H. Has adequate financial, staff and operational resources to perform its accreditation functions efficiently and effectively.
- I. Makes clear distinctions between actions required of institutions or programs necessary for accreditation and actions that are suggestions for institution or program improvement.
- J. Assures procedural due process in accreditation activities, including, without limitation, (1) publication of an appeals policy that informs the institution or program of the process to be used and actions that may be taken (i.e., the grounds for appeal, the process by which the appeal will be conducted and heard by individuals independent of the body that made the decision to deny or remove accreditation and any costs associated with an appeal) and (2) an effectively administered conflict of interest policy that covers all accrediting organization staff, site visitors and members of accreditation-recommending and decision-making bodies.
- K. Requires participation by higher education professionals, practitioners where appropriate and the public in accreditation reviews, decision-making, and policy setting, including review, revision and adoption of accreditation standards.
- L. Fosters reasonable consistency in accreditation reviews of, and accreditation actions about, institutions or programs, while allowing for varying institution or program mission, purpose and operation.
- M. For purposes of promoting effective practice in the future, engages in regular critical self-evaluation of its performance, standards, policies and impact by the:
  - 1. Review of aggregate information regarding the extent to which the accredited institutions or programs are achieving their expectations for student learning; and

2. Collection and review of evidence that the accrediting organization's own performance promotes academic quality and student success and serves both higher education and the public.

## COMMITTEE ON RECOGNITION

### 13. COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES AND RELATIONSHIP TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

The Committee reviews applications for recognition of accrediting organizations and makes recommendations to the Board. With due regard for the Committee's advice and applying a presumption of regularity, the Board reviews the Committee's recommendations and makes the final determinations as to the recognition of the accrediting organizations. The Committee reviews and makes the final determinations with respect to editorial modifications to the CHEA-recognized scope of accreditation, interim reports and requests by the Committee for information. The Committee reviews and makes the final determinations with respect to changes to the CHEA-recognized scope of accreditation, in accord with the provisions of Paragraph 8.

**14. MEMBERSHIP.** The Committee is appointed by the Board upon recommendation by the President of CHEA in consultation with CHEA-recognized accrediting organizations and others. The Committee will consist of nine (9) members, each serving a three (3)-year term, and each of whom may be reappointed to one or more three (3)-year terms. The Committee includes public members, members from regional, national career- or faith-related and programmatic accrediting organizations and members from colleges and universities. CHEA will seek participation that reflects the diversity of the accrediting community and higher education institutions. Current Board members are ineligible for service on the Committee.

**15. 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.

## RECOGNITION REVIEW

**16. FREQUENCY OF RECOGNITION REVIEW.** A CHEA-recognized accrediting organization will undergo a recognition review every seven (7) years, or such other period as the Board approves.

**17. INTERIM REVIEWS.** A recognized accrediting organization submits an interim report, normally at the mid-point of the term of recognition. The major purpose of the interim report is to inform the Committee of organizational changes, e.g., changes in governance, financial condition, functions, operations, relationship with parent or sponsoring organization, standards, policies or procedures. The Committee will review such changes to determine that the accrediting organization continues to meet the recognition standards. In keeping with the expectations regarding academic quality, student success, public accountability and transparency, the interim report is to include information to demonstrate that the accrediting organization meets CHEA requirements in this regard (per Paragraph 10B and 11A1).

In the event that the accrediting organization experiences major change(s) to its governance, financial condition, functions, operations, relationship with parent or sponsoring organization, standards, policies or procedures outside the scheduled interim review, the accrediting organization is expected to provide timely information to CHEA on the change(s).

**18. REVIEW OUT OF SEQUENCE.** At its discretion, CHEA may elect to review a recognized accrediting organization at any time when:

- A. There is evidence of ongoing deficient performance of accredited institutions and programs;

- B. There are documented concerns received by CHEA staff that, in the Committee's judgment, indicate that the accrediting organization may not be meeting one or more recognition standards; or
- C. There are changes in the organizational structure or operation of the accrediting organization which may alter the conditions upon which recognition was granted.

When CHEA staff receives such information, it will disclose the concerns to the Committee and the accrediting organization and invite a response from the accrediting organization. The Committee will examine the information received and the accrediting organization's response, if any. The Committee may decide to conduct a full recognition review; determine that the matter does not warrant a review out of sequence; request additional information; or take other action it deems appropriate, such as a review limited in scope to the area in which there is evidence of ongoing deficient performance.

**19. WITHDRAWAL OF APPLICATION.** An accrediting organization may withdraw an application at any time in the process prior to consideration by the Board at a formal meeting. If an application is withdrawn before Committee action (i.e., recommendation from the Committee to the Board), the Committee and the Board will be informed in executive session. If an application is withdrawn after Committee action, the withdrawal and the Committee's action will be reported at the next public Board meeting. If an accrediting organization withdraws an application for recognition, it cannot reapply until at least one full year from the formal date of withdrawal of the application.

## APPLICATION PROCESS

**20. INQUIRIES ABOUT RECOGNITION: INITIAL STAFF CONSULTATION.** Before pursuing a recognition review, an accrediting organization shall consult CHEA staff about the recognition policy, process and CHEA expectations. CHEA staff will initially advise an accrediting organization about applicable recognition requirements set forth in this *Recognition Policy and Procedures*. Accrediting organizations may include non-governmental, U.S.-based membership organizations and such other organizations as the Board from time to time may determine to be considered for recognition.

**21. APPLICATION FORM AND FEE TO CHEA.** To initiate the formal process either for an initial recognition review or for a continuing review, the chief executive officer of the accrediting organization submits an Application Form that includes documentation that the decision-making body of the accrediting organization authorizes the application. The fee for recognition review is sent at the time of the submission of the Application Form. Upon receipt of the Application Form, CHEA will inform the Committee and the public that the accrediting organization is seeking initial or continuing recognition.

**22. SUBMISSION OF AN APPLICATION NARRATIVE FOR RECOGNITION.** An Application Narrative is submitted in accordance with the CHEA *Guidelines for Preparation of an Application Narrative*. The Application Narrative requires evidence that the accrediting organization complies with this policy and meets all the recognition standards. CHEA will consider a range of processes for conducting the self-evaluation and for providing expected evidence.

**23. OBSERVATION VISITS.** During a recognition review, CHEA conducts an observation visit to a decision-making meeting of the accrediting organization. The purposes of the visit are (1) to review the accrediting organization's application of its standards and policies, including those related to institution or program performance, and of its decision-making activities related to the recognition standards, and (2) to report relevant information to the Committee. The observation visit includes attention to deliberations concerning policies, procedures and standards and to decisions on accreditation status. The visit may include experts in areas where additional focus is needed, as determined by CHEA, with such experts' findings included as part of the observation visit report. CHEA may elect to survey a sample of accredited institutions or programs and may request to observe an on-site evaluation.

Observers and experts are chosen by CHEA in consultation with the accrediting organization. The accrediting organization has the opportunity to review the visit report and provide comments. The full report of any visit, with comments from the accrediting organization, is distributed to the Committee. CHEA deems reports of observation visits confidential to CHEA and the accrediting organization unless otherwise, in CHEA's judgment, required by law.

**24. FEES AND COSTS.** Accrediting organizations bear all fees and costs for the recognition review and observation visit expenses.

**25. PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF PENDING RECOGNITION REVIEW AND CALL FOR THIRD-PARTY COMMENT.** CHEA makes public through its Website that the accrediting organization has undertaken a recognition review. The CHEA public notice also calls for third-party comments and identifies the period during which third-party comment will be received. The accrediting organization is required to (A) publicize (using the CHEA public notice statement) that the organization has asked CHEA to conduct a recognition review and the time period during which CHEA will receive third-party comments about the organization's recognition review and (B) inform CHEA staff of compliance with this requirement.

**26. THIRD-PARTY WRITTEN OR ORAL COMMENT.** The substance of third-party comment is limited to whether the accrediting organization meets the recognition standards. All third parties requesting the opportunity to make written comment are to provide the text of the comment, including the name and affiliation of the person(s) making the comment, by the announced deadline. After review by CHEA staff for confirmation that the written comment addresses the recognition standards, the comment will be provided to the Committee and the accrediting organization. Accrediting organizations will have the opportunity to review and respond, which response will be provided to the Committee.

Oral comment is heard by the Committee in public session. CHEA staff will notify all concerned parties of the location, date and time of the accrediting organization's public presentation to the Committee, where third-party oral comment may also be given. Third parties who wish to give oral comment shall provide an outline of the proposed comment, including the name and affiliation of the person(s) making the comment, by the announced deadline. After review by CHEA staff for confirmation that the comment addresses the recognition standards, CHEA staff will forward the outline to the Committee and the accrediting organization. At the public meeting, the accrediting organization will have the opportunity to respond.

**27. ACCREDITING ORGANIZATION PUBLIC PRESENTATION TO THE COMMITTEE.** The Committee will hold a public meeting at which the accrediting organization may make an oral presentation concerning the qualifications of the accrediting organization for recognition and how the accrediting organization meets the recognition standards. Ordinarily, the accrediting organization is expected to be represented by the executive officer of the accrediting unit and the chair of the decision-making body. Committee members may ask questions of the accrediting organization and third parties, if any. Persons questioned will be given an opportunity to respond. If, in the judgment of the Committee, participation by observation visitors or experts would be useful, the Committee may ask such persons to attend and respond to questions related to the visit report. The accrediting organization will be given opportunity to respond to any observation visitor or expert comment. The Committee will make a transcript of the public meeting and will provide it to the accrediting organization upon request.

Consideration of change in the CHEA-recognized scope of accreditation and interim reports and other responses to requests for additional information are reviewed in executive session and do not require a public presentation by the accrediting organization.

**28. COMMITTEE PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS, COMMITTEE AND BOARD CONSULTATION.** For applications for recognition, following the public presentation, the Committee meets in executive session to consider the qualifications of the accrediting organization for recognition. The Board then meets in executive session with the Chair of the Committee to consider the Committee's preliminary analysis.

**29. COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING APPLICATIONS FOR RECOGNITION.**

Following the Board meeting, the Committee meets, reviews the Board's informal feedback and makes a recommendation for Board action, which may include:

- A. Recognition of the accrediting organization.
- B. Recognition of the accrediting organization with a requirement of one or more written reports to the Committee that address issues identified in relation to the recognition standards.
- C. Deferral of action on recognition pending receipt and review of, and action by CHEA on, additional information from the accrediting organization. The information required will be clearly specified by the Committee and related to one or more of the recognition standards. The deferral will be accompanied by a deadline for receipt of information.
- D. Denial of recognition, including reason(s) for the denial.
- E. Withdrawal of recognition as a consequence of situations that have been addressed per Paragraph 18; or
- F. Such other action as the Committee deems appropriate.

**30. WRITTEN NOTICE BY THE COMMITTEE.** Within thirty (30) calendar days after the Committee meeting, the Committee will notify the accrediting organization of the Committee's recommendation. If the Committee finds that an accrediting organization does not meet one or more of the recognition standards, the notice will identify the recognition standard(s) that the accrediting organization does not meet and the reason(s) for that determination. Any suggestions for improvement or other commentary by the Committee will be distinguished from requirements for recognition under the recognition standards.

**31. ACCREDITING ORGANIZATION RESPONSE TO THE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION.** An accrediting organization wishing to respond to the Committee's recommendation must do so within thirty (30) calendar days after the date of receipt of the formal notification of the Committee's recommendation. The accrediting organization's written response, if any, will be provided to the Board and to the Committee. The scope of the response is limited to:

- A. Information in the record before the Committee at the time of review;
- B. Any asserted procedural errors in the recognition process; and
- C. Any asserted factual errors.

The accrediting organization has a right to appear before the Board only in the case of a recommendation to deny recognition.

**32. REVIEW BY BOARD OF DIRECTORS.** The Board will act on a recommendation of the Committee 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 deems appropriate.

Except for actions to deny recognition, the Board may take any of the above actions without further submission or appearance by the accrediting organization.

**33. PRESUMPTION OF REGULARITY.** In addressing the recognition of an accrediting organization, the Board will consider the preliminary analysis and recommendation of the Committee, the response, if any, of the accrediting organization and the record before the Committee. The Board will presume that the findings of the Committee are accurate unless the accrediting organization demonstrates to the Board's satisfaction that a finding material to the Committee's recommendation is clearly erroneous based on the record before the Committee at the time of the Committee review.

In making a decision, the Board also may consider and include in its findings additional information that may be available apart from the Committee's review, including the work of outside experts the Board may retain.

**34. WRITTEN NOTICE BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS.** The Board will notify an accrediting organization of its action on the recommendation of the Committee as to recognition within thirty (30) calendar days after taking such action. If the Board recognizes an accrediting organization, the notice will specify the accrediting organization's CHEA-recognized scope of accreditation, the period of recognition and any requirement of one or more written reports. If the action is to defer, deny or withdraw recognition, the notice will reference a statement of the reason(s) for that action. The statement of reasons will identify the recognition standard(s) that the accrediting organization does not meet.

**35. DEFERRAL OF ACTION ON RECOGNITION.** There can be only one deferral of action in the course of a recognition review. The Committee will review the information provided by the accrediting organization and make a recommendation to the Board.

An accrediting organization that has been deferred for action on an application for recognition shall respond to the Board's notice within one year after the date of the Board action. In exceptional circumstances, the accrediting organization may request an extension of the time allowed for responding to the deferral of action on recognition. The Committee will consider the request and supporting rationale and determine whether an extension is warranted. Unless an extension has been granted, the Board will deem the accrediting organization to have withdrawn its application if the accrediting organization does not respond to the deferral of action within one year of the Board decision. CHEA will notify the accrediting organization that its application is withdrawn.

**36. ACTIONS TO DENY RECOGNITION.** The Board will not act on a recommendation to deny recognition before providing the accrediting organization with notice and an opportunity to appear before the Board. At the request of the accrediting organization, the accrediting organization will be afforded the opportunity to appear in person before the Board. The appearance of an accrediting organization will include an opportunity to present its written response to the recommendation of the Committee as provided in Paragraph 31. The response is limited to information available to the Committee at the time of Committee review. The accrediting organization may have legal counsel present to advise it during its appearance before the Board, but counsel may not speak unless requested to do so by the Board.

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

**38. RECONSIDERATION BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS.** Within thirty (30) calendar days following the receipt of the notification of the action taken by the Board, the accrediting organization may request, in writing, reconsideration by the Board. The Board will determine in its discretion whether reconsideration is warranted. The Board ordinarily will not reconsider an action unless, in its judgment, the accrediting organization has submitted in writing substantial reason to believe that there was plain and material error in the review, abuse of process, or both. In the event the Board decides to reconsider an action, the accrediting organization will be afforded the opportunity to appear in person before the Board and may have legal counsel present to advise it during its appearance before the Board, but counsel may not speak unless requested to do so by the Board.

**39. PUBLIC NOTICE.** All actions of the Board to recognize, defer, deny or withdraw recognition of an accrediting organization, including initial and continued recognition of accrediting organizations, will be public information after such actions become final. CHEA will publish the action of the Board, including a summary of the reason(s) for decisions to recognize, defer, deny or withdraw recognition.

**40. APPLICATION AFTER DENIAL OR WITHDRAWAL OF RECOGNITION.** An accrediting organization that has sought recognition and has been unsuccessful may not reapply until at least one full year from the date of denial or withdrawal of recognition.

## ADDITIONAL PROVISIONS

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

- A. When there is an actual or apparent conflict of interest, CHEA expects its representatives to recuse themselves from consideration of an accrediting organization as a matter of personal and professional integrity. The CHEA representative will have primary responsibility for compliance with this policy.
- B. CHEA representatives will recuse themselves from consideration of an accrediting organization 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 deciding whether to recuse themselves from consideration of an accrediting organization, CHEA representatives will 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 recognition; (ii) are participating in an accreditation review by the accrediting organization applying for recognition; (iii) have a financial relationship or governance role with an accrediting organization that is a direct competitor of an accrediting organization applying for recognition; (iv) have or have expressed a predisposition concerning an accrediting organization applying for recognition that would impair objectivity in the recognition process; (v) have a close relative with a pertinent relationship, role or predisposition concerning an accrediting organization applying for 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 may take such action as the Board considers appropriate.

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

CHEA representative will not discuss any confidential aspect of an application for recognition with the accrediting organization applying for recognition, an institution or program accredited by the accrediting organization, a direct competitor of the accrediting organization or any other third party that intends to comment on the accrediting organization, except as required in order to discharge the responsibilities of the CHEA representative in the recognition review. CHEA representatives will refer inquiries concerning the recognition process to CHEA staff. CHEA will communicate the results of the recognition review to the accrediting organization and the public as provided in Paragraphs 34 and 39.

## **AMENDMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION**

**44. AMENDMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION.** CHEA reserves the right to amend this *Recognition Policy and Procedures*, in whole or part, 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. Revisions of the CHEA *Recognition Policy and Procedures* are effective at such date as the Board sets and implemented based on a timeframe established by CHEA.







**Council for Higher Education Accreditation  
CHEA International Quality Group**

One Dupont Circle NW • Suite 510  
Washington, DC 20036-1135

tel: (202) 955-6126 • fax: (202) 955-6129

e-mail: [chea@chea.org](mailto:chea@chea.org) • web: [www.chea.org](http://www.chea.org)