



**Policies and Procedures
Manual of the
American Academy for
Liberal Education
2007-2008 AY**

**The American Academy for Liberal
Education**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Adverse Decisions	2
Amendment of Academy Documents.....	2
Appeals of Adverse Decisions	2
Application Fees/Membership Dues.....	2
Appointment and Training of Evaluation Team Members	5
Articulation Agreements.....	6
Branch, Distance Education and Other Off-Campus Locations	7
Categories of Accreditation and Preaccreditation	8
Change of Institutional Control	9
Complaints	9
Conflict of Interest in Accreditation	12
Consulting Service.....	13
Decisions of Other Accrediting and Authorizing Agencies	14
Deferral of Action.....	15
Disclosure of Accreditation Materials and Information	15
Disclosure of Membership Information.....	16
Evaluation Team Report Disclaimer.....	17
External Budget Control	18
Membership	18
Monitoring and Reevaluation of Accredited and Preaccredited Institutions and Programs	18
Non-Discrimination Policy	21
Notification of Accreditation Decisions	21
Postponement of Evaluation Site Visits.....	22
Public Information	22
Reconsideration of Accreditation Actions.....	23
Records Retention.....	25
Revocation of Accreditation or Preaccreditation.....	25
Role of Accreditation Staff in Accreditation	25
Scope of Accreditation Authorization	26
Self-Assessment Procedures	26
Special Statuses.....	26
Statements of Membership	29
Student Complaints	30
Substantive Change.....	30
Teach-out Agreements.....	31
Terms of Accreditation and Preaccreditation	31
Third Party Comment	32
Withdrawal.....	32
 Appendix 1 – <i>Appeals Procedure</i>	 34

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Adverse Decisions

An adverse decision is defined as a decision of the Academy's Board of Trustees that *denies, withdraws, or revokes* institutional accreditation or preaccreditation or program accreditation. Deferrals or tabled motions by the Board of Trustees are not considered adverse actions.

Amendment of Academy Documents

Changes to the Academy's *Standards and Criteria, Policies and Procedures, Bi Laws* and other documents are approved by the Board of Trustees during regularly scheduled meetings. The Academy's Executive Committee may approve changes between meetings, at the request of the Academy President or Board Chairman. The Board need only approve changes in policy, not clarifying language.

Applicant fees and membership dues

Membership in the Academy is a *voluntary* process. Applicants and members pay fees and annual dues for membership in the Academy. A list of the current fees and dues can be obtained through the Academy's offices or its website. Concerned parties should contact the national office to obtain the most up-to-date fees and dues.

Appeals of Adverse Decisions

Please note: The complete text of the Academy's appeals procedure is found in the Appendix I of this manual.

An appeal of an adverse decision made by the Academy's Board of Trustees may be preceded, but not followed, by a request for reconsideration (see Adverse Decisions and Reconsideration of Accreditation Actions).

Grounds for Appeal

The grounds on which an institution may appeal an adverse decision of the Academy's Board of Trustees denying or withdrawing institutional accreditation or preaccreditation or program accreditation shall be:

1. that the Board's decision was not supported by substantial evidence in the record; or
2. that the Board, in making its decision, departed significantly from its written procedures and protocols.

Meaning of Appeals Decisions

Decisions on appeals concern only matters outlined under “Grounds for Appeal” above. After completing the appeals process, decisions concerning accreditation or preaccreditation remain the responsibility of the Board. Decisions on appeals are made only on evidence available at the time of the decision being appealed.

Notice of Intent to Appeal

1. An institution wishing to appeal a decision of the Academy’s Board shall file with the Director of Accreditation a notice of intent to appeal by registered mail not later than thirty (30) days following the date of the decision letter of the Academy’s Board. This notice shall be the official action of the governing board of the institution, and must be accompanied by the required filing fee.
2. Immediately upon receiving notice of intent to appeal, the Director of Accreditation shall forward to the President of AALE and the Chairman of the Academy’s Board of Trustees a copy of the notice and shall acknowledge receipt of the notice in writing to the chief executive officer of the institution.
3. If the Director of Accreditation finds that the decision being appealed clearly is not one that denied or withdrew the accredited or preaccredited membership of an institution or program with the Academy, the Director of Accreditation shall confirm to the institution or program its accredited or preaccredited status with the Academy and shall notify the institution that the appeal is invalid and will not be entertained.

Failure of an institution to file notice of intent to appeal, the required filing fee, or its appeal document in a timely fashion shall void the appeal.

Initial Response

The Director of Accreditation shall ensure that the institution’s notice of appeal and the appeal document meet all preconditions for review by the appeals committee. If the appeal is accepted for review, the Director of Accreditation informs the President of the Academy and the Chairman of the Academy’s Board and provides the appeals materials submitted by the institution.

Within thirty (30) days of receipt of the appeals documents, the Chairman of the Academy’s Board shall provide a written response to the appeal stating the reason for the Board’s decision. The response shall be sent to the Director of Accreditation, who forwards a copy to the President of the Academy and the chief executive officer of the institution filing the appeal.

Public Response to Inquiries

In response to inquiries concerning an institution appealing a decision of the Academy's Board, the Academy's comments will be limited to the following: confirm action that an appeal by the institution of an Academy decision is pending and that the status of the institution prior to the decision remains in effect pending the outcome of the appeal.

Appointment of the Appeals Committee

The Director of Accreditation or Higher Education, with the approval of the Executive Committee of the Academy's Board of Trustees, shall appoint the chairman and members of an appeals committee comprising three persons, none of whom shall be members of the Academy's Board of Trustees.

Each person invited to participate in the appeals committee shall be asked to consider whether any conflict of interest would arise from service on the committee. Conflict of interest includes, but is not limited to, participating in any way in the process leading to the decision being appealed or having any prior or projected alumni, employment, financial, or other relationship with the appealing institution that could influence or be construed as influencing the outcome of the appeal. If conflict of interest is found, that person may not serve on the appeals committee. In addition, Appeals Panel members are subject to the AALE Conflict of Interest in Accreditation policy (see [Conflict of Interest in Accreditation](#)).

The appeals committee shall receive from the institution making the appeal written materials detailing its appeal and from the Chairman of the Academy's Board a written response to the appeal.

Appeal Hearing

Upon receiving the written notice of intent to appeal, the Director of Accreditation or Director for Higher Education shall establish the appeals committee, as provided above. After consultation with members of the committee, the Director shall notify the chief executive officer of the institution, the President of the Academy and the Chairman of the Academy's Board of a time and place at which the committee will hear the appeal.

The hearing shall be scheduled not earlier than sixty (60) days and not later than ninety (90) days following receipt by the Director of the notice of intent to appeal. The place of the hearing shall be within the continental United States. Once scheduled, the time and place of the hearing may be changed only by agreement of a majority of the appeals committee. The reason for such change shall be conditions beyond the control of the committee, institution, or Academy, such as weather or illness of representatives or appeals committee members.

The appeals committee shall conduct the hearing and its deliberations on the date and at the place scheduled. If for any reason the institution or the Academy does not have representatives present at the hearing, the hearing shall proceed, and the committee shall

make its decision on the basis of the written record and the presentations available to it at the hearing.

An institution may elect to have its appeal considered by use of the written documents only, notifying the committee in writing of this election no later than forty-eight (48) hours in advance of the meeting. In this case, the committee shall not receive oral presentations at the hearing from Academy representatives.

Final Decision of the Appeals Committee

The decision of the appeals committee will be communicated in writing to the institution filing the appeal, as well as to the President and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Academy, within fifteen (15) days of the conclusion of the appeals hearing.

In the event the appeals committee upholds the original decision of the Academy's Board of Trustees, the Board's decision becomes final at this point.

In the event the appeals committee remands the original decision of the Academy's Board of Trustees, the prior status of the institution remains in effect until the Board of Trustees acts on the remanded decision.

Effective Date of Action

Until the final decision of the appeals committee, the decision under appeal shall not be in effect, and the accredited or preaccredited membership status of the institution or program shall remain as it was before the decision under appeal was made.

If the appeal is denied, the Academy decision under appeal shall become effective on the date of adoption by the appeals committee of the recommendation that the appeal be denied and the decision be sustained.

If the appeal is sustained, the decision being appealed is suspended until the Academy takes action on remand, and the accredited or preaccredited membership status of the institution or program shall remain as it was before the decision under appeal was made.

Appointment and Training of Evaluation Team Members

The Academy shall provide applicant institutions or programs in advance with the names, titles, and institutional affiliations of each proposed candidate for the evaluation team. The applicant institution or program shall have ten (10) days for comment regarding conflicts of interest or documented bias before team members shall be invited to serve. When subsequent changes in the team have to be made, the institution is notified and given five (5) working days to comment on the proposed changes. Site evaluation teams shall have at least one member whose current primary position is in higher education administration (e.g., President, Vice-President, Provost, or similar) and at least one current academic/faculty member.

Because individuals with the power of appointment or invitation to an evaluation team cannot know of every possible conflict of interest, evaluators are expected to refuse a team invitation if any conflict appears probable (see Conflict of Interest). Applicant

institutions or programs are also expected to comment on any possible conflicts of interest among proposed candidates for evaluation teams.

All site visitors are “trained” in applying the Academy’s *Standards and Criteria* in their review of applicant or member institutions. In addition, they receive training in the use of the AALE *Site Visit Manual*, *Self-Study Manual* and *Guide* to the self-study and any other relevant materials or publications. Training is conducted by AALE staff prior to, through conference call and/or in person, the beginning of all site visits, and is supplemented as needed by training sessions at AALE national, regional or other meetings. Further, an Academy executive staff member accompanies all teams and is available throughout the evaluation process as a resource to team members.

Articulation Agreements

The Academy requires that accredited and preaccredited institutions submit for review curriculum and degree program articulation agreements with other institutions. Articulation agreements must be made only with institutions that are accredited or preaccredited by agencies recognized by the U. S. Department of Education, and must be consistent with applicable Academy standards and regulations.

Branch and Other Off-Campus Locations

The Academy's measures of accreditation apply to ALL locations of an institution, including branch campuses,¹ additional locations² or any other facilities or locations used by the college. The Academy may exclude any of the above, from the membership award granted to the main campus. The Academy requires accredited and preaccredited institutions establishing a branch campus to:

1. Notify the Academy of plans to establish a branch campus as least sixty (60) days in advance;
2. Submit at least sixty (60) days prior to the establishment of the branch campus a comprehensive business plan that includes:
 - a. Descriptions of educational programs to be offered;
 - b. Projections for revenues, expenditures, and cash flow of the branch campus; and
 - c. Descriptions of the operation, management, and physical resources of the branch campus;
3. Receive an Academy site visit to any new branch campuses no later than six (6) months after the establishment of the branch campus.

Establishment of additional locations, fall under the *Substantive Change* provisions of this manual. The establishment of additional locations are also to be included in the *Annual Institutional Report Form* narrative section. The Academy must visit any additional locations for schools that have three or fewer additional locations. The Academy reserves the right to visit any other additional locations. The Academy may also visit other school locations that do not fall under the additional locations definition of the USDOED, e.g., offer less than fifty percent of a program.

The purpose of these visits, to branch campuses, additional locations and any other locations, is to ensure that educational quality is maintained at those locations apart from the main campus. The Academy may also visit the main campus if deemed appropriate.

For applicants, branch campuses, additional locations and any other locations or facilities must be included in the self-study for them to be included in any grant of membership.

¹ The USDOED defines a "branch campus" as: Geographically apart and independent from the main campus where 50 percent or more of an academic program leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized credential, or at which a degree may be completed. It must also be physically permanent; have its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization; and have its own budgetary and hiring authority.

² The USDOED defines an "additional location" as one that is geographically apart from the main campus at which the institution offers a least 50 percent of an educational program.

Distance Education

As of the 2007-2008 AY, the Academy's purview of accreditation does not include distance education, as it relates to the Title IV student loan program, if more than fifty percent of the units earned are delivered through distance education mechanisms (as defined by the state where the college is authorized).

Categories of Accreditation and Preaccreditation

Institutional Preaccreditation

An institution may apply for institutional preaccreditation if:

1. The institution has been in continuous operation for fewer than ten (10) years and/or has never been accredited or preaccredited by a U.S. Department of Education recognized institutional accreditor (AALE, NEASC, MSACS, SACS, NCACS, NWAS, WASC, or other) regardless of years of operation; or
2. The institution's previous institutional accreditation or preaccreditation has lapsed or been withdrawn for any reason; or
3. The institution is currently preaccredited by a U.S. Department of Education recognized institutional accrediting agency other than AALE (NEASC, MSACS, SACS, NCACS, NWAS, WASC, or other) and is free of recent or pending adverse actions by any of its institutional accreditors.
4. The institution can provide strong and sufficient evidence of financial stability for the coming three years.
5. The institution's liberal arts core is in at least its third full year of enrolled students.

Institutional Accreditation

An institution may apply for institutional accreditation if:

1. The institution can provide historical evidence of financial stability; and
2. The institution, including the liberal arts core, has been in continuous operation for at least five (5) years; and
3. The institution is currently preaccredited by AALE and is free of any recent or pending adverse actions by AALE; or
4. The institution is currently accredited or preaccredited by a U.S. Department of Education recognized institutional accrediting agency (NEASC, MSACS, SACS,

NCACS, NWAS, WASC, or other) and is free of recent or pending adverse actions by any of its institutional accreditors.

Program Accreditation

A program leading to a baccalaureate degree within an institution of higher education may apply for program accreditation if:

1. The liberal arts centered program has been in operation for at least three (3) years; and
2. The institution can provide sufficient evidence of financial stability for the program.
3. The host institution is currently accredited or preaccredited by a U.S. Department of Education recognized institutional accrediting agency (NEASC, MSACS, SACS, NCACS, NWAS, WASC, or other) and is free of recent or pending adverse actions by any of its institutional accreditors.

Change of Institutional Control

Accreditation is not automatically transferable when there is a major change in institutional control. Major change includes but is not limited to sale; transfers of stock, assets, and liabilities; mergers; divisions; the complete replacement of one set of board members by another, in less than a six-month period; or the change in over seventy-five percent of board membership at any one time.

Accredited or preaccredited institutions that undergo a change of control must notify the Academy within thirty (30) days of the effective date of the change. The Academy will undertake a site-visit of an accredited or preaccredited institution that has undergone a change of control no later than six (6) months after the effective date of the change. The purpose of this visit is to ensure that educational quality is maintained throughout and subsequent to changes in ownership and control.

Complaints

Complaints against Institutions or Programs:

AALE occasionally receives complaints against member institutions. The Academy does not respond to, or take any action on, any unwritten or unsigned complaint or on any allegations regarding the personal lives of individuals concerned with its member and affiliate institutions. The Academy assumes no responsibility for adjudicating isolated individual grievances, nor will it act as a court of appeals in matters of admission, granting or transfer of credits, fees, disciplinary matters, collective bargaining, faculty appointments and dismissals, or similar matters.

If the complaint includes matters that are currently the subject of, or directly related to, litigation in which the member institution or program is a principal, the Academy will not

proceed with consideration of the complaint until such litigation is settled. The Academy may weigh the results of such litigation in its deliberations.

Complaints will be considered only when the reported conditions are substantially documented and reflect conditions within an institution that jeopardize the quality of the educational program and/or the general welfare of the institution or program. Unless the situation suggests the kind of capricious or unprofessional action which impairs attainment of the institution's stated objectives, or suggests direct violation of Academy standards, procedures for member institutions and programs, the Academy will not intervene.

The procedures for reviewing complaints are not judicial; they serve only as a method or means to communicate the allegations, determine the facts, and resolve the issues within the stated purposes of the accreditation.

The President of the Academy shall have the authority to stop the complaint process at any point or at any time upon the appearance of evidence that would disqualify the complaint under policies outlined above, or if the complaint otherwise moves beyond the scope or jurisdiction of the Academy.

The Academy will resolve complaints against member institutions and programs in a timely manner, moving as quickly as is feasible from step to step in the complaint procedures. The President of the Academy shall have the authority to establish timelines for each specific step of the process. In normal circumstances, (a) thirty days is the maximum period for each step; (b) business to come before the Board will be scheduled at regular meetings.

Complaints against the Academy staff:

Complaints and suggestions concerning accreditation standards, should be made in writing either to the Director for Higher Education or to the President at the National Office.

Complaints about Academy staff, policies or the accreditation process in general, or as applied in a specific case, may be lodged in writing with the President of AALE at the National Office. Complaints concerning senior staff (directors and higher) will be forwarded to the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees.

Receipt of complaints shall be acknowledged within 15 working days. In cases concerning the Academy's executive staff, or where, in the president's determination, the issues are potentially serious, the president shall notify the Executive Committee of the Board about the nature of the complaint.

The President shall review all complaints and will determine within 30 days if the complaint has merit. If it is determined that the complaint does have merit, the President shall inform the Board of Trustees for review and possible action. The Chairman of the

Board of Trustees shall notify the person or entity that lodged the complaint as to its resolution within 15 days of receiving notice that the complaint appears to have merit.

Non-Compliance with the Standards or Policies of the Academy

A. The complaint in writing is accepted by the President of the Academy.

B. The President of the Academy acknowledges receipt of the complaint in writing and requests of the complainant whatever additional information is deemed necessary. If a matter has not been pursued through the proper channels of appeal within the institution, the complainant is advised to follow this course of action. The President of the Academy shall determine whether the complaint is within the scope or jurisdiction of the Academy and shall so inform the complainant.

C. If the President determines that the complaint is within the scope or jurisdiction of the Academy, the President contacts the chief executive officer of the institution against which the complaint has been lodged to advise of the complaint.

D. The President of the Academy, in discussion with the institution and the complainant, sets a period of time for the resolution of the complaint by the institution without further formal action by the Academy.

E. If a resolution is not forthcoming in the time allotted, the President of the Academy develops a dossier containing the following:

1. The formal complaint with complete documentation;
2. Information obtained from the institution or program involved regarding the circumstances surrounding the complaint;
3. The relevant section(s) of the Academy's *Standards and Criteria*

F. The President of the Academy alerts the Board of Trustees that a complaint has been made and places the dossier on the agenda of the Board.

G. The Board reviews the dossier and formulates a decision concerning the case. Possible decisions are:

1. The institution or program is found to be in compliance with the standards.
2. The institution or program is found to be generally in compliance with the standards, but the complaint has merit in this particular circumstance.
3. The institution is found to be in non-compliance with the standards.

H. If the recommendation is G.1 above, the complainant and the institution are so informed by the President of the Academy.

I. If the recommendation is G.2 or G.3 above, the Academy may require the institution to submit a response within a specific time showing satisfactory resolution of the complaint and compliance with the standards. The response may require the report of an on-site consultant. The basic procedures for establishing and operating such consultancy shall be that in effect for on-site evaluation team visits.

The Academy will review the response when received and take one of the following actions:

1. Accept the response and consider the complaint resolved. The institution and complainant are notified; the action is not made public.
2. Accept the response and consider the complaint resolved, but request a progress report(s) to determine further compliance with the standards. The institution and complainant are notified; the action is not made public.
3. Acknowledge receipt of the response, but consider the complaint unresolved and the institution to be in noncompliance with the standards. In this case, the Academy may place the institution on administrative warning. If placed on administrative warning, the institution must submit an administrative warning response to the Academy within a specified time. Administrative warning status is not communicated to the public.
4. Upon receipt of the administrative warning response, the Academy either removes administrative warning or places the institution on probation. The institution is requested to submit a probationary response within a specified time. Probation is communicated to the Secretary of the U. S. Department of Education and to the public. If a probationary response is not received within the specified time, the membership of the institution is revoked, and the action made public through appropriate channels.
5. If the initial response is not received within the specified time, the institution is placed on probation; the action is communicated to the Secretary of the U. S. Department of Education and to the public. The institution is requested to submit a probationary response within a specified time.
6. If a probationary response is not received within the specified time, the membership of the institution is revoked, and the action made public through appropriate channels.

Conflict of Interest in Accreditation

The Academy attempts to guard against actual or apparent conflicts of interest in its accreditation and preaccreditation procedures. A conflict of interest in accreditation is defined as a circumstance or situation in which an individual's duty to make an impartial

or unbiased decision may be affected by prior, current, or anticipated affiliation, relationship, or association with the institution or program being evaluated.

The Academy's conflict of interest policy applies to Academy administrative staff, members of the Board of Trustees, members of the Council of Scholars, evaluation team members, appeals committee members, consultants, and other Academy representatives involved in an accreditation review process. This policy requires (but is not limited to) the following:

1. That no person should have visited the institution as an accreditation evaluator within the preceding five (5) years (non-US institutions may not be bound by this restriction);
2. That no person be, have been (within the preceding five (5) years), or expect to be an appointee, paid consultant, or employee of the institution, or a close relative of a person who is, has been (within the preceding five (5) years), or expects to be an appointee, consultant, or employee of the institution.
3. That Board members with any interest in an institution or program under review recuse themselves from the vote on accreditation or preaccreditation;
4. That Council members with any interest in an institution or program under review recuse themselves from the vote on recommendation;
5. That no person (associated with the Academy) serve or agree to serve as a paid consultant to the institution during the year following any evaluation visit for accreditation;
6. That no person (associated with the Academy) should explicitly or implicitly have expressed opinions, personal or professional, that bear adversely on the integrity, quality, or accreditability of the institution or any of its programs.

Because an individual with the power of appointment or invitation cannot know of every possible conflict, evaluators are expected to refuse a team invitation if any conflict appears probable. Applicant institutions or programs are also expected to comment on any possible conflicts of interest among proposed candidates for evaluation teams. Academy staff, Council members, Board members, appeals panelists, consultants and representatives should be alert to any such conflict. Refusal is expected if such a conflict exists.

If a conflict of interest issue arises, the matter shall be forwarded to the President of the Academy, who shall gather information, solicit advice as appropriate, and attempt to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of all concerned, consistent with the published policies and procedures of the Academy and with consideration of standard practice within the post-secondary accreditation community. Should the President be unable to achieve resolution, he shall bring the matter to the Executive Committee of the

Academy's Board. The Executive Committee shall seek resolution through procedures developed to address the specifics of each case.

Consulting Service

Upon request, the Academy will supply a consulting service to institutions and programs (members and non-members) having questions relative to their future development or to assist in the resolution of problems. The Academy will also provide upon request resource persons to provide information about the Academy, its accreditation standards and criteria, and its policies and procedures. Formal requests for this service should be sent to the Academy's offices.

There is no charge for regular staff consultation, via phone or email, on matters of accreditation. However, travel related expenses of staff associated with development and administration of accreditation self-studies, site visits, or similar services must be reimbursed by the institution. Staff consultation on matters not concerning accreditation is subject to an administrative fee. In addition, fees may be assessed for any non-staff consultants participating in reviews, visits, or other consultative actions conducted under the auspices of the Academy.

Decisions of Other Accrediting and Authorizing Agencies

The Academy shall not accredit or preaccredit institutions that lack legal authorization under applicable state law to provide programs of education beyond the secondary level. In considering whether to grant accreditation or preaccreditation to an institution or program, the Academy will take into account decisions made by recognized accrediting agencies and state agencies with regard to the institution or program making an application to the Academy, if the Academy knows or has reasonable cause to know, such decisions. Such decisions include but are not limited to the following:

1. A decision by a U.S. Department of Education recognized accrediting agency to deny accreditation or preaccreditation;
2. A pending or final action by a U.S. Department of Education recognized accrediting agency to suspend, revoke, or terminate accreditation or preaccreditation;
3. A decision by a U.S. Department of Education recognized accrediting agency to place an institution on probation or equivalent status; or
4. A pending or final action by a state agency to suspend, revoke, withdraw, or terminate the institution's legal authority to provide postsecondary education.

If the Academy grants preaccreditation or accreditation to an institution or program notwithstanding the adverse actions described above, the Academy will provide the Secretary, within thirty (30) days of its action, with a thorough and reasonable explanation, consistent with the Academy's accreditation standards, as to why the

previous action by a U.S. Department of Education recognized accrediting agency or state agency does not preclude the Academy's grant of accreditation or preaccreditation.

In the event that a U.S. Department of Education recognized accrediting agency takes adverse action or places on public probationary status any institution or program accredited or preaccredited by the Academy, the Academy will promptly review its accreditation or preaccreditation to determine if the Academy should also take adverse action.

The Academy shall, upon request, share with appropriate recognized accrediting agencies and recognized State education agencies information about the accreditation or preaccreditation status of an institution or program and any adverse actions it has taken against an accredited or preaccredited institution or program.

Deferral of Action

After the second consecutive deferral of an application for accreditation or preaccreditation for failure to meet a specific standard, the Academy's Board shall adopt one of the following motions upon third consideration of the application:

1. To approve the application;
2. To approve the application with a request for a progress report;
3. To require a response for the next Board meeting showing cause why the institution or program:
 - a. should not be placed on probation;
 - b. should not have accreditation or preaccreditation denied or revoked;
4. To place the institution on probation; or
5. To deny or revoke accreditation or preaccreditation.

Disclosure of Accreditation Materials and Information

Members and Applicants:

The Academy encourages institutions to make publicly available information about their accredited status and to share accreditation review materials with individuals and agencies having legitimate claim to information beyond that made available to the general public (see Statement of Membership).

AALE:

The Academy will notify the Secretary, the appropriate state education agency, the appropriate accrediting agencies, and the public of the types of accreditation *decisions* specified under Notification of Accreditation Decisions.

In addition, the Academy shall submit to the Secretary of Education in writing and in a timely manner:

(a) A copy of any annual report it prepares, when requested;

As well as:

(b) Any proposed change in the agency's policies, procedures, or accreditation or preaccreditation standards that *might* alter its--

(1) Scope of recognition; or

(2) Compliance with the criteria for recognition;

(c) The name of any accredited or preaccredited institution or program the agency has reason to believe is failing to meet its Title IV, HEA program responsibilities or is engaged in fraud or abuse, along with the reasons for concern about the institution or program; and

(d) If requested by the Secretary, a summary of major accrediting activities during the previous year (an annual data summary);

(e) Upon the Secretary's request, information that may bear upon an accredited or preaccredited institution's compliance with its Title IV, HEA program responsibilities, including eligibility of the institution or program to participate in Title IV, HEA programs.

The Academy will not make publicly available any accreditation review materials supplied by an institution or by representatives of the Academy in the course of an accreditation review, including self-studies, site evaluators' reports, institutional responses, and other documents and correspondence, unless an institution discloses part or all of such materials or information in a manner that misrepresents or distorts the decisions, reports, or findings of the Academy made in the course of the accreditation review, or its status of affiliation with the Academy. In such cases the President of the Academy will notify the chief executive officer or program director of the institution and inform them that corrective action must be taken. If the misrepresentation or distortion is not promptly corrected the Academy may, at its discretion, release a public statement in such a form and with such content as it deems necessary to provide the correct information. This holds for both applicants and member institutions.

Disclosure of Membership Information

The Academy submits to the Secretary, upon request, information to assist the Secretary in resolving problems with any institution or program accredited or preaccredited by the Academy that pertains to the institution's compliance with its Title IV, HEA program responsibilities. In addition, the names of any institutions or programs that the Academy accredits and has reason to believe are engaged in fraud, abuse, or fail to meet Title IV, HEA program responsibilities will be submitted to the Secretary with a statement outlining the reasons for these concerns.

The Academy publishes an annually updated directory of preaccredited and accredited institutions and programs, which states the year the institution or program will be up for renewal – the Academy website also has this information. A copy of the directory will be provided to the U.S. Department of Education as requested. Upon inquiry from the Department, State Postsecondary Review Entities, or the public, the Academy will release the following information about an institution's status, in a statement, prepared in consultation with the institution:

1. Date of the initial preaccreditation or accreditation;
2. Date and nature of the current on-site evaluation and subsequent actions by the Academy on the institution's accredited status;
3. Date and nature of the next scheduled on-site evaluation;
4. Dates of submission and action on the most recent written report required by the Academy;

For institutions or programs on probation, the Academy will release its reasons for recommending probationary status and its plans to monitor the institution.

The Academy does not provide information to the general public about deferments of action on preaccreditation or accreditation status, tabled motions, warning status, or show-cause orders. Also, adverse actions (placement of an institution on probation, denial of preaccreditation or accreditation, revocation of preaccreditation, and termination of accreditation) are not communicated to the public until the available reconsideration and/or appeals process is completed or the window for appeal has expired.

The Academy maintains and makes available to the public written materials describing its accreditation membership categories, its application procedures, and the names, professional qualifications, relevant experience, and education of administrative staff and members of its policy and decision-making bodies. This information is also on the Academy website.

Evaluation Team Report Disclaimer

All evaluation team reports must begin with this notice:

This site visit evaluation report and any statements therein regarding compliance with the accreditation standards and criteria of the American Academy for Liberal Education represent only the considered opinion of the site visitors at the time of the visit. Definitive evaluation of compliance and the accreditation decision will be made by the Academy's Board of Trustees, upon recommendation of the Council of Scholars, following a thorough review of application materials including, but not limited to, the institutional self-study, the site visit evaluation report, and any responses to the site team report submitted by the institution.

External Budget Control

Institutions dependent on an outside group for financial support (e.g. public/private agencies, state governments, churches, etc.) must retain the right to govern their own budgets through their governing boards. An outside group giving financial support to an accredited or preaccredited institution can determine the amount it gives as well as define in broad terms the categories for which it is meant. However, the institution has the responsibility to determine in detail how the funds are allocated and spent. Once funds have been allocated, it is expected that the amount provided by the outside group not be reduced. If a situation develops where this is necessary, then it is the institution and its governing board and officers who determine how and where the reductions are made. If the outside group has a responsibility for pre- or post-auditing, it should be only for mathematical accuracy, authenticity of signatures, consistency with the provisions of the budget, and legality.

Membership

Membership categories (both domestic and international) include: Institutional Accreditation or Preaccreditation (same as Candidacy with other Title IV authorized accreditors and not applicable to schools outside the US; *not awarded to non-US colleges*), program accreditation, program certification, institutional or program affiliation and friends of the Academy (individuals, foundations or institutions).

Monitoring and Reevaluation of Accredited and Preaccredited Institutions and Programs

All member institutions and programs are bound by the requirements set out in the *Standards and Criteria* and by all official correspondence from the Academy, including the award letter outlining the terms, requirements or stipulations of membership. Annual reports (including, but *not limited to* the AIRF) for all members (including pre-accredited) should be viewed as a continuation of the collegial discussion begun during the self-study process. Emphasis should be given to institutional, student, teaching and curricula assessment. Reports are intended to *verify that institutions are following their own procedures and maintaining the assessment levels as outlined and excerpted by the Academy's documents and Board at the time of awarding membership or subsequent. A*

current financial audit is required of all Academy members. Requests for AIRFs are sent out to members approximately Dec 1st of every year so that correct data for the current as well as previous AY can be obtained. Should Academy staff find the information to be unclear or insufficient, the college will be contacted no later than 45 days from the due date and asked to provide further data or information. Schools that do not respond to the Academy's initial request will be contacted within 30 days of the due date and notified that if a response is not made within an additional 30 days, membership may be suspended within 90 days from the original due date. Requests for reinstatement must be approved by the Academy's Board of Trustees at the next scheduled meeting. Schools that submit materials deemed acceptable may not be contacted for additional information.

The Academy *at any time* may ask for evidentiary documents from any member school, to verify any statements made in the school's published material, website or correspondence with the Academy. It may also visit any member institutions with, or without, notice. The Academy also reviews member websites at least once every two years, and should fraudulent or misleading information be found, the college will be contacted immediately and required to remove or modify the information within 10 working days.

As part of the annual reporting process, members are required to document continued compliance with AALE *Criteria*, as well as with federal regulations concerning:

- (i) Success with respect to student achievement in relation to the institution's or program's mission, including, as appropriate, consideration of course completion, State licensing examination, and job placement rates.
- (ii) Curricula.
- (iii) Faculty.
- (iv) Facilities, equipment, and supplies.
- (v) Fiscal and administrative capacity as appropriate to the specified scale of operations.
- (vi) Student support services.
- (vii) Recruiting and admissions practices, academic calendars, catalogs, publications, grading, and advertising.
- (viii) Measures of program length and the objectives of the degrees or credentials offered.
- (ix) Record of student complaints.
- (x) Record of compliance with the institution's program responsibilities under Title IV of the Act, based on the most recent student loan default rate data provided by the Secretary,

and the results of financial and compliance audits or program reviews undertaken by the Secretary.

A Mid-Term Review takes place in the middle of the accredited period of both programs and institutions (Pre-Accredited members may not be required to submit mid-term reports as the term is only for three years).

As part of this review, all accredited institutional and program members must submit an update of their original self-study, demonstrating the institution's *continued adherence to Academy Standards and Criteria, particularly with reference to any problems or goals cited in the preceding self-study, site evaluation report, membership award letter, annual update or other correspondence from the Academy staff, Council or Board.* A site visit by Academy staff will take place within 6 months of the submission of the mid-term report. The Academy may require an additional visit by staff or third party evaluators as part of the review process.

Academy staff or Board may require that a member institution submit additional reports related to specific or time sensitive criteria or concerns (e.g., new assessment regime implementation, corrections in aspects of the curriculum deemed not sufficient at the time of granting of membership, concerns about administration vacancies, frequent turn-over or appointments, stability in finances, etc.).

If, on the basis of information received during monitoring of programs and institutions or by other means, it is determined that an institution or program may no longer be in compliance with the agency's standards or other requirements, a special evaluation, a site visit, or both shall be undertaken to determine the status of the institution or program's compliance. An institution/program that has been determined to be out of compliance will be required to show-cause why it should not be immediately terminated or placed on probation.

Record of Compliance:

During its evaluative and monitoring processes, including initial and subsequent accreditation and preaccreditation, the Academy, during annual updates (see above) and mid-term reviews, incorporates the results of USDOE financial or compliance audits of pre-accredited and accredited members, program reviews, and any other information that the Secretary may provide to the Academy that may affect a member's standing in relation to Title IV financial aid funds.

For Institutional Pre-accreditation

During their term of pre-accreditation, institutions must:

1. Provide the Academy with concise annual reports describing progress and developments in relation to fulfillment of the Academy's *Standards and Criteria* (see above for more details); and

2. Complete and submit annual AALE Institutional Profile forms (AIRF).

Pre-accredited institutions seeking a change in status to accreditation must demonstrate full compliance with the Academy's Eligibility Requirements, Education Standards, and Institution Standards through a detailed and concise self-study report and receive the site evaluation visit before the expiration of their term of pre-accreditation. Attainment of AALE pre-accreditation does not ensure or imply that an institution will eventually be granted AALE accreditation status.

For Institutional Accreditation

During their term of accreditation, institutions must:

1. Provide during the term of accreditation any additional reports, such as a concise *mid-term report* or report dealing with specific concerns (e.g., finances, governance, writing in the curriculum, etc.) as requested by the Board, indicating continuing compliance with the Academy's *Standards and Criteria*; and
2. Complete and submit annual AALE Institutional Profile forms.
3. Accredited institutions seeking renewal of accreditation status must demonstrate compliance with the Academy's Eligibility Requirements, Education Standards, and Institution Standards through a detailed and concise self-study report and must also receive a site evaluation visit before the expiration of their term of accreditation. In exceptional cases, a member school may request a one term extension, prior to the acceptance of the site visit team.

Note: ALL Accredited and Program members must accept at least one visit by AALE staff (and external reviewers if deemed appropriate by the Academy) during the term of accreditation.

For Program Accreditation

During their term of accreditation, programs must:

1. Provide mid-point of program accreditation a concise mid-term report, as requested by the Board and/or AALE staff, indicating continuing compliance with the Academy's *Standards and Criteria*; and
2. Complete and submit annual AALE Institutional Profile (AIRF) forms.
3. Accredited programs seeking renewal of accreditation status must demonstrate compliance with the Academy's Program Eligibility Requirements, Education Standards, and Program Standards through a detailed and concise self-study report and must also receive a site evaluation visit before the expiration of their term of accreditation.

Non-Discrimination Policy

It is the policy of the Academy that no person shall be subject to discrimination in whatever relationship with the Academy because of sex, race, color, creed, religion, or national origin.

Notification of Accreditation Decisions

The Academy will notify the Secretary, the appropriate state education agency, the appropriate accrediting agencies, and the public of the following types of *decisions* or *actions*, no later than thirty (30) days after a final decision is made:

1. A decision to award accreditation or pre-accreditation status to an institution or program for the first time;
2. A decision to renew an institution's or program's accreditation or pre-accreditation;

The Academy will notify the Secretary, the appropriate state education agency, the appropriate accrediting agencies, at the same time it notifies the institution or program of the decision, and the public within twenty-four (24) hours of notifying the institution or program, but no later than thirty (30) days after it reaches the following types of decisions:

1. A *final* decision to deny, suspend, terminate, or otherwise affect the accreditation status or any accredited or pre-accredited member;
2. A decision to place on probation any pre-accredited or accredited member;

Adverse actions/decisions (actions that deny, withdraw, or revoke accreditation status) are not considered final and communicated to the public until the available reconsideration and/or appeals process is completed. When the final decision is to deny, withdraw, or revoke the accreditation status, the Secretary will be notified of the decision at the same time as the institution. No later than sixty (60) days after the date of final decision, the Academy makes available to the Secretary, the appropriate state agency, and the public upon request, a brief statement summarizing the reasons for the Academy's determination to deny, withdraw, suspend, terminate, or otherwise affect the accreditation status, and the comments, if any, that the institution may wish to make with regard to that decision.

Postponement of Evaluation Site Visits

If absolutely necessary, postponement of a planned evaluation site visit may be granted. Requests for postponement should be directed to the Academy's president in writing, and should be made at least 10 business days prior. The institution is expected to cover any additional costs incurred owing to a postponement.

The Academy also reserves the right to postpone a planned evaluation site visit if it becomes apparent that a) the institution has not sent necessary materials (i.e., eligibility documents, self-study) in a timely fashion to site visitors; or b) key personnel at the institution will not be available to meet with site visitors during the dates previously agreed upon. Notice of such postponement will be made in writing to the chief executive officer of the applicant institution or program. Any expenses incurred in the event of a postponement by the Academy for these reasons will be covered by the applicant institution.

Public Information

The Academy maintains and makes publicly available written materials describing:

1. The scope of its accreditation authority;
2. The categories of accreditation for which institutions and programs may apply;
3. Its Eligibility Requirements for all categories of accreditation;
4. Its *Standards and Criteria* for all categories of accreditation;
5. Its policies and procedures;
6. A list of member institutions and programs, including accreditation status;
7. The members of its policy and decision-making bodies and principal and administrative staff (names, academic and professional qualifications, relevant employment and organizational affiliations).

The Academy's principal means for providing the public information will include an Internet website, a bi-annually published newsletter, and an annual report. This website and newsletter will be made available to the public in a timely fashion. Additionally, the public may request these materials to be sent either electronically or through the US mail. All such requests will be complied with within 15 working days of the receipt of the request.

1. Notice of the year when institutions and programs are being reviewed for accreditation action, including opportunity for public comment. Any public comments must be received in writing by the Academy at least sixty (60) days prior to formal action by the Academy's Board of Trustees; institutions and programs being reviewed for accreditation action will be notified of any public comments received, and will have opportunity to respond to these. Institutional or program responses to public comment must be received at least thirty (30) days prior to formal action by the Academy's Board of Trustees.

Third-party comment must be restricted to issues of accreditation. The procedure will not be used to settle disputes between individuals and institutions, whether faculty, students,

administration, or members of other groups are involved. Third-party comments will not be accepted in cases where parties are in litigation with each other.

2. Notice of formal and final actions on institutions and programs reviewed for accreditation action by the Academy's Board of Trustees; and

3. Notice of proposed new or revised standards and/or criteria for accreditation, including the opportunity for public comment prior to formal action by the Academy's Board of Trustees. Any public comments on new or revised standards and/or criteria for accreditation must be received in writing by the Academy at least thirty (30) days prior to formal action by the Board.

In addition the Academy's website will make available to the public in a timely fashion:

1. Notice of Academy events and meetings, including regular and special Board of Trustees meetings, General and Membership meetings, and research project meetings; and

2. Copies of all current regular and occasional publications of the Academy for viewing on-line or download without charge, including the *Standards and Criteria*, application materials, and the Academy's policies and procedures.

Reconsideration of Accreditation Actions

Reconsiderations of accreditation actions may precede, but not follow appeals of adverse decisions made by the Board of Trustees of the Academy. Under most circumstances, a request for reconsideration of an accreditation action will constitute the first stage of review of an accreditation action taken by the Board (see Appeals of Adverse Decisions).

Actions Eligible for Reconsideration

A request for reconsideration may be filed with the President of the Academy regarding the following actions:

1. Denial of accreditation or preaccreditation;
2. Denial of renewal of accreditation or preaccreditation;
3. Revocation of accreditation or preaccreditation;
4. Termination of a new application for accreditation or preaccreditation;
5. The placing of an institution on probation;
6. Continuing denial of a request for approval of a substantive change; or

7. Continuing denial of action on an application for accreditation or preaccreditation.

Grounds for Reconsideration

In the event of a decision by the Board of Trustees of the Academy in the categories outlined above under “Actions Eligible for Reconsideration,” the grounds for reconsideration shall be:

1. Allegations concerning bias or prejudice;
2. Departure from published or customary procedures;
3. Factual error of such magnitude as to warrant reconsideration;
4. Failure to consider all the evidence and documentation presented in favor of an application; or
5. New evidence that would affect the decision.

Procedures for Reconsideration

1. Within thirty (30) days of the date of the decision letter of the Academy’s Board, the institution shall notify the President of the Academy in writing of its intention to seek reconsideration of the decision.
2. The institution shall submit written documentation supporting its request not later than sixty (60) days from the date of the Board decision letter.
3. The President shall determine whether the request for reconsideration meets the criteria necessary to proceed, and so informs the institution of his decision in writing.
4. If the request meets the criteria, the President places the request for reconsideration on the agenda of the next regularly scheduled Board meeting.
5. The Board acts on the request using its normal procedures, and the institution is informed in writing of the Board’s decision within thirty (30) days of the decision.

The status of any institution shall remain unchanged during the reconsideration. There shall be no public notice of the decision until the review is completed and a final determination in the matter has been reached. For institutions filing a request for reconsideration, deadlines for filing an appeal (see Appeals of Adverse Decisions) of a decision of the Academy’s Board of Trustees will be tolled either: a) from the date of the letter from the President of the Academy informing the institution that the request for reconsideration does not meet the applicable criteria, or b) from the date of the letter informing the institution of the outcome of the completed reconsideration process.

Records Retention

It is the Academy's policy to save all materials related to at least the last two completed accreditation cycles of an institution or program. This includes eligibility materials, on-site evaluation team reports, the institution's or program's response to the evaluation team report, any periodic or special review reports, (e.g., unannounced site visits to institutions that offer vocational education or training, substantive change applications, notices of administrative warning or probation, etc.), and the institution's or program's most recent self-study. In addition, letters notifying institutions of accreditation decisions are kept on permanent file as are the minutes from any appeals hearings.

The Academy also keeps on file a record of complaints made to the Academy about any institution or program accredited by it (see Complaints) for at least one accreditation cycle.

Revocation of Accreditation or Preaccreditation

Member institutions and programs failing to maintain the required standards, or failing to respond appropriately to administrative warning status, probationary status, or suspension of accreditation status (see Special Statutes), may have their membership revoked, with notice of right to request reconsideration and right to request appeal. Such institutions may apply for reinstatement through the normal application procedures of the Academy. A request for readmission will not be considered until two years have elapsed and until any previous financial obligations of the applicant institution or program to the Academy have been satisfied. Final action to revoke membership is published and notice forwarded to the Secretary within thirty (30) days of the action.

Role of Academy Staff in Accreditation

The staff of the Academy manages the accreditation process, and ensures that all procedures, policies, and operations established by the Board of Trustees are carried out fairly and in accordance with Academy practice. The staff does not engage in accreditation evaluations of institutions or programs, nor does the staff take overt responsibility for operating the accreditation process at specific institutions. However, the staff is responsible for providing consultative services when requested to do so by institutions and programs. The staff is also involved extensively in the development of literature, workshops, and other services to assist institutions in structuring their own uses of requisite accreditation standards and procedures.

Each member of the Academy staff avoids conflicts of interest in the accreditation process by declining to (a) act inconsistently among member and applicant institutions; (b) make unilateral accreditation personnel decisions affecting any institution where the staff member was a student or employee; (c) direct institutions and programs concerning internal policy decisions; (d) make definitive judgments or promises concerning acceptability of the content of documents submitted for Commission review; (e) accept

positions on boards, councils, or development groups associated with specific institutions of higher education;

Scope of Accreditation Authorization

The Academy is recognized by the United States Secretary of Education as a national institutional accrediting agency for the accreditation and preaccreditation (Candidacy for Accreditation) of institutions and programs of higher education that offer liberal arts degrees at the baccalaureate level.

Both institutional accreditation and institutional preaccreditation when granted by the Academy fully enable institutions to establish eligibility to participate in Federal student financial assistance programs administered by the Department of Education under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 as amended, as well as in student financial assistance programs established under other Federal legislation which require accreditation by a nationally recognized accrediting agency.

The Academy will inform the Secretary in writing and in a timely manner of proposed changes in agency policies, procedures, or accreditation standards that *might* alter the Academy's scope of recognition or compliance with the requirements of regulation 602.40 of the Secretary's Procedures and Criteria for Recognition of Accrediting Agencies.

Self-Assessment Procedures

The Academy will regularly review its standards to ensure that they are adequate to evaluate the quality of the education provided by the institutions and programs it accredits, are relevant to the educational needs of its students, and provide a consistent basis for determining the educational quality of different institutions and programs. If the Academy determines, at any point during its systematic program of review, that it needs to make changes to its standards, the association will initiate action within 12 months to make the changes and will complete that action within a reasonable time.

A review of the standards will be an Academy Board agenda item at least every three years, and during every year in which the Academy conducts its systematic review of education standards.

The Academy will conduct a systematic review of its education standards every third year, at the close of the calendar year, consulting both internal and external constituencies. This review will gather qualitative and quantitative evaluations of Academy education standards and criteria; the review will specifically address educational relevancy and effectiveness. A comprehensive report describing results of the systematic review will be presented to the Academy's Board of Trustees at the next regularly scheduled meeting, and copies of the report will be made available to the general public through the Academy's website at www.aale.org. A copy of the most

recent survey questionnaire will be made available to interested parties through the Academy's website as well.

Special Statutes

Administrative Warning Status

Institutions may be placed on administrative warning by the Board for failing to:

1. Payment of yearly membership dues to the Academy or meet other financial commitments;
2. File annual reports;
3. Apply for accreditation re-evaluation after due notice; or
4. Provide timely responses to requests of the Board of Trustees of the Academy.

Before this action is taken, the Board shall send a show-cause letter requesting:

1. Remediation of the problem; or
2. An explanation of why administrative warning should not be invoked.

Administrative warning status may extend from one to twelve months at the discretion of the Board, and is removed as soon as the administrative issue is resolved. Failure to resolve the issue may result in revocation of membership.

Administrative warning status is not an adverse action and is not published. Institutions and programs with administrative warning status retain accredited membership and do not lose their voting or other rights and responsibilities.

Probationary Status

Any accredited member may be placed on probation by the Academy's Board with notice of right to request reconsideration for:

1. Failing to maintain the Academy's required standards and/or criteria;
2. Failing to respond satisfactorily to the requests of the Academy; or
3. Violation of qualitative aspects of the Academy's policies and procedures.

The probationary period shall extend not fewer than five (5) months or more than two (2) years, the specific period to be determined by the Board of Trustees of the Academy at each time such action is taken. A period of probation may be extended by the Board good

cause for not fewer than five (5) months or more than two (2) years. A self-evaluation and site visit may be required for the removal of probation.

Notice of probation is forwarded to the Secretary at the same time as the institution, and within thirty (30) days of the action, and thus becomes public in cases where the Academy serves as the designated institutional accreditor. Institutions on probation do not lose their voting or other rights and responsibilities.

Suspension of Accreditation Status

Suspension of accreditation status can be applied only to institutions of higher education for which the Academy is the designated institutional accreditor for Title IV purposes. Automatic suspension of accreditation or preaccreditation will occur under the following circumstances:

1. The filing of Chapter 11 or Chapter 7 bankruptcy proceedings by the institution;
2. Change in ownership or major changes in control without previous notice as stipulated in Academy policies and procedures (see Change of Institutional Control);
3. The establishment without prior notice of a branch campus or other entity offering degrees and programs eligible for accreditation by the Academy, or significant expansion of affiliate uses of the institution's name without prior notice (see Branch and Other Off-Campus Locations).

Following automatic suspension, accreditation may only be reinstated upon application to and approval by the Academy's Board of Trustees. Because the suspension results without action or prior approval on the part of the Board, this change in status does not constitute formal withdrawal of accreditation, and thus is not an adverse action that is subject to reconsideration or to appeal (see Appeals of Adverse Decisions and Reconsideration).

It is expected that institutions with automatic suspension status will regain their accredited status at the earliest feasible time, or resign from the Academy. The suspension period will not exceed the earlier of six (6) months or the expiration of the institution's current accreditation period.

Failure to move expeditiously from suspended accreditation status to regular accreditation status within a period of six (6) months of the date of automatic suspension will be cause for revocation of accreditation. Revocation of accreditation is not automatic and must be approved by the Board.

If evidence concerning remediation of the reasons for automatic suspension is submitted within six (6) months of the date of automatic suspension and judged adequate by the Board, the Board will reinstate accreditation, retroactive to the date of automatic suspension, along with any time and other stipulations for future reviews.

If the Board of Trustees revokes the suspended institution's accreditation, or if the suspended institution does not present evidence concerning remediation of the reasons for automatic suspension within the earlier of six (6) months or the expiration of the previous grant of accreditation, the institution must then follow procedures for initiating accreditation.

Automatic suspension is not published, but notice is forwarded to the Secretary if the suspension lasts more than twenty-nine (29) days. Institutions with automatic suspension are suspended as members of the Academy and thus lose their voting rights during the suspension period.

Statements of Membership

Institutions and programs accredited or preaccredited by the American Academy for Liberal Education may state their affiliation with AALE in their materials according to one of the following approved statements:

For accredited or preaccredited institutions:

_____ [name of institution] is accredited [or preaccredited] by the American Academy for Liberal Education, located at 1050 17th Street NW, Suite 400, Washington, D.C. 20036. The Academy's telephone number is (202) 452-8611.

For accredited institutions only:

_____ [name of institution] is accredited by the American Academy for Liberal Education, which accredits outstanding liberal arts institutions and programs. This accreditation is institutional in nature with a focus on general education/liberal arts curricula. The Academy is located at 1050 17th Street NW, Suite 400, Washington, D.C. 20036. The Academy's telephone number is (202) 452-8611.

For accredited programs only:

_____ [name of program] within _____ [name of institution] is accredited by the American Academy for Liberal Education, located at 1050 17th Street NW, Suite 400, Washington, D.C. 20036. The Academy's telephone number is (202) 452-8611.

_____ [name of program] within _____ [name of institution] is accredited by the American Academy for Liberal Education, which accredits outstanding liberal arts institutions and programs. This accreditation is programmatic in nature and certifies that the general education/liberal arts program meets the Academy's Education Standards. The Academy is located at 1050 17th Street NW, Suite 400, Washington, D.C. 20036. The Academy's telephone number is (202) 452-8611.

An institution or program must disclose its affiliation with the Academy in an accurate and truthful manner. If it does not, the Academy will consider this a basis for removing the institution's or program's accreditation status. This includes accredited and preaccredited institutions and programs as well as those in the application process.

Student Complaints

All institutions must maintain a file of written student complaints on-site and make these records available upon request to the Academy.

Substantive Change

Changes that fundamentally affect the nature of an accredited or preaccredited institution or program, its educational programs, its allocation of resources, or its fulfillment of the Academy's standards and requirements are considered substantive.

Substantive changes initiated after the most recent evaluation *are not included automatically* in the institution's or program's accreditation. Therefore, an institution or program considering substantive change must notify the Academy early in its planning process and provide an explanation of the proposed change. Notice of the proposed change must be submitted at least thirty (30) days prior to implementation. Prior approval of substantive changes must be obtained from the Academy before those changes may be included in the institution's accredited status.

Types of Substantive Change

The Academy's definition of substantive change includes *but is not limited to*:

1. Changes to an institution's established mission or educational objectives;
2. Changes to an institution's legal status or form of control;
3. Addition of courses or programs that represent a significant departure in content or method of delivery from those offered at the time of the Academy's last evaluation of the institution or program;
4. Addition of courses or programs leading to degrees at a level higher than that for which accreditation is held;
5. Changes from clock to credit hours and vice versa;
6. Substantial changes in the number of clock or credit hours awarded for successful completion of a program; and
7. Establishment of a *branch campus* or *additional locations*, as defined by the USDOED – see **Branch Campus** section of this manual. The Academy must visit any newly

established branch campus within 6 months. The Academy must visit additional locations for colleges with 3 or fewer within 6 months. The Academy reserves the right to visit any locations of an applicant or member institution, if that location is to be considered as part of a program or institution's accreditation or pre-accreditation.

Teach-out Agreements

The Academy requires that accredited and preaccredited institutions submit for approval any teach-out agreements with other institutions at least thirty (30) days before the agreement is to take effect. Teach-out agreements must be made only with institutions that are accredited or preaccredited by agencies recognized by the U. S. Department of Education. Institutions must ensure that:

1. The teach-out institution has the experience, resources, and support services to provide an educational program of acceptable quality and of one that is comparable in content, structure, and scheduling to that of the closing institution; and that
2. The teach-out institution can provide access to its educational program and services and a location reasonably proximate to that of the closing institution.

The Academy will cooperate with the U. S. Department of Education as well as with the appropriate state departments and authorizing agencies to ensure, to the extent feasible, that students of closing institutions receive opportunities to complete their education without additional charge.

Terms of Accreditation and Preaccreditation

Institutional Categories

Institutional preaccreditation is granted for a period of up to *three* (3) years.

Institutional accreditation is granted for a period of up to *ten* (10) years.

Program Categories

US Program accreditation is granted for a period of up to *ten* (10) years.

International Program accreditation is granted for a period of up to *five* (5) years.

Certification, non-degree and Affiliated statuses

Certification, non-degree and Affiliated statuses can be awarded for up to *five* (5) years.

Third Party Comment

The Academy shall provide opportunity for third-party comment in writing regarding the qualifications institutions or programs being reviewed for accreditation or reaccreditation on issues relating to the Academy's accreditation standards, criteria, and policies. Notice of opportunity for third-party comment will be made through the Academy's website as well as through its biannual newsletter at least 90 days in advance.

Any third-party comments must be received in writing by the Academy at least sixty (60) days prior to the expected date of formal action by the Academy's Board of Trustees; institutions and programs being reviewed for accreditation action will be notified of any public comments received, and will have opportunity to respond to these. Institutional or program responses to public comment must be received at least thirty (30) days prior to formal action by the Academy's Board of Trustees.

Third-party comment is not a substitute for the Academy's procedures for Complaints against member institutions and programs (see Complaints).

Third-party comment must be restricted to issues of accreditation. The procedure will not be used to settle disputes between individuals and institutions, whether faculty, students, administration, or members of other groups are involved. Third-party comments will not be accepted in cases where parties are in litigation with each other.

Withdrawal

An institution holding any accredited institutional or program member status may withdraw from such membership at anytime by providing written notice to the President of the Academy.

An applicant institution or program may withdraw from the application process for accreditation at any time by providing written notice to the President of the Academy. The institution is expected to cover all costs connected with its withdrawn application, including but not limited to travel expenses incurred in anticipation of an evaluation site visit. Application fees paid to the Academy are not refundable.

The Academy shall notify the Secretary, the appropriate State licensing or authorizing agency, the appropriate accrediting agencies, and, upon request, the public if an accredited or preaccredited institution or program--

- (1) Decides to withdraw voluntarily from accreditation or preaccreditation, or
- (2) Lets its accreditation or preaccreditation lapse.
- (3) Notification will be made within 30 days of AALE receiving a declaration that the institution or program is withdrawing voluntarily from accreditation or preaccreditation; or within 30 days of the date on which accreditation or preaccreditation lapses.

APPENDIX I:

APPEALS PROCEDURE

Appeals of Adverse Decisions

An appeal of an adverse decision by the Academy's Board of Trustees may be preceded, but not followed, by a request for reconsideration (see Adverse Decisions and Reconsideration of Accreditation Actions).

Grounds for Appeal

The grounds on which an institution may appeal an adverse decision of the Academy's Board of Trustees denying or withdrawing institutional accreditation or preaccreditation or program accreditation shall be that:

1. the Board's decision was not supported by substantial evidence in the record; or
2. the Board, in making its decision, departed significantly from its written procedures and protocols.

Meaning of Appeals Decisions

Decisions on appeals concern only matters outlined under "Grounds for Appeal" above. After completing the appeals process, decisions concerning accreditation or preaccreditation remain the responsibility of the Board. Decisions on appeals are made only on evidence available at the time of the decision being appealed.

Notice of Intent to Appeal

1. An institution wishing to appeal a decision of the Academy's Board shall file with the Director of Accreditation a notice of intent to appeal by registered mail not later than thirty (30) days following the date of the decision letter of the Academy's Board. This notice shall be the official action of the governing board of the institution, and must be accompanied by the required filing fee.
2. Immediately upon receiving notice of intent to appeal, the Director of Accreditation shall forward to the President of AALE and the Chairman of the Academy's Board of Trustees a copy of the notice and shall acknowledge receipt of the notice in writing to the chief executive officer of the institution.
3. If the Director of Accreditation finds that the decision being appealed clearly is not one that denied or withdrew the accredited or preaccredited membership of an institution or program with the Academy, the Director of Accreditation shall confirm to the institution or program its accredited or preaccredited status with the Academy and shall notify the institution that the appeal is invalid and will not be entertained.

Failure of an institution to file notice of intent to appeal, the required filing fee, or its appeal document in a timely fashion shall void the appeal.

Payment for Costs of the Appeal

At the same time the notice of intent is sent, the institution shall send to the Academy by registered mail a deposit of \$5,000 payable to the Academy, to be deposited in the funds of the Academy and applied to certain costs of the appeals process as follows:

1. Travel and subsistence for members of the appeals committee;
2. Telephone and correspondence costs incurred by appeals committee members and reimbursed by the Academy;
3. Costs of meeting rooms for the appeals committee; and

4. Any other costs of conducting the appeals process paid by the funds of the Academy.

Such costs shall be totaled following the conclusion of the appeals process and divided equally between the institution filing the appeal and the Academy. The Director of Accreditation shall provide to both the institution and the Academy's Board an accounting of such costs and refund to the institution any portion of its \$2,500 deposit not used to pay the institution's portion of the costs. Costs in excess of \$2,500 shall be evenly split between the Academy and the appealing institution up to a maximum of \$5,000. The Academy shall be responsible for all costs over \$5,000. Appeal fees shall be subject to a yearly increase in accordance with the Higher Education Price Index.

The institution shall be responsible for any costs incurred in providing for its representatives at the appeals committee hearing and the preparation of its documents submitted as part of the appeals process, and such costs shall not be reimbursed by the Academy. Similarly, the Academy shall be responsible for any costs incurred in providing for its representatives at the appeals committee hearing and the preparation of its documents submitted as part of the appeals process.

Should the Director of Accreditation find that the institution did not provide its deposit against costs as delineated above, the Director of Accreditation shall notify the institution and the Chair of the Academy's Board of Trustees of that finding, and the appeal shall not be entertained.

Filing of the Appeal Document

The institution shall file with the Director of Accreditation by registered mail a written appeal document setting forth evidence and argument in support of its appeal not later than thirty (30) days following the date of its notice to appeal.

The evidence and argument of the written appeal document may set forth that:

1. the Board's decision was not supported by substantial evidence in the record; or
2. the Board, in making its decision, departed significantly from its written procedures and protocols.

Changes made by or occurring at the institution since the time of the decision being appealed or evidence that is not submitted to the Academy prior to the time of the adverse decision that is the subject of the appeal may not be cited, or relied upon, in support of the appeal.

Any audio-visual or other supplementary materials that the institution may wish to provide in support of its case may accompany the appeal document.

Upon receipt of the written appeal document the Director of Accreditation shall forward to the President of the Academy and the Chair of the Board of Trustees a copy of the document and shall acknowledge receipt of the document in writing to the chief executive officer of the institution.

Initial Response

The Director of Accreditation shall ensure that the institution's notice of appeal and the appeal document meet all preconditions for review by the appeals committee. If the

appeal is accepted for review, the Director of Accreditation informs the President of the Academy and the Chairman of the Academy's Board and provides the appeals materials submitted by the institution.

Within thirty (30) days of receipt of the appeals documents, the Chairman of the Academy's Board shall provide a written response to the appeal stating the reason for the Board's decision. The response shall be sent to the Director of Accreditation, who forwards a copy to the President of the Academy and the chief executive officer of the institution filing the appeal.

Public Response to Inquiries

The AALE appeals process operates under the AALE Policies and Procedures statement on Disclosure of Accreditation Materials and Information. AALE considers the appeals process to be confidential and, at all times during the course of the appeal, will maintain complete confidentiality of all documents and information supplied or reviewed during the appeal, as well as the deliberators and decision-making process relating to the appeal or to the decision under appeal. In response to inquiries concerning an institution appealing a decision of the Academy's Board, the Academy's comments will be limited to the following: confirm action that an appeal by the institution of an Academy decision is pending and that the status of the institution prior to the decision remains in effect pending the outcome of the appeal.

However, should a potential or actual appellant publicly disclose a pending or actual appeal or appeal decision, or publicly characterize or make misleading or inaccurate representations about the appeals process, the decision that may be, or is subject to, an appeal, or the appeals decision, whether before, during, or after the appeal, AALE reserves the right to respond immediately and publicly through the appropriate medium or media to correct or clarify such inaccurate or misleading representations or characterizations.

Statements regarding disclosure and confidentiality in the AALE Policies and Procedures Manual and above are consistent with AALE's responsibility under law and regulation to inform various governmental authorities when decisions are reached at the conclusion of accreditation or appeals procedures.

Appointment of the Appeals Committee

The Director of Accreditation, with the approval of the Executive Committee of the Academy's Board of Trustees, shall appoint the chairman and members of an appeals committee comprising three persons, none of whom shall be members of the Academy's Board of Trustees.

Each person invited to participate in the appeals committee shall be asked to consider whether any conflict of interest would arise from service on the committee. Conflict of interest includes, but is not limited to, participating in any way in the process leading to the decision being appealed or having any prior or projected alumni, employment, financial, or other relationship with the appealing institution that could influence or be construed as influencing the outcome of the appeal. If conflict of interest is found, that

person may not serve on the appeals committee. In addition, Appeals Panel members are subject to the AALE Conflict of Interest in Accreditation policy (see Conflict of Interest in Accreditation).

The appeals committee shall receive from the institution making the appeal written materials detailing its appeal and from the Chairman of the Academy's Board a written response to the appeal.

Appeal Hearing

Upon receiving the written notice of intent to appeal, the Director of Accreditation shall establish the appeals committee, as provided above. After consultation with members of the committee, the Director of Accreditation shall notify the chief executive officer of the institution, the President of the Academy and the Chairman of the Academy's Board of a time and place at which the committee will hear the appeal.

The hearing shall be scheduled not earlier than sixty (60) days and not later than ninety (90) days following receipt by the Director of Accreditation of the notice of intent to appeal. The place of the hearing shall be within the continental United States. Once scheduled, the time and place of the hearing may be changed only by agreement of a majority of the appeals committee. The reason for such change shall be conditions beyond the control of the committee, institution, or Academy, such as weather or illness of representatives or appeals committee members.

The appeals committee shall conduct the hearing and its deliberations on the date and at the place scheduled. If for any reason the institution or the Academy does not have representatives present at the hearing, the hearing shall proceed, and the committee shall make its decision on the basis of the written record and the presentations available to it at the hearing.

An institution may elect to have its appeal considered by use of the written documents only, notifying the committee in writing of this election no later than forty-eight (48) hours in advance of the meeting. In this case, the committee shall not receive oral presentations at the hearing from Academy representatives.

Procedures for the Hearing

Three groups are involved in the hearing:

1. The appeals committee;
2. Representatives from the appealing institution; and
3. Representatives from the Academy.

The institution may be represented by not more than three persons at the hearing, and the Academy may be represented by not more than three persons, one of whom shall be the Chairman of the Board of Trustees or the designee of the Chairman (but not the Director of Accreditation). Argument will be limited to principals, or their designees, with evidence provided by the other representatives. The Director of Accreditation shall act as staff to the committee.

After the committee is assembled and called to order by its chairman, the committee shall first meet by itself to consider the appeal document and the Academy response.

The committee shall then invite institutional and Academy representatives to enter the meeting together and shall ask for oral presentations and discussion of issues bearing on the appeal; this portion of the hearing may be recorded if the committee, institution, or Academy requests it and there is no objection. The presentations and discussion shall be allotted such times as the chairman of the committee shall decide. The chairman of the committee may terminate presentations and discussion found by the chairman to be of excessive length or not germane to the issues before the committee. Only issues discussed in the appeal document can be raised at the hearing by the institution and the Academy.

Following presentations and discussion, which may include questions from members of the committee, all representatives shall be excused from the hearing and the committee shall proceed to a discussion of its findings and recommendation. If in the course of its discussion the committee wishes to recall representatives to answer questions, it may do so provided it recalls representatives of both the institution and the Academy.

Recommendation of the Committee

The recommendation of the committee shall be either to:

1. deny the appeal and sustain the decision of the Academy; or
2. sustain the appeal on one or more of the grounds specified in the “Grounds for Appeal” noted in the written appeal document and stated in the committee findings, and to remand the decision to the Academy for correction of errors and omissions identified by the committee and for reconsideration of the institution’s status.

The committee shall support its recommendation by specific findings of fact on which its recommendation is based.

Written Report of the Appeals Committee

When the committee is ready to consider its written report, it shall meet with the Director of Accreditation and give instructions for the preparation of a draft report. Alternatively, the appeals committee may prepare the first draft of its own report. The staff shall formally and promptly circulate the draft report to each member of the committee for changes.

When draft report and committee recommendations are approved by a majority of the committee, the staff shall prepare the final report containing the committee’s findings and decision for the signature of the chairman of the appeals committee. A copy of the signed report shall be sent promptly by staff to the chief executive officer of the institution, the President of AALE, the Chairman of the Academy’s Board, and each member of the appeals committee.

Final Decision of the Appeals Committee

The decision of the appeals committee will be communicated in writing to the institution filing the appeal, as well as to the President and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Academy, within fifteen (15) days of the conclusion of the appeals hearing.

In the event the appeals committee upholds the original decision of the Academy’s Board of Trustees, the Board’s decision becomes final at this point.

In the event the appeals committee remands the original decision of the Academy's Board of Trustees, the prior status of the institution remains in effect until the Board of Trustees acts on the remanded decision.

Action by the Board following an Appeals Decision

If the appeal is denied, the Academy's Board of Trustees has no power to consider new evidence produced since the original decision.

If the appeal is sustained and the decision remanded to the Academy's Board, the Board in acting on the remanded decision shall take into account changes made by or occurring in the institution since the original decision. The Board in its reconsideration shall utilize written materials submitted by the institution, and may, at its discretion, have a team visit the institution and other such procedures as are appropriate in correcting the errors and omissions identified by the appeals committee and in reaching a new decision on the institution's accreditation or preaccreditation or program's accreditation.

The institution may be assessed such fees as are established by the Academy for such procedures, except that the institution may not be assessed fees for Academy actions taken solely to correct errors and omissions identified by the appeals committee.

Effective Date of Action

Until the final decision of the appeals committee, the decision under appeal shall not be in effect, and the accredited or preaccredited membership status of the institution or program shall remain as it was before the decision under appeal was made.

If the appeal is denied by the committee, the Board decision under appeal shall become effective on the date of denial.

If the appeal is sustained, the decision being appealed is suspended until the Academy takes action on remand, and the accredited or preaccredited membership status of the institution or program shall remain as it was before the decision under appeal was made.