



ACCJC

ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR
COMMUNITY AND JUNIOR COLLEGES
WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

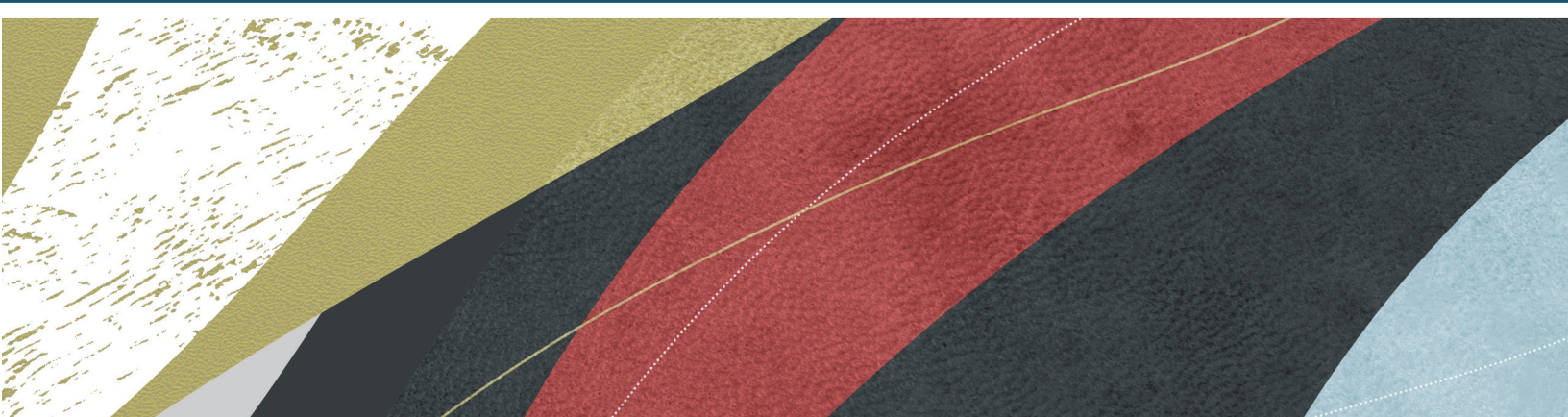
Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) Guide

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Congratulations on your selection as your institution's Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO)!

ALO Role

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) regularly communicates with institutions about matters of policy and institutional quality through the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Institutions also designate an Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) to be a critical point of contact with the Commission, to maintain institutional records of accreditation activities, and to remain current on Commission policies and practices. The ALO is an advocate for the accreditation process, helping to explain and ensure the adoption of Commission recommendations and requirements. As such, the ALO's role is continuously important, both at the time of a review and throughout the review cycle.

Official correspondence between the Commission and an institution's president is typically copied to the ALO. Other types of communications (emails, phone calls, letters) may occur directly between the Commission staff and the ALO. In such instances, you, as the ALO, should ensure that your president is appropriately informed.

The effective ALO is carefully selected by the president and has the time, knowledge, and authority to engage in regular communication about accreditation-related issues with the institution's president, other offices and individuals on campus, and with the Commission. In addition, as an effective ALO you should have adequate time and resources to focus on accreditation issues and should have appropriate status, visibility, convening authority, knowledge, access to data, and support from the senior administration to fulfill the responsibilities of being the ALO.

To learn more about the role and responsibilities of the Accreditation Liaison Officer, [click here to view the Commission's policy statement on the Role of ALOs.](#)

Your ACCJC Staff Liaison

In fall 2017, ACCJC deployed the professional experience of each of its vice presidents to more closely support a portfolio of member institutions, bringing a new level of experienced insight, personal availability, and consistent applications of ACCJC's processes. As such, each college has an assigned vice president who serves as the college's ACCJC staff liaison. For multi-college districts, the assigned liaison will provide support for all of the colleges in the district.

One of the central responsibilities of an ALO is to maintain contact with the ACCJC vice president assigned as your institution's liaison. You should communicate with your ACCJC vice president as needed and respond promptly when contacted by that individual. A list of member institutions with the assigned staff liaison is available at www.accjc.org under the *Directory* drop down menu, click on [Find Your Institution's Staff Liaison](#).

About ACCJC

In your role as ALO it is important you become familiar with the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC). Formed in 1962, the ACCJC accredits 134 public and

private two-year colleges in California, Hawai'i, the Territories of Guam and American Samoa, the Commonwealth of Northern Marianas, the Republic of Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

ACCJC is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) as a reliable authority regarding the quality of education offered by accredited institutions in keeping with the Higher Education Act of 1965. The higher education community in the United States has organized its quality assurance process by creating six separate, geographical regions of the country. Within each geographic region, the institutions have formed an association that developed a quality assurance agency and a process that examines overall institutional quality. The quality assurance process is called accreditation, and regional accreditation refers to the institutional accreditation processes developed by the seven agencies in the six geographic regions. The Western region chose to have two higher education accrediting commissions, one for the four-year colleges and universities (WASC Senior Colleges and Universities Commission – WSCUC) and the other for two-year colleges (Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges - ACCJC). Thus, ACCJC is one of the seven regional accrediting agencies and one of the two accrediting agencies in the Western Region. It is the only regional agency with community and junior colleges as its only members.

Regional accreditation is the accepted process for assuring the public that a higher education institution meets established standards of quality and provides degrees, certificates, and/or credits that students and the community can trust. It has been operating in the United States for more than 100 years, and almost 50 years in the Western Region. The granting of accreditation by a regional accreditor commission enables an institution to qualify for federal grants and contracts, and to distribute federal financial aid to its students.

Accreditation has a dual purpose of both compliance and improvement. The Commission's Standards describe institutional best practices that will lead to achievement of mission and to improving educational quality.

Peer review is the most effective approach to evaluating the complex environment of higher education. It serves as a rich and diverse resource for quality improvement as it uses inquiry from peers to gain an accurate understanding of an institution and provide useful feedback.

To learn more about the ACCJC and the role of the Commission, click on the links below:

- [About ACCJC \(including Mission, Values, History, Recognition, Geographic Scope\)](#)
- [Role of the Commission](#)

Resources and Publications

ACCJC provides several helpful resources for your role as ALO. These resources, including links to the Eligibility Requirements, Standards of Accreditation, and Commission Policies, are available on the *Resources* tab of the [ACCJC website](#). In addition, you should become familiar with the various handbooks, guides, and checklists also available on the [Publications and Documents](#) site.

[Eligibility Requirements](#) and [Standards of Accreditation](#)

During 2012 and 2013, the Commission spent considerable time and effort reviewing and revising its Eligibility Requirements and Standards of Accreditation. The revised Eligibility Requirements and Standards were adopted by the Commission in June 2014. Per policy, the Standards are reviewed and revised by the member institutions every ten years.

Accreditation Process and Reporting Cycles

Comprehensive Review and Institutional Self-Evaluation (every 7 years)

ACCJC member institutions undergo a comprehensive review for reaffirmation of accreditation every seven years to determine whether they continue to meet ACCJC's expectations and are engaged in sustainable efforts to improve educational quality and institutional effectiveness.

The [Guide to Institutional Self-Evaluation, Improvement, and Peer Review](#) contains suggestions for how an institution organizes for self-evaluation and prepares for peer review. It includes an outline of information that should be included in the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER). This Guide also provides suggestions for what might constitute evidence of meeting Accreditation Standards and review criteria to help institutions and peer review teams during the evaluation process. It is intended for use by institutions as they prepare their ISER and by teams when evaluating institutions. The Guide includes a downloadable Template for Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER) which is available on the <https://accjc.org/publications/> webpage.

Midterm Reporting (4 years after the comprehensive review)

The [Guidelines for Preparing Institutional Reports to the Commission \(for reports due through Spring 2020\)](#) / [Guidelines for Preparing Institutional Reports to the Commission \(for reports due Fall 2020 and beyond\)](#) provides resources for preparing Midterm, Follow-Up, and Special Reports to the Commission. Every institution submits a Midterm Report four years after a comprehensive evaluation. The Midterm Report keeps the Commission apprised of your institution's continuous improvement activities. Particular attention is given to efforts derived from improvement recommendations offered by the Commission (as detailed in the Commission Action Letter to the institution), any self-identified improvement plans (from the ISER), and progress made on the quality focused projects as outlined in the college's Quality Focus Essay. For reports due in Fall 2020 and beyond, colleges will reflect on student learning outcomes and achievement.

Ongoing Reporting ([Substantive Change](#), [Annual Report](#), [Annual Fiscal Report](#))

The U.S. Department of Education requires accrediting agencies to have adequate policies and procedures to ensure substantive changes to the educational mission or programs of a member institution do not compromise the capacity of the institution to continue to meet ACCJC's Standards.

Guided by ACCJC's [Substantive Change Policy](#), and further detailed in the [Substantive Change](#)

[Manual](#), certain institutional changes must be approved by the Commission before they are implemented. As ALO you should be aware of the policies and should ensure all substantive changes are submitted in a timely manner to the Commission for review and approval. Colleges, through their ALOs, will submit a [Substantive Change Inquiry Form](#) for each change, so that a determination can be made as to whether the change requires a full Substantive Change Application or whether an Administrative Approval can be granted.

In accordance with [ACCJC Policy on Monitoring Institutional Performance](#), the Commission applies a set of annual monitoring and evaluation approaches that assess an institution's continued compliance with the Commission's Standards and take into account institutional strengths and stability. Each spring, ACCJC provides links to the [Annual Report form](#) and [Annual Fiscal Report form](#) along with specific submission instructions. The *Getting Started Instructions* link these report form websites to provide a template for each report. Generally, the ALO assumes responsibility for ensuring these annual reports are submitted on time to ACCJC office.

[Representation of Accredited Status](#)

When acknowledging their accreditation, institutions should include the following information in appropriate publications and in electronic communications such as websites:

(Name of institution) is accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges, 10 Commercial Blvd., Suite 204, Novato, CA 94949, (415) 506-0234, an institutional accrediting body recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation and the U.S. Department of Education. Additional information about accreditation, including the filing of complaints against member institutions, can be found at: www.accjc.org

Note that the mailing address and telephone number of the Commission are required by federal regulation to be included in all public references to an institution's accreditor(s).

ACCJC Directory Information

Your institution's accreditation status is available by visiting the Directory tab on the www.accjc.org website. Click on [Find an Institution](#), select your institution, and the information will be displayed. You may also update the contact information for key personnel by completing the [Update Contact Information](#) form.

Policies

The Commission's policies describe procedural requirements for institutions and for the Commission, elaborate upon standards of accreditation, and align with federal requirements. ACCJC continuously revises its existing policies and develops new policies as needed. To view all of the Policies, follow the *Resources* tab on www.accjc.org and click on the [Eligibility, Standards, & Policies](#) link. Of special interest to ALOs are the following documents:

[Policy on Institutional Degrees and Credit](#)

Standard II requires institutions to meet generally accepted practices when awarding credit. This

policy incorporates federal credit hour requirements, defines credit hours applicable to a degree or certificate awarded by an accredited institution, and adopts the federal definitions of terms related to institutional degrees and credits.

[Policy on Commission Actions on Institutions](#)

As your institution's ALO, it is important for you to understand the types of actions the Commission may take. Institutions applying for candidacy or initial accreditation and accredited institutions undergoing periodic evaluation for reaffirmation of accreditation will be reviewed by the Commission, which will apply, as appropriate, one of the actions listed in this policy.

[Policy on Institutional Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Representation of Accredited Status](#)

All accredited institutions, or individuals acting on their behalf, must exhibit integrity and responsibility in advertising, student recruitment, and representation of accredited status. This policy describes in detail the key information institutions are required by the Commission to include in their publications, whether in print or online. It also provides the framework for the advertising or promotion of the institution's accreditation status and acceptable terminology.

[Policy on Institutional Compliance with Title IV](#)

In order to comply with federal regulations regarding Institutional Compliance with Title IV of the Higher Education Act (HEA), and as the designated gate-keepers of federal financial aid, the Commission is required to provide available information germane to an accredited or candidate institution's program responsibilities or eligibility to participate under Title IV of the HEA.

[Policy on Commission Good Practice in Relations with Member Institutions](#)

The Commission makes the commitment to follow good practices in relations with the institutions it accredits. This policy outlines the specific procedures and protocols of the Commission in conducting its work with member institutions.

[Rights and Responsibilities of the Commission and Member Institutions](#)

The Commission and its member institutions share rights and responsibilities to develop and promulgate Accreditation Standards and an agreed-upon accrediting process for comprehensive institutional evaluations. This policy outlines those areas of responsibility.

Complaints and Third-Party Comments

Federal regulations require accrediting organizations to review and respond to complaints and third-party comments regarding member and candidate institutions. ACCJC has specific policies and procedures for such situations. If the Commission determines a complaint or third-party comment requires a response from an institution, a letter will be sent to the institution's Chief Executive Officer with a copy of the complaint or third-party comment and a list of information the Commission will need to complete its review. For further details, view the following:

- [Policy on Complaints Involving Member and Candidate Institutions](#)
- [Third Party Comments](#)

Training Opportunities

ACCJC offers workshops for institutions embarking upon their institutional self-evaluation process, training for new ALOs, training for members of institutions who wish to become peer reviewers, and team chair and team training for those selected to serve on peer review teams. These opportunities are posted on the [ACCJC events webpage](#), along with other pertinent conferences or available workshops.

In addition, ACCJC offers a free online [Accreditation Basics](#) course, which serves as a popular resource to orient you and members of your institution to the purposes of accreditation, introduce the accreditation standards and resources, and explain the process of accreditation.

Recent Commission Actions

The Commission meets two times per year, in June and January. Actions taken during the meetings of the full Commission are published on the ACCJC website under the Accrediting Commission tab. Institutions undergoing review will receive a Commission Action Letter within 30 days of the meeting.

An Institutional Partnership

The accreditation process relies on a partnership between ACCJC and the institution being accredited. Accreditation provides quality assurance to the public and helps enhance the educational quality of an institution when institutional CEOs, administrators, faculty, and staff are engaged in the process of reaffirmation and in maintaining continuous institutional adherence to ERs, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies. When institutional members regard accreditation as an opportunity for deep, honest inquiry into institutional strengths and weaknesses, the process becomes supportive of the institution's efforts to provide the best educational programs and services possible in fulfillment of its mission. When institutional members check ongoing educational practices for compliance with accreditation requirements and engage in the continuous improvement process, they help ensure the institution retains its high quality.

Contact Us

The [ACCJC staff](#) welcomes you in your new role and looks forward to working with you.

Please feel free to contact us at any time.

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Thank you!
