



American Academy for Liberal Education

**AALE ACCREDITATION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES HANDBOOK**  
**Programs (*post-secondary*) and PK-12 Schools**

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- Self-Study overview
- Site visit planning guide
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### Additional resources (*internal use*):

- Board of Trustees Handbook
- Council of Scholars Handbook
- Site Visitors Handbook

## **AMERICAN ACADEMY FOR LIBERAL EDUCATION (AALE)**

### **Introduction**

The American Academy for Liberal Education (AALE) was founded in 1992 by a group of distinguished scholars and institutions who recognized a need to reestablish high standards of student learning in the core disciplines of the arts and sciences. It was constituted to serve as a specialized accrediting body utilizing a peer-review process to evaluate the educational quality of liberal arts programming and to advance excellence in liberal arts learning.

Today, at the core of the review process are the AALE Program Standards of Excellence in Liberal Education and the AALE PK-12 School Standards for Accreditation. These standards and criteria are designed to support and recognize excellence in liberal arts learning and teaching. They establish that accredited members and applicants take seriously their liberal arts mission, and allow for recognition of the diverse ways the ends and means of quality liberal arts education can be achieved on the post-secondary and PK-12 school levels.

Accreditation by the American Academy for Liberal Education signifies school integrity and a strong commitment to liberal arts learning. It provides interested parties – including parents and students – a means of distinguishing well-articulated post-secondary and PK-12 school liberal arts and science curricula.

### **Mission**

The mission of the American Academy for Liberal Education (AALE) is to promote excellence in liberal education by providing recognition of schools and programs that maintain the highest standards of liberal arts learning.

AALE achieves its mission by articulating standards designed to support excellence in liberal arts learning and teaching, offering rigorous peer-review accreditation, and fostering dialogue on the ends and means of quality liberal arts education.

### **Governance and administration**

The American Academy for Liberal Education (AALE) is a registered non-profit governed by a Board of Trustees. The AALE Board of Trustees (Board) consists of up to twenty-one (21) voting members with every seventh member being a representative of the public, and two ex-officio non-voting members. The composition of the Board reflects various perspectives and expertise in AALE's constituency and membership. Board members are elected to serve four-year terms. The Board holds responsibilities for AALE's governance and accreditation decision-making processes.

The Board maintains a meeting schedule of four (4) meetings per year, which include accreditation decision-making sessions. When the Board is not in session, the Executive Committee is responsible for leadership of AALE consistent with any policies and procedures established by the Board.

In addition to the Executive Committee, there are two standing committees of the Board. The Finance Committee is responsible for preparing the annual budget for Board approval, arranging for required audits, and assisting the Vice-Chair/Treasurer with financial duties as needed consistent with any policies and procedures established by the Board. The Nominating Committee is responsible for nominating individuals for election to positions on the Board, Executive Committee, and Council of Scholars (Council) as well as for administering review of, and amendment to, the Bylaws consistent with any policies and procedures established by the Board.

The Board may appoint a President to serve as an ex-officio voting member on the Board and delegate to that person responsibility for AALE constituency, member, and public relations when the Board is not in session consistent with any policies and procedures established by the Board.

The Council of Scholars (Council) serves as an advisory body to the Board. The Council consists of up to fifteen (15) voting members, each of whom is elected to serve a four-year term. The composition of the Council reflects a range of perspectives and includes members with expertise in the humanities and sciences. Council members act

as individuals in accordance with the policies, procedures and interests of AALE and do not serve as representatives of institutions, professions, groups, or other organizations, however defined.

All Board and Council members receive orientation and training prior to participating in their initial Board or Council meeting.

The Executive Director is responsible for the administration of AALE activities and programs on a day-to-day basis consistent with any policies and procedures established by the Board. The Executive Director ensures that administrative services are provided to the Board, Executive Committee and Council of Scholars to accomplish AALE's mission and program objectives. The Executive Director is appointed by, and reports directly to the Board, and serves as an ex-officio, non-voting member on the Board.

### **Membership**

Institutions or programs awarded accreditation by the American Academy for Liberal Education (AALE) hold accredited membership and are required to maintain compliance with AALE Standards, adhere to all AALE policies and procedures, and remit annual dues in the amount determined by the AALE Board of Trustees (Board). Failure to do so, after notice from AALE, initiates a review of accredited membership status under procedures established by the Board. Accredited membership has no voting privilege.

Non-accredited membership open to colleges, universities, schools, programs, individuals and organizations concerned with liberal education may be afforded in appropriate categories as established by the Board. Non-accredited members adhere to all AALE policies and procedures governing their category of membership and remit annual dues. Failure to do so, after notice from AALE, initiates a review of membership status under procedures established by the Board. Non-accredited membership has no voting privilege.

## **AALE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

*Policies and procedures are applicable to accredited institutions and programs and applicants, unless otherwise specified.*

*(Note: AALE Board of Trustees is also known as 'Board of Trustees' or 'Board'; AALE Council of Scholars is also known as 'Council of Scholars' or 'Council'; and AALE Executive Director is also known as 'Executive Director'.)*

### **Section A.**

#### **Board of Trustees**

##### **1. Accreditation responsibilities**

The Board of Trustees sets the mission and goals of AALE, establishes and amends the purposes and scope of AALE accreditation, determines accreditation policies and procedures, and holds final authority for the accreditation decision-making process (see Appendix A. AALE Bylaws: Article III).

##### **2. Conflict of interest in accreditation** (see Section F. Conflict of interest)

##### **3. Policies and procedures review**

AALE reviews policies and procedures on an on-going basis. Non-substantive changes for improving clarity are presented by staff to the Executive Committee for review and approval. If the Executive Committee determines a change presents a substantive issue with regards to accreditation policy or procedure, the change is forwarded to the Council of Scholars for recommendation and presentation to the Board of Trustees for final action.

##### **4. Standards review**

AALE reviews its Standards for accreditation on a regular cycle to ensure that they remain current and provide a consistent basis for evaluating and supporting the educational quality of liberal arts programming. The following activities contribute to the standards review process:

- a) bi-annual review by the Board of Trustees of comments received from accredited members and site visitors pertaining to current standards;
- b) systematic review of standards every seven years conducted by the Council of Scholars and including survey of accredited members and interested third parties with results presented to the Board for review.

Proposed revisions to standards are posted for public comment before final approval by the Board.

##### **5. Bylaws amendment**

Amendments to the AALE Bylaws may be proposed by any member of the Board of Trustees or Council of Scholars or by any accredited member of AALE in good-standing. The Nominating Committee submits proposed amendments to the Board, the Council, and accredited members of AALE at least thirty (30) days prior to consideration by the Board consistent with policies and procedures established by the Board. Amendments are adopted by a two-thirds vote of the total voting membership of the Board.

*(Additional policies and operating procedures relevant to the Board of Trustees are published in the Board of Trustees Handbook.)*

**Section B.**  
**Council of Scholars**

**1. Accreditation responsibilities**

The Council of Scholars develops accreditation standards, applies AALE Standards in reviewing accreditation applications for recommendations to the Board, and provides recommendations pertinent to the operation of AALE's accreditation function, including, but not limited to, accreditation procedures and accreditation policy issues for consideration by the Board of Trustees (see Appendix A. AALE Bylaws: Article V).

**2. Conflict of interest in accreditation** (see Section F. Conflict of interest)

*(Additional policies and operating procedures relevant to the Council of Scholars are published in the Council of Scholars Handbook.)*

## Section C.

### Accreditation: Scope, terms, multiple locations

#### 1. Scope and types of accreditation

AALE provides peer-review accreditation based on standards that support and recognize excellence in liberal arts learning and teaching. Programmatic accreditation is offered to liberal arts programs through the master's level in accredited U.S. colleges and universities, and to liberal arts programs through the baccalaureate level in colleges and universities outside the U.S. Institutional accreditation is offered to PK-12 schools within the U.S.

#### 2. Terms of accreditation

AALE awards post-secondary program accreditation and PK-12 school accreditation for terms up to five (5) years. Accreditation is renewable for terms up to five (5) years.

#### 3. Multiple campuses, schools, locations (*Programs*)

The AALE Standards of accreditation apply to all locations of a program including off-campus locations and branch campuses. AALE does not allow for a pre-approval process that automatically transfers the accreditation held by an accredited program member to an additional new off-campus location or branch campus over which the accredited member or the accredited member's institution has operating authority.

To ensure that educational quality is maintained at all locations of the program, AALE requires that each program location be individually accredited. An accredited program member seeking to establish (or replicate) the program at an off-campus or branch-campus location during a term of accreditation and/or outside the scheduled time for renewal of accreditation must:

- a) notify AALE at least one (1) year prior to establishing (or replicating) a program at any off-campus or branch-campus location; and
- b) complete the accreditation process for the program at the new off-campus or branch-campus location.

#### 4. Multiple campuses, schools, locations (*PK-12 schools*)

The AALE Standards of accreditation apply to a school and additional campuses for which it has operating authority, to each school within a school management organization with authority to operate multiple schools/campuses, or to a school organization with authority to operate more than one school at a single campus location. AALE does not allow for a pre-approval process that automatically transfers the accreditation held by an accredited school member to an additional or new school or campus over which the accredited member or its management organization has operating authority.

To ensure that educational quality is maintained at all school locations, AALE requires that each school and additional school/campus be individually accredited. An accredited school member, or its management organization, seeking to add a new school/campus or expanding to more than one school at a single campus location during a term of accreditation and/or outside the scheduled time for renewal of accreditation must:

- a) notify AALE at least one (1) year prior to opening the new school or campus; and
- b) complete the accreditation process for the new school or campus.

## **Section D.**

### **Accreditation: Post-secondary program requirements, process, renewal**

#### **1. Requirements**

All programs, both within and outside of the U.S., seeking AALE post-secondary program accreditation must be operational and have provided instruction for at least one (1) academic year. Programs must meet eligibility requirements which are presented in the application for eligibility review.

#### **2. Process**

The central parts of the AALE post-secondary program accreditation process are: eligibility review; letter of intent to apply; completion of application: self-study; site evaluation visit and formal response to site evaluation visit report; final Board of Trustees review and accreditation decision.

##### *Eligibility review*

The eligibility review determines if a program meets basic eligibility requirements and can be reviewed for accreditation under the AALE Standards. After initial inquiry and consultation with AALE staff, a program completes and submits the application and eligibility review form with supporting documents pertaining to mission, curriculum, faculty, administrative structure, facilities, student services, and informational materials. In addition, a U.S. program is required to submit a copy of the institution's accreditation letter and a program outside of the U.S. is required to submit a copy of the letter from their authorizer. A non-refundable application fee is due with the application and eligibility review form.

AALE staff completes an eligibility review to evaluate a program's readiness to begin the accreditation process, and within thirty (30) days of receipt of a completed application and eligibility review form with supporting documents informs a program:

- a) the eligibility review is successfully completed, and within thirty (30) days of receipt of notification the program must submit a letter of intent to apply for accreditation to formally begin the accreditation process; or
- b) the eligibility review is not successfully completed due to outstanding questions or missing documents and the program has thirty (30) days to provide satisfactory response, and/or the outstanding questions pertaining to readiness to begin the accreditation process necessitate an on-site evaluation, and an eligibility review site visit is needed (program is responsible for non-refundable fees and costs pertaining to an eligibility review site visit).

If a program does not successfully complete the eligibility review and does not accept an eligibility review site visit, or does not successfully complete the eligibility review after a required eligibility review site visit, the program is notified in writing within thirty (30) days and informed that if changes are made that result in the ability to meet eligibility requirements, the program may initiate a new eligibility review after a period of six (6) months (see Section J. Appeal of eligibility review decision).

(Affiliate membership, a non-accreditation status, is available to potential applicants for accreditation who require extended time to work with AALE staff to determine readiness for eligibility review and meeting a designated timeline for completing the accreditation process. Information on affiliate membership is provided upon request.)

##### *Intent to apply*

A letter of intent to apply for accreditation must be submitted within thirty (30) days of successful completion of an eligibility review to formally begin the accreditation process. Upon receipt of the letter of intent to apply, AALE staff contacts program representatives to discuss the next steps in the accreditation process: self-study and site evaluation visit, and to discuss a proposed schedule for completing the accreditation process.

##### *Self-Study*

The self-study is a comprehensive and rigorous examination of a program's performance in light of the AALE Standards. The AALE Standards, which serve as the basis for the self-study, focus on those elements that comprise

and support excellence in liberal arts learning. Successful applicants demonstrate in the self-study report characteristics that promote high student achievement of liberal arts learning objectives and the importance of teaching and instructional practices suitable for liberal education, and foster life-long learning that prepares students for productive engagement in the world. The AALE Overview of the Self-Study Process elaborates on the purpose and aims of the self-study, discusses how to prepare and write a self-study, and presents a structure for the self-study report.

Following receipt of a program's letter of intent to apply, AALE forwards a copy of the AALE Overview of the Self-Study Process and arranges a conference call with program representatives to review the self-study process. The self-study process involves participation by a representative range of individuals including administrators, faculty, staff, and students providing opportunity for conversation and reflection on mission, learning objectives, and performance of the program. (An optional self-study workshop is available to applicants. Non-refundable fees and costs are associated with the workshop.)

Upon completing the self-study process, a program submits a self-study report, and AALE staff reviews the report for completeness and correct format within thirty (30) days of receipt of the report and informs a program:

- a) the self-study is accepted as complete and the process of scheduling a site evaluation visit can begin; or
- b) the self-study report is considered incomplete or incorrectly formatted, and the program is directed to address all issues and return the revised self-study report within ninety (90) days. A period of revision may generate a change in the date of the final Board of Trustees review and accreditation decision.

If a program does not complete necessary revisions to a self-study report within ninety (90) days, the program may withdraw from the accreditation process or receive notice that AALE is removing the program from the accreditation process. A program must wait one (1) year from the date of withdrawal or removal from the accreditation process to begin a new eligibility review (see Section K. Withdrawal and Section J. Appeal of removal from accreditation process).

The timeframe for completing a self-study ranges from six (6) to eighteen (18) months. If a program does not submit and receive notification that the self-study is complete within eighteen (18) months of AALE's receipt of the letter of intent to apply for accreditation, AALE removes the program from the accreditation process and the program must wait one (1) year to begin a new eligibility review (see Section J. Appeal of removal from accreditation process).

#### *Site evaluation visit*

The site evaluation visit consists of on-site interviews and observations to verify what is presented in the self-study and to further assesses a program's fulfillment of the AALE Standards as well as the program's apparent fulfillment of its own mission and learning objectives.

The site evaluation visit is conducted by a site visit team composed of experienced faculty, faculty/scholars, and/or administrators representing the liberal arts and sciences and who are trained by AALE to serve as site visitors (see Section G. Site visitors). A site visit team usually consists of three (3) appointed site visitors, one of whom serves as chair, and one (1) AALE representative.

AALE staff works in cooperation with a program to schedule the site evaluation visit so as to meet an agreed to date for the final Board of Trustees review and accreditation decision. Procedures and logistical details related to a site evaluation visit are reviewed with an on-site liaison designated by the program prior to the visit. Once scheduled, a site evaluation visit may be postponed however postponement may generate a change in the date of the final Board of Trustees review and accreditation decision (see Section G. Site visit postponement). A site evaluation visit can also be cancelled (see Section G. Cancellation of site visit).

#### *Site evaluation visit report and program's formal response*

The site visit team is charged with assessing the self-study in light of AALE Standards and the program's mission and educational objectives by engaging in first-hand interviews and on-site observations. The assessment is

presented in a team-written site evaluation visit report. The report provides a narrative introduction concisely summarizing: salient historical and factual circumstances of the program; recent and current state of the program; salient program strengths and areas for improvement and concern; and major issues, challenges, and opportunities facing the program in the foreseeable future, followed by an evaluation of the program's fulfillment of AALE Standards and criteria. The site visit team's evaluation for each standard includes reasoning for whether the standard is met, approaches being met, or is not met. An appendix contains the site visit schedule and lists individual and group interviews with administrators, faculty, students, and governing officials of the program. The report represents the considered professional judgment of the site visit team as a whole.

AALE staff reviews a draft of the site evaluation visit report to ensure that it meets format and content requirements. The draft is forwarded to the program for factual corrections. The program has approximately two (2) weeks to submit factual corrections to AALE, which are then incorporated into the report and a final draft of the site evaluation visit report is returned to the program for formal response. The program has approximately two (2) weeks to submit a formal response to the site evaluation visit report. The formal response is not mandatory, and the program can accept the contents of the site evaluation visit report as presented. If the program chooses to respond to an assessment in the site evaluation visit report they are limited to evidence provided at the time of the self-study or gathered during the site visit.

#### *Final review and decision process*

The final review of an application for accreditation is conducted at a decision-making session of a regularly scheduled Board of Trustees meeting.

Approximately twenty-one (21) days before a decision-making session the Board receives application materials including: self-study and supporting documents, site evaluation visit report, program formal response to the site evaluation visit report and the Council of Scholars recommendation. The Council of Scholars recommendation is a review of the site evaluation visit report and supporting evidence and the program's response with a particular focus on the first four AALE Standards: Mission, Learning Objectives and Assessment, Curriculum, and Faculty and Teaching. Prior to a final review and decision-making session of the Board, the name of a program being considered for accreditation is listed on the AALE website ([www.aale.org](http://www.aale.org)) to allow opportunity for third parties to submit written comments about the program to AALE.

The Board issues a final accreditation decision indicating the extent to which a program has satisfied all application requirements and met AALE Standards for accreditation based upon a complete review of all application materials including, but not limited to: self-study and supporting documents, site evaluation visit report, program's formal response, Council of Scholars recommendation, financial review and any public comments received. The program receives written notice of the accreditation decision within thirty (30) days after the decision is made (see Section H. Accreditation decision and Section M. Notification of accreditation decisions and actions).

### **3. Renewal**

AALE notifies a program approximately two (2) years before the end of the program's accreditation term of the need to begin the renewal of accreditation process. The program is provided with a preliminary schedule that allows for a final review of the application for renewal of accreditation at the last regular Board meeting with a decision-making session scheduled before the expiration of the program's accreditation. The schedule contains proposed dates and information for:

- a) submitting the letter of intent to renew;
- b) submitting the application for renewal of accreditation and application fee;
- c) submitting the self-study;
- d) completing the site evaluation visit;
- e) submitting the school's formal response to the site evaluation visit report;
- f) completing the renewal application for final review and decision.

Upon receipt of the letter of intent to renew accreditation, AALE contacts the chief executive officer and accreditation liaison of the program to review steps in the renewal of accreditation process, and to prepare a final

plan with deadlines that allow the site evaluation visit to be completed no later than three (3) months before the program's accreditation term is due to expire. Once the renewal plan is accepted by the program, any change to deadlines is subject to written approval of the Executive Director. Changes that affect the completion of the renewal process before the expiration of the accreditation term are subject to Board review.

An accredited program that fails to meet deadlines during the renewal process can be subject to administrative warning (see Section I. Administrative warning).

If a program does not apply for renewal of accreditation, accredited membership status expires at the end of the accreditation term (see Section K. Expiration).

## **Section E.**

### **Accreditation: PK-12 School requirements, process, renewal**

#### **1. Requirements**

All schools seeking AALE PK-12 school accreditation must be operational and have provided instruction for at least two (2) years. Schools must meet eligibility requirements which are presented in the application for PK-12 school accreditation.

#### **2. Process**

The central parts of the AALE PK-12 school accreditation process are: eligibility review; letter of intent to apply; completion of application: self-study; site evaluation visit and formal response to site evaluation visit report; final Board of Trustees review and accreditation decision.

##### *Eligibility review*

The eligibility review determines if a school meets basic eligibility requirements and can be reviewed for accreditation under the AALE Standards. After initial inquiry and consultation with AALE staff, a school completes and submits the application and eligibility review form with supporting documents pertaining to mission, curriculum, teachers, administrative structure, student services, facilities, and informational materials. In addition, a school is required to submit a copy of instruction offering authority from the authorizer in the jurisdiction in which they operate. A non-refundable application fee is due with the application and eligibility review form.

AALE staff completes an eligibility review to evaluate a school's readiness to begin the accreditation process, and within thirty (30) days of receipt of a completed application and eligibility review form with supporting documents informs a school:

- a) the eligibility review is successfully completed, and within thirty (30) days of receipt of notification the school must submit a letter of intent to apply for accreditation to formally begin the accreditation process; or
- b) the eligibility review is not successfully completed due to outstanding questions or missing documents and the school has thirty (30) days to provide satisfactory response, and/or the outstanding questions pertaining to readiness to begin the accreditation process necessitate an on-site evaluation, and an eligibility review site visit is needed (school is responsible for non-refundable fees and costs pertaining to an eligibility review site visit).

If a school does not successfully complete the eligibility review and does not accept an eligibility review site visit, or does not successfully complete the eligibility review after a required eligibility review site visit, the school is notified in writing within thirty (30) days and informed that if changes are made that result in the ability to meet eligibility requirements, the school may initiate a new eligibility review after a period of six (6) months (see Section J. Appeal of eligibility review decision).

(Affiliate membership, a non-accreditation status, is available to potential applicants who require extended time to work with AALE staff to determine readiness for eligibility review and meeting a designated timeline for completing the accreditation process. Information on affiliate membership is provided upon request.)

##### *Intent to apply*

A letter of intent to apply for accreditation must be submitted within thirty (30) days of successful completion of an eligibility review to formally begin the accreditation process. Upon receipt of the letter of intent to apply, AALE staff contacts school representatives to discuss the next steps in the accreditation process: self-study and site evaluation visit, and to discuss a proposed schedule for completing the accreditation process.

##### *Self-Study*

The self-study is a comprehensive and rigorous examination of a school's performance in light of the AALE Standards. The AALE Standards, which serve as the basis for the self-study, focus on those elements that comprise and support excellence in liberal arts learning. Successful applicants demonstrate in the self-study report

characteristics that promote high student achievement of liberal arts learning objectives and the importance of teaching and instructional practices suitable for liberal education, and foster life-long learning that prepares students for productive engagement in the world. The AALE Overview of the Self-Study Process elaborates on the purpose and aims of the self-study, discusses how to prepare and write a self-study, and presents a structure for the self-study report.

Following receipt of a school's letter of intent to apply, AALE forwards a copy of the AALE Overview of the Self-Study Process and arranges a conference call with school representatives to review the self-study process. The self-study process involves participation by a representative range of individuals including administrators, faculty, staff, and students providing opportunity for conversation and reflection on mission, learning objectives, and performance of the school. (An optional self-study workshop is available to applicants. Non-refundable fees and costs are associated with the workshop.)

Upon completing the self-study process, a school submits a self-study report, and AALE staff reviews the report for completeness and correct format within thirty (30) days of receipt of the report and informs a school:

- a) the self-study is accepted as complete and the process of scheduling a site evaluation visit can begin; or
- b) the self-study report is considered incomplete or incorrectly formatted, and the school is directed to address all issues and return the revised self-study report within ninety (90) days. A period of revision may generate a change in the date of the final Board of Trustees review and accreditation decision.

If a school does not complete necessary revisions to a self-study report within ninety (90) days, the school may withdraw from the accreditation process or receive notice that AALE is removing the school from the accreditation process. A school must wait one (1) year from the date of withdrawal or removal from the accreditation process to begin a new eligibility review (see Section K. Withdrawal and Section J. Appeal of removal from accreditation process).

The timeframe for completing a self-study ranges from six (6) to eighteen (18) months. If a school does not submit and receive notification that the self-study is complete within eighteen (18) months of AALE's receipt of the letter of intent to apply for accreditation, AALE removes the school from the accreditation process and the school must wait one (1) year to begin a new eligibility review (see Section J. Appeal of removal from accreditation process).

#### *Site evaluation visit*

The site evaluation visit consists of on-site interviews and observations to verify what is presented in the self-study and to further assesses a school's fulfillment of the AALE Standards as well as the school's apparent fulfillment of its own mission and learning objectives.

The site evaluation visit is conducted by a site visit team composed of experienced faculty, faculty/scholars, and/or administrators representing the liberal arts and sciences and who are trained by AALE to serve as site visitors (see Section G. Site visitors). A site visit team usually consists of three (3) appointed site visitors, one of whom serves as chair, and one (1) AALE representative.

AALE staff works in cooperation with a school to schedule the site evaluation visit so as to meet an agreed to date for the final Board of Trustees review and accreditation decision. Procedures and logistical details related to a site evaluation visit are reviewed with an on-site liaison designated by the school prior to the visit. Once scheduled, a site evaluation visit may be postponed however postponement may generate a change in the date of the final Board of Trustees review and accreditation decision (see Section G. Site visit postponement). A site evaluation visit can also be cancelled (see Section G. Cancellation of site visit).

#### *Site evaluation visit report and school's formal response*

The site visit team is charged with assessing the self-study in light of AALE Standards and the school's mission and educational objectives by engaging in first-hand interviews and on-site observations. The assessment is presented in a team-written site evaluation visit report. The report provides a narrative introduction concisely summarizing: salient historical and factual circumstances of the school; recent and current state of the school; salient school

strengths and areas for improvement and concern; and major issues, challenges, and opportunities facing the school in the foreseeable future, followed by an evaluation of the school's fulfillment of AALE Standards and criteria. The site visit team's evaluation for each standard includes reasoning for whether the standard is met, approaches being met, or is not met. An appendix contains the site visit schedule and lists individual and group interviews with administrators, teachers, students, and governing officials of the school. The report represents the considered professional judgment of the site visit team as a whole.

AALE staff reviews a draft of the site evaluation visit report to ensure that it meets format and content requirements. The draft is forwarded to the school for factual corrections. The school has approximately two (2) weeks to submit factual corrections to AALE, which are then incorporated into the report and a final draft of the site evaluation visit report is returned to the school for formal response. The school has approximately two (2) weeks to submit a formal response to the site evaluation visit report. The formal response is not mandatory, and the school can accept the contents of the site evaluation visit report as presented. If the school chooses to respond to an assessment in the site evaluation visit report they are limited to evidence provided at the time of the self-study or gathered during the site visit.

#### *Final review and decision process*

The final review of an application for accreditation is conducted at a decision-making session of a regularly scheduled Board of Trustees meeting.

Approximately twenty-one (21) days before a decision-making session the Board receives application materials including: self-study and supporting documents, site evaluation visit report, school's formal response to the site evaluation visit report and the Council of Scholars recommendation. The Council of Scholars recommendation is a review of the site evaluation visit report and supporting evidence and the school's response with a particular focus on the first four AALE Standards: Mission, Learning Objectives and Assessment, Curriculum, and Teachers and Teaching. Prior to a final review and decision-making session of the Board, the name of a school being considered for accreditation is listed on the AALE website ([www.aale.org](http://www.aale.org)) to allow opportunity for third parties to submit written comments about the school to AALE.

The Board issues a final accreditation decision indicating the extent to which a school has satisfied all application requirements and met AALE Standards for accreditation based upon a complete review of all application materials including, but not limited to: self-study and supporting documents, site evaluation visit report, school's formal response, Council of Scholars recommendation, financial review and any public comments received. The school receives written notice of the accreditation decision within thirty (30) days after the decision is made (see Section H. Accreditation decision and Section M. Notification of accreditation decisions and actions).

### **3. Renewal**

AALE notifies a school approximately two (2) years before the end of the school's accreditation term of the need to begin the renewal of accreditation process. The school is provided with a preliminary schedule that allows for a final review of the application for renewal of accreditation at the last regular Board meeting with a decision-making session scheduled before the expiration of the school's accreditation. The schedule contains proposed dates and information for:

- a) submitting the letter of intent to renew;
- b) submitting the application for renewal of accreditation and application fee;
- c) submitting the self-study;
- d) completing the site evaluation visit;
- e) submitting the school's formal response to the site evaluation visit report;
- f) completing the renewal application for final review and decision.

Upon receipt of the letter of intent to renew accreditation, AALE contacts the chief executive officer and accreditation liaison of the school to review steps in the renewal of accreditation process, and to prepare a final plan with deadlines that allow the site evaluation visit to be completed no later than three (3) months before the school's accreditation term is due to expire. Once the renewal plan is accepted by the school, any change to

deadlines is subject to written approval of the Executive Director. Changes that affect the completion of the renewal process before the expiration of the accreditation term are subject to Board review.

An accredited school that fails to meet deadlines during the renewal process can be subject to administrative warning (see Section I. Administrative warning).

If a school does not apply for renewal of accreditation, accredited membership status expires at the end of the accreditation term (see Section K. Expiration).

## **Section F.**

### **Accreditation: Administration**

#### **1. Staff responsibilities**

AALE staff manages the accreditation process, and ensure that all procedures, policies, and operations established by the Board of Trustees are carried out fairly and in accordance with AALE practice. Staff does not engage in accreditation evaluations of institutions or programs. However, they do provide support services to institutions and programs during the accreditation process, to the site evaluation visit team in preparation for and throughout the site evaluation visit, and to the Board and Council of Scholars as needed. Staff is involved in the development of literature and other direct services to assist institutions and programs in structuring their own use of requisite accreditation standards and procedures.

AALE staff avoids conflicts of interest in the accreditation process by declining to:

- a) act inconsistently among member and applicant institutions and programs;
- b) make unilateral accreditation personnel decisions affecting any institution or program 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 Council of Scholars or Board of Trustees review.

Further, AALE staff is required to seek approval from the Executive Committee before accepting positions on boards, councils, or development groups associated with specific post-secondary or PK-12 educational institutions or programs.

#### **2. Conflict of interest**

AALE is committed to guarding against actual or apparent conflicts of interest in its 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 AALE conflict of interest policy applies to AALE administrative staff, Board of Trustees members (Board), Council of Scholars (Council) members, site visitors, appeals committee members, and other AALE representatives involved in an AALE accreditation review process. This policy requires, but is not limited to, the following:

- a) that no person involved in an AALE accreditation review process should have visited the institution or program as an accreditation evaluator within the preceding three (3) years;
- b) that no person involved in an AALE accreditation review process be, have been within the preceding three (3) years, or expect to be an appointee, paid consultant, or employee of the institution or program, or a close relative of a person who is, has been within the preceding three (3) years, or expects to be an appointee, consultant, or employee of the institution or program;
- c) that Board members with any interest in the institution or program under review recuse themselves from the accreditation review process and vote on accreditation, or appeals review;
- d) that Council members with any interest in the institution or program under review recuse themselves from the accreditation review process and vote on recommendation;
- e) that no person associated with AALE serve or agree to serve as a paid consultant to the institution or program during the year following any evaluation visit for accreditation;
- f) that administrative staff, Board members, Council members, site visitors, appeals committee members and other AALE representatives avoid representing interests that conflict or compete, or provide the appearance of conflict, competition or bias with the fair and objective review of the institution or program.

Because AALE staff cannot know of every possible conflict of interest, Board members, Council members, site visitors, appeals committee members, and all other AALE representatives are expected to refuse participation in

any accreditation review process if any conflict appears probable. Applicant institutions or programs are also expected to comment on any possible conflicts of interest among proposed candidates for site evaluation visits.

If a conflict of interest issue arises, the matter should be forwarded to the Executive Director, who will gather information, solicit advice as appropriate, and attempt to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of all concerned, consistent with AALE published policies and procedures and with consideration of standard practice within the pre- and post-secondary accreditation community. Should the Executive Director be unable to achieve resolution, he/she will forward the matter to the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee will seek resolution through procedures developed to address the specifics of each case.

## **Section G.**

### **Accreditation: Site visitors, site visits**

#### **1. Site visitors**

Site visitors are selected for participation on a site visit team from the AALE Site Visitors Resource List which is composed of teachers/scholars and/or administrators representing the liberal arts and sciences. The Resource List is an open list containing the names of previous site visitors as well as recommendations from these visitors, member institutions and programs, Board of Trustees members, Council of Scholars members, and AALE staff. Using the Resource List the Executive Director identifies and interviews potential candidates to serve as site visitors. To become eligible to serve on a site visit team, candidates must first complete a mandatory training session.

##### *Site visitor training*

Mandatory training sessions, are conducted via a webinar or at a regional location. Sessions include detailed overview of the application/accreditation process, purpose of the site evaluation visit and the responsibilities of site visitors. All site visitors are trained in applying AALE Standards for accreditation. In addition, they receive training in site visit policies and procedures, the use of the AALE site evaluation visit review form, and the AALE site evaluation report template.

Site visitors selected and approved for a particular site visit participate in a second focused training and planning session conducted approximately six (6) weeks before a site visit begins. The session is conducted by an AALE staff member and the site visit team chair, and includes discussion of conduct expected of site visitors during the site visit, salient issues for joint or individual investigation, writing and interview assignments, and the process of the exit interview.

Site visitors, who successfully complete a visit, are invited to participate in subsequent training sessions conducted via webinar when new accreditation policies and procedures are introduced.

##### *Appointing a site visit team*

AALE provides applicant institutions or programs with the names, titles, and institutional affiliation(s) of each proposed candidate for the site visit team in advance of the visit. The applicant institution or program has fourteen (14) days for comment regarding conflicts of interest or documented bias before team members are invited to serve. When subsequent changes in the site visit team have to be made, the institution or program is consulted and given seven (7) days to comment on the proposed changes before the site visit team is finalized.

Because individuals with the power to appoint a site visit team cannot know of every possible conflict of interest, site visitors are expected to refuse a team invitation if any conflict appears probable (see Section F. Conflict of interest).

#### **2. Site visit postponement (initial accreditation)**

Requests to postpone a scheduled site visit for initial accreditation must be directed to the Executive Director in writing, and need to be made as far in advance of the start date of the site visit as possible. The institution or program is liable to cover all direct costs incurred owing to a postponement, as well as a postponement fee determined annually by the Board of Trustees. Plans to reschedule the postponed site visit must be initiated by the institution or program within thirty (30) days after the original start date of the site visit.

If the institution or program does not initiate plans to reschedule a postponed site visit within thirty (30) days after the original start date of the visit AALE provides written notice to the institution or program removing the institution or program from the accreditation process. An institution or program must wait one (1) year from the date of withdrawal or removal from the accreditation process to begin a new eligibility review (see Section J. Appeal of removal from accreditation process). An institution or program is allowed a single (1) postponement request during the application process.

AALE reserves the right to postpone a planned site visit for initial accreditation if:

- a) the institution or program has not provided AALE with required materials (i.e., self-study and supporting documents, interim report) by a stated deadline;
- b) the institution or program reports that key personnel at the institution or program, scheduled to be interviewed, will not be available to meet with site visitors during the dates previously agreed upon.

Notice of postponement is made in writing to the chief executive officer of the institution or program. The institution or program is liable to cover any expenses incurred in the event of a postponement by AALE for these reasons, as well as a postponement fee determined annually by the Board of Trustees. Plans to reschedule the postponed site visit will be initiated by AALE within thirty (30) days after the original start date of the site visit.

If the institution or program does not complete a site visit postponed and then rescheduled by AALE, AALE provides written notice to the institution or program removing the institution or program from the accreditation process. An institution or program must wait one (1) year from the date of removal from the accreditation process to begin a new eligibility review (see Section J. Appeal of removal from the accreditation process). AALE reserves the right to a single (1) postponement of the original scheduled site visit.

### **3. Site visit postponement (*renewal*)**

Requests to postpone a scheduled site visit for renewal of accreditation must be directed to the Executive Director in writing, and need to be made as far in advance of the start date of the site visit as possible. The institution or program is liable to cover all direct costs incurred owing to a postponement, as well as a postponement fee determined annually by the Board of Trustees. Plans to reschedule the postponed site visit must be initiated by the institution or program within fourteen (14) days after the original start date of the site visit.

An institution or program that fails to initiate plans to reschedule the postponed site visit within fourteen (14) days after the original start date of the site visit, and to reschedule the site visit to meet the agreed to deadline for the final Board review and decision-making session is subject to administrative warning (see Section I. Administrative warning). An institution or program is allowed a single (1) postponement request during the renewal of accreditation process.

AALE reserves the right to postpone a planned site visit for renewal of accreditation, if:

- a) the institution or program has not provided AALE with required materials (i.e., self-study, supporting documents, interim report) by a stated deadline;
- b) the institution or program reports that key personnel at the institution or program, scheduled to be interviewed, will not be available to meet with site visitors during the dates previously agreed upon.

Notice of postponement is made in writing to the chief executive officer of the institution or program. The institution or program is liable to cover any expenses incurred in the event of a postponement by AALE for these reasons, as well as a postponement fee determined annually by the Board of Trustees. Plans to reschedule the postponed site visit will be initiated by AALE within fourteen (14) days after the original start date of the site visit. AALE reserves the right to a single (1) postponement of the original scheduled site visit.

### **4. Cancellation of site visit (*initial accreditation*)**

A decision to cancel a scheduled site visit for initial accreditation must be directed to the Executive Director in writing and needs to be made as far in advance of the start date of the site visit as possible. The institution or program is liable to cover all direct costs incurred owing to a cancellation of the scheduled site visit. The decision is considered withdrawal from the accreditation process. An institution or program must wait one (1) year from the date of withdrawal from the accreditation process to begin a new eligibility review.

AALE reserves the right to cancel a planned site visit, if after postponement of a scheduled site visit:

- a) the institution or program has not provided AALE with required materials (i.e., self-study and supporting documents, interim report) by a stated deadline;

- b) the institution or program reports that key personnel at the institution or program, scheduled to be interviewed, will not be available to meet with site visitors during the dates previously agreed upon.

If AALE cancels a site visit for the reasons listed above, AALE provides written notice to the chief executive officer of the institution or program cancelling the site visit and removing the institution or program from the application process. The institution or program is liable to cover any expenses incurred in the event of a cancellation for these reasons and the removal of an institution or program from the accreditation process. An institution or program must wait one (1) year from the date of removal from the accreditation process to begin a new eligibility review (see Section J. Appeal of removal from accreditation process).

#### **5. Cancellation of site visit (*renewal*)**

A decision to cancel a scheduled site visit for renewal of accreditation must be directed to the Executive Director in writing and needs to be made as far in advance of the start date of the site visit as possible. The institution or program is liable to cover all direct costs incurred owing to a cancellation of the scheduled site visit. The decision is considered withdrawal from the renewal of accreditation process and withdrawal from accredited membership effective the date of notification (see Section K. Withdrawal). An institution or program must wait one (1) year from the date of withdrawal from the renewal of accreditation process to begin a new eligibility review.

AALE reserves the right to cancel a planned site visit, if after postponement of a scheduled site visit:

- a) the institution or program has not provided AALE with required materials (i.e., self-study and supporting documents, interim report) by a stated deadline;
- b) the institution or program reports that key personnel at the institution or program, scheduled to be interviewed, will not be available to meet with site visitors during the dates previously agreed upon.

If AALE cancels a site visit for the reasons listed above, the Executive Director provides written notice to the chief executive officer of the institution or program cancelling the site visit. The institution or program is liable to cover any expenses incurred in the event of a cancellation for these reasons. The Executive Director issues a request to the Board of Trustees that the institution or program be placed on administrative warning status (see Section I. Administrative warning).

#### **6. Interim site visit**

An interim site visit can be required by the Board of Trustees at the time of an accreditation decision or during a term of accreditation. An interim site visit may consist of on-site interviews and observations to assess progress in a specific area of concern determined by the Board of Trustees, or on-site interviews and observations to verify what is presented in a required interim report.

The interim site visit is conducted by trained AALE representatives or site visitors (see Section G. Site visitors).

AALE staff works in cooperation with an institution or program to schedule the interim site visit so as to meet a deadline set by the Board of Trustees. Procedures and logistical details related to an interim site visit are reviewed with an on-site liaison designated by the institution or program prior to the visit. Once scheduled, an interim site visit may be postponed however postponement cannot exceed the deadline set by the Board (see Section G. Interim site visit postponement). An interim site visit can also be cancelled (see Section G. Cancellation of interim site visit).

#### **7. Interim site visit postponement**

Requests to postpone a scheduled interim site visit must be directed to the Executive Director in writing, and need to be made as far in advance of the start date of the site visit as possible. The institution or program is liable to cover all direct costs incurred owing to a postponement, as well as a postponement fee determined annually by the Board of Trustees. Plans to reschedule the postponed site visit must be initiated by the institution or program within fourteen (14) days after the original start date of the site visit.

An institution or program that fails to initiate plans to reschedule the postponed site visit within fourteen (14) days after the original start date of the site visit, and to reschedule the site visit to meet the deadline set by the Board is subject to administrative warning (see Section I. Administrative warning). An institution or program is allowed a single (1) postponement request for an interim site visit.

AALE reserves the right to postpone a planned interim site visit, if:

- a) the institution or program has not provided AALE with required materials (i.e., interim report or requested documents) by a stated deadline;
- b) the institution or program reports that key personnel at the institution or program, scheduled to be interviewed, will not be available to meet on the dates previously agreed upon.

Notice of postponement is made in writing to the chief executive officer of the institution or program. The institution or program is liable to cover any expenses incurred in the event of a postponement by AALE for these reasons, as well as a postponement fee determined annually by the Board of Trustees. Plans to reschedule the postponed interim site visit will be initiated by AALE within fourteen (14) days after the original start date of the interim site visit. AALE reserves the right to a single (1) postponement of the original scheduled interim site visit.

#### **8. Cancellation of interim site visit**

A decision to cancel a scheduled interim site visit must be directed to the Executive Director in writing and needs to be made as far in advance of the start date of the interim site visit as possible. The institution or program is liable to cover all direct costs incurred owing to a cancellation of the scheduled interim site visit. The decision is considered withdrawal from accredited membership effective the date of notification (see Section M. Withdrawal). An institution or program must wait one (1) year from the date of withdrawal from accredited membership to begin a new eligibility review.

AALE reserves the right to cancel a planned site visit, if after postponement of a scheduled site visit:

- a) the institution or program has not provided AALE with required materials (i.e., interim report or requested documents) by a stated deadline;
- b) the institution or program reports that key personnel at the institution or program, scheduled to be interviewed, will not be available to meet on the dates previously agreed upon.

If AALE cancels a site visit for the reasons listed above, the Executive Director provides written notice to the chief executive officer of the institution or program cancelling the site visit. The institution or program is liable to cover any expenses incurred in the event of a cancellation for these reasons. The Executive Director issues a request to the Board of Trustees that the institution or program be placed on administrative warning status (see Section I. Administrative warning).

#### **9. Site visit report disclaimer**

All site evaluation visit reports contain the following disclaimer: "The site evaluation visit report and any statements therein regarding compliance with the accreditation standards and criteria of the American Academy for Liberal Education (AALE) represent only the considered opinion of the site visit team members at the time of the visit. Definitive evaluation of compliance and the accreditation decision will be made by the AALE Board of Trustees, upon consultation with the Council of Scholars, following a thorough review of application materials including, but not limited to, the self-study, the site evaluation visit report, a financial review, and any official responses to the site evaluation visit report."

*(Additional policies and operating procedures relevant to site visitors are published in the Site Visitors Handbook.)*

## Section H.

### Accreditation: Decision

#### 1. Accreditation decision

The Board of Trustees issues a final accreditation decision indicating the extent to which an institution or program has satisfied all application requirements and met AALE Standards for accreditation based upon a complete review of all application materials including but not limited to: self-study and supporting documents, site evaluation visit report, school's/program's formal response, Council of Scholars recommendation, financial review and any public comments received. Possible accreditation actions include:

- a) award full five (5) year term with no required interim reporting and no interim site visits;
- b) award full (5) year term with required interim reporting and/or required interim site visits;
- c) award less than a full five (5) year term with the possibility to extend accreditation to complete the remaining years of a full five (5) year term if required interim reporting and/or required interim site visit requirements are satisfactorily met;
- d) defer a decision to receive additional information to clarify discrepancies in the application materials upon which the Board makes its final decision;
- e) deny initial accreditation if institution or program has not substantially met AALE Standards for accreditation and provide information on the appeals process;
- f) revoke accreditation if an accredited institution or program no longer meets eligibility requirements, fails to substantially meet AALE Standards for accreditation, fails to respond to and/or meet required accreditation reporting requirements, fails to meet special status conditions set by, but not limited to, administrative warning or probation.

#### 2. Accreditation decision (*reports for extension of accreditation to full term*)

The Board of Trustees issues an accreditation decision on a report or site visit report for extension of accreditation to complete a full five (5) year term indicating the extent to which the report meets the requirements as outlined in the decision letter awarding initial or renewed accreditation for less than the full five (5) year term. Possible accreditation actions include:

- a) acceptance of the report and an extension of accreditation to the full five (5) year term with no additional interim reporting requirement prior to completion of the term of accreditation;
- b) acceptance of the report and extension of accreditation to the full five (5) year term with an additional interim reporting requirement;
- c) report is not accepted as meeting reporting requirements necessary for extension of accreditation to a full five (5) year term, and
  - i. initial term of accreditation awarded for less than five (5) years expires with no grounds for appeal; or
  - ii. renewed term of accreditation awarded for less than (5) years expires with no grounds for appeal.

#### 3. Accreditation decision (*interim reports*)

The Board of Trustees issues an accreditation decision on an interim report or interim site visit report indicating the extent to which the report meets the requirements as outlined in the decision letter awarding initial accreditation or renewal of accreditation. Possible accreditation actions include:

- a) acceptance of the report with no further reporting requirement prior to completion of the term of accreditation;
- b) report is insufficient and an additional interim report or interim site visit is required before application for renewal of accreditation is filed;
- c) report is not accepted as meeting reporting requirements and issue is remanded to Executive Committee for administrative warning.

#### 4. Decisions of government authorizing and other accrediting agencies

The AALE accreditation application requires an institution or program to provide evidence of formal authority from the appropriate government authorizing agency to confer degrees, certificates, or diplomas in the jurisdiction(s) in

which it operates. AALE does not accredit institutions or programs that lack legal authorization under applicable State law to provide the program or programs of education for which they seek AALE accreditation.

In considering whether to grant accreditation to an institution or program, AALE takes into account decisions made by government authorizing agencies and other accrediting agencies with legitimate claim with regard to the institution or program making an application to AALE. Such decisions include but are not limited to the following:

- a) pending or final action by a government authorizing agency to revoke, suspend, withdraw, or terminate the institution's or program's legal authority to provide the program or programs of education for which it seeks AALE accreditation;
- b) decision by an accrediting agency to deny accreditation to the institution or program;
- c) pending or final action by an accrediting agency to revoke, suspend, withdraw, or terminate accreditation of the institution or program;
- d) decision by an accrediting agency to place the institution or program on probation or equivalent status.

To ensure that an institution or program continues to have legal authority under applicable State law to provide the program of education for which it has received AALE accreditation, the institution or program must certify on its AALE Annual Reporting Form (ARF):

- a) continuation of the formal authority from the appropriate government authorizing agency to confer degrees, certificates, or diplomas in the jurisdiction(s) in which it operates; and
- b) any changes in status pertaining to accreditation held through other accrediting agencies.

#### **5. Deferral**

Deferral is an action by the Board of Trustees which delays issuing an accreditation decision in order that the Board can obtain additional information to clarify discrepancies in the application materials.

#### **6. Substantial compliance**

Substantial compliance constitutes fulfillment of the accreditation standard or criterion with only slight variances from the exact requirement. To determine whether the variance or lack of full compliance is sufficient to be considered substantial compliance, the institution or program must establish that the variance or defect can and is being corrected pursuant to a viable plan of action or is inconsequential in terms of the purpose of the accreditation standard or criterion.

## **Section I.**

### **Accreditation: Administrative warning, probation, adverse decision**

#### **1. Administrative warning**

An accredited Institution or program may be placed on administrative warning by the Executive Committee for failing to:

- a) remit annual membership dues or meet other financial obligations to AALE;
- b) file annual, interim, or focused reports as requested;
- c) complete interim site visits as required;
- d) apply for renewal of accreditation after due notice;
- e) meet deadlines during the renewal of accreditation process;
- f) provide timely responses to AALE requests for information.

The institution or program is required to respond to the Executive Committee's letter by stated deadlines. Administrative warning is not an adverse action and is not published. Institutions and programs with administrative warning status retain accreditation status and do not lose their rights and responsibilities.

Following an administrative warning and after review of the institution's or program's response, the Executive Committee determines:

- a) issue for which the institution or program was placed on administrative warning is resolved;
- b) issue for which the institution or program was placed on administrative warning is not resolved and the administrative warning should continue; or
- c) issue is unresolved and recommendation is sent to the Board of Trustees that the institution or program be placed on probation.

#### **2. Probation**

An accredited institution or program may be placed on probation by the Board of Trustees for:

- a) failure to resolve the issue of an administrative warning;
- b) failure to maintain substantial compliance with AALE Standards and criteria;
- c) failure to respond satisfactorily to deadlines and requirements set by the Board;
- d) violation of qualitative aspects of AALE's policies and procedures.

The institution or program is required to respond to the Board's letter by stated deadlines. Notice of probation is forwarded to the government authorizing agency of the institution or program, and is published on the AALE website ([www.aale.org](http://www.aale.org)) in cases where AALE serves as the designated institutional accreditor (see Section M. Notification of accreditation decisions and actions). Probation is not considered an adverse action. Institutions or programs on probation do not lose their rights or responsibilities.

Following a probation action and after review of the institution's or program's response, the Board of Trustees determines:

- a) issue for which the probation action was taken is resolved and required notifications are made;
- b) issue for which probation action was taken is not resolved and the probation action is continued
  - i. A probationary period does not extend beyond one (1) year. The specific period is determined by the Board at each time such action is taken. A period of probation may be extended by the Board for good cause in exceptional circumstances, with specific, identified rationale and for a limited duration. Good cause includes, but is not limited to, immanent real or prospective resolution of an issue due to a funding timetable beyond the control of the institution or program, pending action or approval by an internal or external body or agency, natural disaster, or the need to complete a mandated structural or academic change beyond the control of the institution or program. Limited duration includes, but is not limited to, a time or timeframe certain or documented that an action or event is being scheduled. A focused report and site visit may be required for the removal of probation; or
- c) issue is unresolved and action is taken to revoke accreditation (see Section I. Revocation).

### **3. Adverse decision**

AALE defines an adverse decision as one that denies, revokes, suspends, terminates or withdraws institutional or programmatic accreditation. Deferrals, probation, or tabled motions by the Board of Trustees are not considered adverse decisions or actions. (Note: The inclusion of the terms 'suspends', 'terminates' and 'withdraws' under: *Adverse decision*, acknowledges that when issued by some government authorizing agencies and/or other accrediting agencies these actions are considered adverse decisions and can be taken into account as such by AALE when considering whether to grant accreditation to an institution or program.)

### **4. Revocation**

An institution or program failing to respond to and resolve issues documented in an administrative warning, probation action, or suspension of accreditation may have their accreditation revoked by the Board of Trustees, with right to request reconsideration and right to request appeal (see Section I. Reconsideration of adverse accreditation action and Section J. Appeals).

An institution or program whose accreditation is revoked may apply for reinstatement of accreditation through the initial application process after a period of two (2) years has elapsed from the date accreditation was revoked and all previous financial obligations of the institution or program to AALE have been satisfied. Final action to revoke accreditation is published (see: Section M. Notification of accreditation decisions and actions).

### **5. Suspension**

Suspension of accreditation occurs automatically under the following circumstances:

- a) filing of Chapter 11 or Chapter 7 bankruptcy proceedings by an institution or program;
- b) change in ownership or major changes in control without previous notice as stipulated in AALE policies and procedures (see Section K. Change of institutional or programmatic control);
- c) establishing without prior notice branch campuses or additional schools eligible for accreditation by AALE, or significant expansion of affiliate uses of the institution's or program's name without prior notice (see Section C. Multiple campuses, schools, locations);
- d) misrepresentation of accredited status with AALE (see Section K. Statement of accredited membership and Section M. Public correction of incorrect or misleading information).

Following automatic suspension, accreditation may only be reinstated upon application to and approval by the 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 an adverse action that is subject to reconsideration or to appeal (see Section I. Reconsideration of adverse accreditation action and Section J. Appeals).

It is expected that an institution or program with automatic suspension status will regain their regular accreditation status at the earliest feasible time, or voluntarily withdraw from accredited membership (see Section K. Withdrawal). The suspension period will not exceed the earlier of six (6) months or the expiration of the institution's or program's current accreditation term. Failure to move expeditiously from suspension status to regular accreditation status within a period of six (6) months of the date of automatic suspension is cause for revocation of accreditation. Revocation of accreditation is not automatic and must be approved by the Board (see Section I. Revocation).

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.

Automatic suspension is not published, but written notice is provided to the government authorizing agency of the institution or program if the suspension lasts more than twenty-nine (29) days. Institutions or programs with automatic suspension are suspended as members of AALE and lose their rights but not their responsibilities during the suspension period.

## **6. Reconsideration of adverse accreditation action**

Reconsideration of an accreditation action may precede, but not follow an appeal of adverse decision made by the Board of Trustees (see Section J. Appeal of adverse decision). 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. AALE refers an institution or program requesting review of new financial information to: Section I. Review of new financial information.

### *Actions eligible for reconsideration*

A request for reconsideration may be filed with the Executive Director regarding the following actions:

- a) denial of accreditation;
- b) denial of renewal of accreditation;
- c) revocation of accreditation; or
- d) denial of a request for approval of a substantive change.

### *Grounds for reconsideration*

In the event of a decision by the Board of Trustees in one of the categories (a-d) under Actions eligible for reconsideration, the grounds for reconsideration are:

- a) departure from written procedures;
- b) factual error of such magnitude as to warrant reconsideration;
- c) failure to consider all evidence and documentation presented in favor of an application;
- d) new evidence that would affect the decision, except evidence of new financial information as defined in, Section I. Review of new financial information; or
- e) allegations concerning bias or prejudice.

### *Procedures for reconsideration*

- a) Within thirty (30) days of the date of the decision letter of the Board of Trustees, the institution or program notifies the Executive Director in writing of its intention to seek reconsideration of the decision.
- b) The institution or program submits written documentation supporting its request within sixty (60) days from the date of the Board's decision letter.
- c) The Executive Director determines whether the request for reconsideration meets the criteria necessary to proceed with reconsideration, and so informs the institution or program of the decision in writing.
- d) If the request meets the criteria, the Executive Director places the request for reconsideration on the agenda of the next regularly scheduled Board meeting.
- e) The Board acts on the request using its normal procedures, and the institution or program is informed in writing within thirty (30) days of the Board's decision.

### *Effective date of action*

The status of an institution or program remains unchanged during the reconsideration. There is no public notice of the decision until the review is completed and a final determination in the matter has been reached. For institutions or programs filing a request for reconsideration, deadlines for filing an appeal of a decision of the Board (see Section J. Appeals process) will be calculated either:

- a) from the date of the letter from the Executive Director informing the institution or program that the request for reconsideration does not meet the applicable criteria; or
- b) from the date of the letter informing the institution or program of the outcome of the completed reconsideration process.

## **7. Review of new financial information**

After the Board of Trustees issues a decision subject to appeal (see Section J. Appeals process), AALE will provide for the review of certain new financial information from an institution or program only as set forth below.

### *New financial information eligible for review*

An institution or program may file a request for AALE to review new financial information only when the financial information meets all of the following criteria:

- a) The financial information was not available to the institution or program until after the date of the adverse decision by the Board.
- b) The financial information is significant and bears materially on the financial deficiencies identified by AALE.
  - i. Financial information is significant when there is a reasonable likelihood that it will change or modify the Board's decision. Significance is not a specific quantitative threshold, but rather specific to an institution or program, taking into account the nature and magnitude of the items to which the information relates within the context of the school's or program's overall financial condition.
  - ii. Financial information is material when, in the light of surrounding circumstances, it is probable that the information would have changed or influenced the judgment of a reasonable person relying on the information.
- c) The only remaining deficiency cited by AALE is the failure of the institution or program to meet an AALE Standard or criterion pertaining to finances.

*Procedures for review of new financial information*

An institution or program may seek AALE's review of new financial information only once and must follow these procedures:

- a) The institution or program notifies the Executive Director in writing of its intention to provide new financial information that meets the definition set forth above in: New financial information eligible for review, together with the documents and other materials supporting its request for AALE to review the new financial information.
- b) The institution or program must submit its request for review of new financial information within sixty (60) days of the date of the letter or written notification informing the institution or program of a decision subject to appeal (see Section J. Appeals process).
- c) Within fifteen (15) days of AALE's receipt of the institution's or program's supporting documents and materials, the Executive Director places the request for review of new financial information on the agenda of the next regularly scheduled Board meeting. AALE may also convene a special meeting of the Board to review and determine the request for review of new financial information as permitted by its Bylaws. The institution or program seeking review of new financial information does not have a right to have a special meeting of the Board consider the request for review of new financial information.
- d) At the Board meeting, and any subsequent Board meetings required to determine the issue, the Board acts on the request for review of new financial information and makes a determination to sustain or withdraw its adverse action decision.
- e) The Chair of the Board informs the institution or program in writing of the Board's final determination within fifteen (15) days of the date of the final meeting of the Board that considers the request for review of new financial information.
- f) AALE's review and determination of new financial information submitted under this section does not provide the institution or program with the basis for an appeal or suspend or interrupt the time period for filing a notice of intent to appeal with AALE concerning the Board's decision subject to appeal.

*Effective date of action*

The status of any institution or program remains unchanged pending the Board of Trustees's completion of its review of the new financial information and its final determination. Until the final determination of the Board on the request for review of new financial information, the decision subject to appeal will not be in effect, and the accreditation status of the institution or program will remain as it was until the Board has reached a final determination concerning the new financial information.

There is no public notice of any adverse decision until the Board reviews and determines the request for new financial information and the Board has reached a final determination.

In the event the Board determines not to make any changes to a decision subject to appeal after its review of new financial information or otherwise decides to sustain its adverse action against the institution or program, the

Board's decision subject to appeal becomes final on the date of the Chair of the Board's letter informing the institution or program of the Board's final determination and decision.

In the event the Board withdraws its decision subject to appeal or otherwise decides to revise that decision so as not to take an adverse action against the institution or program, the Board's action concerning the request for new financial information becomes final on the date of the Chair of the Board's letter informing the institution or program of the Board's final determination and decision.

## **Section J. Appeals**

### **1. Appeal of adverse decision**

An appeal of an adverse decision by the Board of Trustees may be preceded, but not followed by a request for reconsideration (see Section I. Reconsideration of adverse accreditation action).

### **2. Appeals process**

An appeal of an adverse decision by the Board of Trustees may be preceded, but not followed by a request for reconsideration. The grounds on which an institution or program may appeal an adverse decision of the Board of Trustees denying or revoking accreditation are:

- a) that the Board of Trustees decision was not supported by substantial evidence in the record; or
- b) that the Board of Trustees 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. Decisions on appeals are made only on evidence available at the time of the decision being appealed.

#### *Notice of intent to appeal*

An institution or program wishing to appeal a decision of the Board of Trustees files with the Executive Director a notice of intent to appeal by registered mail within thirty (30) days following the date of the decision letter of the Board. This notice is the official action of the governing board of the institution or program, and must be accompanied by the required filing fee.

Immediately upon receiving notice of intent to appeal, the Executive Director forwards to the Chair of the Board a copy of the notice and acknowledges receipt of the notice in writing to the chief executive officer of the institution or program.

If the Executive Director finds that the decision being appealed clearly is not one that denied or revoked the accreditation of the institution or program with AALE, the Executive Director confirms to the institution or program its accredited status with AALE and notifies the institution or program that the appeal is invalid and will not be entertained.

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

#### *Payment for costs of the appeal*

At the same time the notice of intent is sent, the institution or program forwards to AALE by registered mail a deposit (determined annually by the Board of Trustees), payable to the 'American Academy for Liberal Education', to be deposited in the funds of AALE and applied to certain costs of the appeals process as follows:

- a) travel and subsistence for appeals committee members;
- b) telephone and correspondence costs incurred by appeals committee members and reimbursed by AALE;
- c) costs of meeting rooms for the appeals committee; and
- d) any other costs of conducting the appeals process paid by the funds of AALE.

Such costs are totaled following the conclusion of the appeals process and divided equally between the institution or program filing the appeal and AALE. The Executive Director provides to both the institution or program and the Board of Trustees an accounting of such costs and refunds to the institution or program any portion of its deposit not used to pay the institution's or program's portion of the costs. Appeal fees are subject to a yearly increase in accordance with the Higher Education Price Index.

The institution or program is 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 are not reimbursed by AALE. Similarly, AALE is 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 Executive Director find that the institution or program did not provide its deposit against costs as delineated above, the Executive Director notifies the institution or program and the Chair of the Board of that finding, and the appeal is not entertained.

#### *Filing of the appeal document*

The institution or program files with the Executive Director by registered mail a written appeal document setting forth evidence and argument in support of its appeal within thirty (30) days following the date of its notice to appeal.

The evidence and argument of the written appeal document may set forth: that the Board of Trustees decision was not supported by substantial evidence in the record; or

- a) that the Board of Trustees in making its decision departed significantly from its written procedures and protocols.

Changes made by or occurring at the institution or program since the time of the decision being appealed or evidence that is not submitted to AALE 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 or program may wish to provide in support of its case may accompany the appeal document.

Upon receipt of the written appeal document the Executive Director forwards to the Chair of the Board a copy of the document and acknowledges receipt of the document in writing to the chief executive officer of the institution or program.

#### *Initial response*

The Executive Director ensures that the institution's or program'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 Executive Director informs the Chair of the Board and provides the appeals materials submitted by the institution or program.

Within thirty (30) days of receipt of the appeals documents, the Chair of the Board provides a written response to the appeal stating the reason for the Board's decision. The response is sent to the Executive Director, who forwards a copy to the chief executive officer of the institution or program filing the appeal.

#### *Public response to inquiries*

The AALE appeals process operates under the AALE Policies and Procedures statement (see Section J. Appeals process). 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 or program appealing a decision of the Board of Trustees, AALE's comments will be limited to the following: confirm action that an appeal by the institution or program of an AALE decision is pending and that the status of the institution or program 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 AALE Policies and Procedures (see Section M. Public disclosure and notification) and above are consistent with AALE’s responsibility under law and regulation to inform various governmental authorizing agencies when decisions are reached at the conclusion of accreditation or appeals procedures.

#### *Appointment of the appeals committee*

The Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees appoints the chair and members of an appeals committee comprising three (3) persons, none of whom are Board of Trustees members, and no member of the Council of Scholars will have a role in any appeal proceedings.

Each person invited to participate in the appeals committee is 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 or program 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 committee members are subject to the AALE conflict of interest in accreditation policy (see Section F. Conflict of interest).

The appeals committee receives from the institution or program making the appeal written materials detailing its appeal and from the Chair of the Board a written response to the appeal.

#### *Appeal hearing*

Upon receiving the written notice of intent to appeal, the Executive Committee establishes the appeals committee, as provided above. After consultation with members of the appeals committee, the Executive Director notifies the chief executive officer of the institution or program and Chair of the Board of Trustees of a time and place at which the committee will hear the appeal.

The hearing is scheduled not earlier than sixty (60) days and not later than ninety (90) days following receipt by the Executive Director of the notice of intent to appeal. The place of the hearing will 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 is conditions beyond the control of the appeals committee, institution or program, or AALE, such as weather or illness of representatives or appeals committee members.

The appeals committee conducts the hearing and its deliberations on the date and at the place scheduled. If for any reason the institution or program or AALE does not have representatives present at the hearing, the hearing proceeds, and the appeals committee makes its decision on the basis of the written record and the presentations available to it at the hearing.

An institution or program may elect to have its appeal considered by use of the written documents only, notifying the appeals committee in writing of this election within forty-eight (48) hours in advance of the meeting. In this case, the appeals committee does not receive oral presentations at the hearing from AALE representatives. The institution or program has the right to counsel and a presentation before the appeals committee.

#### *Procedures for the hearing*

Three groups are involved in the hearing:

- a) the appeals committee;
- b) representatives from the appealing institution or program; and
- c) representatives from AALE.

The institution or program may be represented by not more than three (3) persons at the hearing, and AALE may be represented by not more than three (3) persons, one of whom is the Chair of the Board of Trustees or the designee of the Chair (but not the Executive Director or a member of the Council of Scholars). Argument will be

limited to principals, or their designees, with evidence provided by the other representatives. The Executive Director acts as staff to the appeals committee.

After the appeals committee is assembled and called to order by its chair, the committee first meets by itself to consider the appeal document and the AALE response.

The appeals committee then invites institutional or programmatic and AALE representatives to enter the meeting together and asks for oral presentations and discussion of issues bearing on the appeal; this portion of the hearing may be recorded if the appeals committee, institution or program, or AALE requests it and there is no objection. The presentations and discussion are allotted such times as the chair of the appeals committee decides. The chair of the appeals committee may terminate presentations and discussion found by the chair 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 or program and AALE.

Following presentations and discussion, which may include questions from members of the appeals committee, all representatives are excused from the hearing and the committee proceeds to a deliberation and discussion of findings. If in the course of its discussion the appeals committee wishes to recall representatives to answer questions, it may do so provided it recalls representatives of both the institution or program and AALE.

#### *Recommendation of the appeals committee*

The appeals committee affirms, amends, reverses or remands the adverse decision.

The appeals committee supports its decision by specific findings of fact on which its recommendation is based.

#### *Written report of the appeals committee*

When the appeals committee is ready to consider its written report, it meets with the Executive Director and gives instructions for the preparation of a draft report. Alternatively, the appeals committee may prepare the first draft of its own report. AALE staff formally and promptly circulates the draft report to each member of the appeals committee for changes.

When a draft report and appeals committee decision is approved by a majority of the committee, AALE staff prepares the final report containing the committee's findings and decision for the signature of the chair of the appeals committee. A copy of the signed report is sent promptly by staff to the chief executive officer of the institution or program, the Chair of the Board of Trustees, and each member of the appeals committee.

#### *Final decision of the appeals committee*

The decision of the appeals committee is communicated in writing to the institution or program filing the appeal, and Chair of the Board of Trustees within fifteen (15) days of the conclusion of the appeals hearing.

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

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

#### *Action by the Board following an appeals decision*

If the appeal is denied, the 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 Board of Trustees, the Board in acting on the remanded decision takes into account changes made by or occurring in the institution or program since the original decision. The Board in its reconsideration utilizes written materials submitted by the institution or program, and may, at its discretion, utilize a site visit to the institution or program 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 or program's accreditation.

The institution or program may be assessed such fees as are established by AALE for such procedures, except that the institution or program may not be assessed fees for AALE 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 is not in effect, and the accreditation status of the institution or program remains as it was before the decision under appeal was made.

If the appeal is denied, the AALE decision under appeal becomes 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 AALE takes action on remand, and the accreditation status of the institution or program remains as it was before the decision under appeal was made.

### **3. Appeal of eligibility review decision**

An eligibility review decision is not an accreditation decision and is not based on compliance with AALE Standards. The eligibility review is conducted by AALE staff to determine that an institution or program falls within AALE scope of accreditation and meets eligibility requirements as specified in the application for eligibility review form and AALE Policies and Procedures. An institution or program that does not successfully complete an eligibility review and is notified that it may initiate a new eligibility review after a period of six (6) months (see Section D. Process-Eligibility review and Section E. Process-Eligibility review) is afforded the following process of appeal:

- a) Within fifteen (15) days of the date of notification that an institution or program has not successfully completed the eligibility review and may initiate a new eligibility review after a period of six (6) months, the institution or program notifies the Executive Director in writing of the intent to appeal on the grounds that AALE misinterpreted factual information submitted in support of the application for eligibility review, and remits a required non-refundable appeals deposit (determined annually by the Board of Trustees).
- b) Within five (5) days the Executive Director confirms in writing receipt of the intent to appeal and the appeals deposit, and requests from the institution or program a formal letter of appeal, with documented evidence that AALE misinterpreted factual information, to be addressed to the AALE Executive Committee and submitted within ten (10) days of the date of confirmed receipt of intent to appeal.
- c) Within twenty-one (21) days of receipt of the formal letter of appeal and documentation, the Executive Committee will review:
  - i. original application for eligibility review with supporting documents;
  - ii. additional supporting documents submitted and correspondence with AALE prior to notification that the institution or program did not successfully complete an eligibility review and was notified that it may initiate a new eligibility review after a period of six (6) months;
  - iii. formal letter of appeal with documented evidence.

The Executive Committee makes one (1) of the following decisions and provides notification in writing to the institution or program:

- a) original decision is upheld that the eligibility review was not successfully completed and the institution or program may initiate a new eligibility review after a period of six (6) months; or
- b) appeal is granted and the institution or program is eligible to begin the accreditation process.

The decision of the Executive Committee is final.

### **4. Appeal of removal from initial accreditation process**

The removal of an applicant from the initial accreditation process is not an accreditation decision and is not based on compliance with AALE Standards. The submission of the self-study and completion of the site evaluation visit is managed by AALE staff. An institution or program that either: a) fails to submit a self-study that is accepted as

complete by deadline (see section D. Process-Self-Study and Section E. Process-Self-Study), or b) does not schedule and complete a site evaluation visit by deadline (see Section G. Site visit postponement and Section G. Cancellation of site visit) and is notified that it is removed from the initial accreditation process and must wait one (1) year from the date of removal to begin a new eligibility review (see Section D. Process-Eligibility review and Section E. Process-Eligibility review) is afforded the following process of appeal:

- a) Within fifteen (15) days of the date of notification that an institution or program has been removed from the initial accreditation process and may initiate a new eligibility review after a period of one (1) year, the institution or program notifies the Executive Director in writing of the intent to appeal on the grounds that AALE misinterpreted factual information submitted in support of either: a) providing a self-study accepted as complete by deadline, or b) scheduling and completing the site evaluation visit by deadline, and remits a required non-refundable appeals deposit (determined annually by the Board of Trustees).
- b) Within five (5) days the Executive Director confirms in writing receipt of the intent to appeal and the appeals deposit, and requests from the institution or program a formal letter of appeal, with documented evidence that AALE misinterpreted factual information, to be addressed to the AALE Executive Committee and submitted within ten (10) days of the date of confirmed receipt of intent to appeal.
- c) Within twenty-one (21) days of receipt of the formal letter of appeal and documentation, the Executive Committee will review:
  - i. either: a) submitted self-study and supporting documents, or b) documentation pertaining to scheduling of the site evaluation visit;
  - ii. additional supporting documents submitted and correspondence with AALE prior to notification that the institution or program either: a) failed to submit a self-study accepted as complete by deadline, or b) did not schedule and complete a site evaluation visit by deadline, and that it may initiate a new eligibility review after a period of one (1) year;
  - iii. formal letter of appeal with documented evidence.

The Executive Committee makes one (1) of the following decisions and provides notification in writing to the institution or program:

- a) original decision is upheld that the institution or program either: a) failed to submit a self-study accepted as complete by deadline, or b) did not schedule and complete a site evaluation visit by deadline, and the institution or program may initiate a new eligibility review after a period of one (1) year; or
- b) appeal is granted and the institution or program is eligible to continue the initial accreditation process.

The decision of the Executive Committee is final.

## **Section K.**

### **Membership, maintaining accreditation, changes**

#### **1. Statement of accredited membership**

Institutions or programs accredited by AALE may state their affiliation in their published materials and on their website according to the following approved statement:

[Name of institution or program] is accredited by the American Academy for Liberal Education (AALE) located in Washington, DC.

Institutions and programs must disclose their affiliation with AALE in an accurate and true manner (Section M. Public correction of incorrect or misleading information and see Section I. Suspension).

#### **2. Maintaining accreditation**

Accredited membership in AALE is a voluntary process. Members pay annual dues and fees set annually by the Board of Trustees. Institutions or programs awarded accreditation by AALE are required to,

- a) maintain compliance with AALE Standards;
- b) adhere to all AALE policies and procedures;
- c) adhere to stipulations set out in all official correspondence from AALE, including but not limited to the decision letter issued by the Board of Trustees awarding accreditation;
- d) keep current contact information including any change of institution or program name;
- e) complete and submit an Annual Reporting Form (ARF); requiring updated institution or program information, evidence of continued eligibility for AALE accreditation, and financial audits;
- f) remit annual dues and meet all financial commitments to AALE;
- g) submit required interim or focused reports;
- h) accept required interim site visits;
- i) report in writing to the Executive Director within ten (10) days of receiving any adverse decision or action or placement on public probation status by a government authorizing agency or another accrediting agency with legitimate claim; and
- j) initiate and complete the renewal process before current term of accreditation expires.

If, on the basis of information received during monitoring, or by other means, AALE determines that an accredited institution or program may no longer be in compliance with AALE Standards, adhering to AALE policies and procedures or meeting any other requirement for maintaining accreditation a request for administrative warning, or appropriate action as governed by AALE policies and procedures is enacted.

#### **3. Change of institution or program control**

Accreditation is not automatically transferable when there is a change in institution or program control. 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( 6) month period; or the change in over 75 percent of board membership at any one time. An accredited institution or program that undergoes a change of control must notify AALE within seven (7) days of the effective date of the change. Change of institution or program control is considered a substantive change (see Section K. Substantive change).

#### **4. Substantive change**

Changes that fundamentally affect the nature of an accredited institution or program, its educational program, allocation of resources, or its fulfillment of AALE Standards and criteria are defined as substantive.

##### *Types of substantive change*

Substantive change includes, but is not limited to:

- a) any change in the established mission or objectives of the institution or program;
- b) any change in the legal status, form of control, or ownership of the institution or program;
- c) addition of courses that represent a significant departure from the existing educational offerings, or method of delivery from those offered when AALE evaluated the institution or program;

- d) addition of programs of study at a degree, certificate or diploma level different from that which is included in the institution's or program's current accreditation status;
- e) change in needed credit hours or change from or to credit hours;
- f) change in resources that significantly diminishes the institution's or program's ability to operate.

Due to the nature of AALE's mission and standards for high educational quality, AALE does not grant pre-approval for adding or acquiring new locations regardless of the number of years that the given institution or program has been accredited by AALE or the number of additional locations that already exist (see Section C. Multiple campuses, schools or locations (Programs) and Section C. Multiple campuses, schools or locations (PK-12 schools)).

#### *Procedures for substantive change*

An institution or program seeking a substantive change must request approval in writing. The request must address each of the following questions:

- a) What change is being proposed, including an assessment of the expected outcomes of this change as well as the category or categories under which the extensive substantive change request will be reviewed?
- b) What factors led to undertaking the proposed change and what approvals have been obtained to implement the proposed change?
- c) How will the institution or program implement and sustain the proposed change?

The Executive Director forwards the substantive change request to the Council of Scholars for review. Each member of the Council reviews the application independently and a meeting is convened to discuss findings and prepare a recommendation. The Council's recommendation is forwarded to the Board of Trustees for final consideration. During a regular meeting or a special meeting called by the Chair of the Board, the Board,

- a) approves the request for substantive change;
- b) defers action on the request for substantive change and requires a site visit before final consideration; or
- c) denies the substantive change.

The review process can require up to six (6) months for completion. AALE makes all necessary notifications in writing within fifteen (15) days of the Board's action to approve or deny the substantive change.

#### *Extensive substantive change (Programs)*

In the event that a substantive change made or proposed by a program is deemed an extensive (or deep) substantive change by the accreditor of the institution at which the program operates, the program is required to follow the substantive change policy of their institution's accreditor and to report accordingly to AALE for review and action by the Board of Trustees.

#### *Extensive substantive change (PK-12 schools)*

An extensive substantive change is defined as one that:

- a) leads to a doubling or greater of the student body at the school between two successive academic years;
- b) expands the mission or learning objectives of the school resulting in significant change to the curriculum;
- c) more than doubles the size of the physical facility or changes by more than 50 percent the proportion of classes taught on-line versus in a traditional, classroom setting; or
- d) seeks to serve specific and identifiable new groups of students who will constitute more than 30 percent of the total student body subsequent to the change (such as by developing specific programs for students with a specific and identifiable physical or developmental disability, or by developing programs targeted to a new classification of students, such as programs intended to serve a significant number of non-traditional students at a school previously dominated by traditional students).

#### *Procedures for extensive substantive change (PK-12 schools)*

An institution seeking an extensive substantive change must request approval in writing. The request must address each of the following questions:

- a) What change is being proposed, including an assessment of the expected outcomes of this change (including impact on mission, enrollment, finances, personnel and breadth of educational offerings) as

well as the category or categories (a-d) above under which the extensive substantive change request will be reviewed)?

- b) What factors led to undertaking the proposed change and what approvals have been obtained to implement the proposed change?
- c) How will the institution implement and sustain the proposed change and evaluate the outcome of the change relative to its proposed goals?

The Executive Director forwards the extensive substantive change request to the Council of Scholars for review. Each member of the Council reviews the application independently and a meeting is convened to discuss findings. If the Council recommends moving forward in potentially approving the request for extensive substantive change, a panel of three (3) reviewers (one (1) AALE representative and two (2) trained site visitors, selected by the Chair of the Council in consultation with the Executive Director) conducts a comprehensive review, including a site visit (see Section G. Interim site visit), and makes a recommendation to the Board of Trustees. The panel's recommendation is forwarded to the Board for final consideration. During a regular meeting or a special meeting called by the Chair of the Board, the Board,

- a) approves the request for extensive substantive change;
- b) defers action on the request for extensive substantive change; or
- c) denies the request for extensive substantive change.

If the Council recommends not to move forward in potentially approving the request for extensive substantive change, the request with Council's recommendation moves directly to the Board for consideration. During a regular meeting or a special meeting called by the Chair of the Board, the Board,

- a) defers action on the request for extensive substantive change and enacts a panel of three (3) reviewers (including one (1) AALE representative and two (2) trained site visitors selected by the Executive Committee in consultation with the Executive Director) to conduct a comprehensive review, including a site visit (see Section G. Interim site visit), and prepare a report for the Board; or
- b) denies the request for extensive substantive change.

The review process can require up to six (6) months for completion. AALE makes all necessary notifications in writing within fifteen (15) days of the Board's action to approve or deny the extensive substantive change.

#### *Effective date for substantive change and extensive substantive change*

Substantive changes and extensive substantive changes initiated after the most recent accreditation evaluation are not included automatically in the institution's or program's accreditation. An institution or program considering substantive change or extensive substantive change must notify AALE 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 (not applicable for multiple campuses, schools or locations, see Section C. Multiple campuses, schools or locations (Programs) and Section C. Multiple campuses, schools or locations (PK-12 schools) must be obtained from AALE before those changes may be included in the institution's or program's accredited status. The Board of Trustees must approve substantive changes and extensive substantive changes prior to the change being included as part of the award of accreditation. The effective change date is the date of approval by the Board.

#### **5. Withdrawal (accredited members)**

An institution or program may withdraw from accredited membership at any time by providing written notice to the Executive Director. Notice of withdrawal must contain the reason for withdrawal and the date. The institution or program is responsible for all fees due through the end of the accreditation term. Membership dues paid to AALE are not pro-rated or refundable upon notice of withdrawal.

An accredited institution or program that closes or is no longer operating under conditions eligible for AALE accreditation must provide written notice to AALE of the last date of operation. Notice will constitute withdrawal from accredited membership by closure. The institution and program is responsible for all fees due through the last date of operation. Membership dues are not pro-rated or refundable upon notice of withdrawal by closure.

A notice of withdrawal from accredited membership is presented to the Board of Trustees at the next available meeting session for vote to acknowledge date of withdrawal or withdrawal by closure. An institution or program must wait one (1) year from the date of withdrawal from accredited membership to begin a new eligibility review.

AALE publishes on the AALE website ([www.aale.org](http://www.aale.org)), the withdrawal of an institution or program from accredited membership and withdrawals from accredited membership due to closure. AALE confirms upon written request from the government authorizing agency of the institution or program and other accrediting agencies with legitimate claim, if an accredited institution or program:

- a) withdrew voluntarily from accredited membership; or
- b) withdrew from accredited membership due to closure.

#### **6. Withdrawal (*applicants*)**

An institution or program may withdraw from the application for initial accreditation process at any time prior to the final Board of Trustees review and accreditation decision by providing written notice to the Executive Director. The institution or program is liable to cover all costs connected with its withdrawn application, including but not limited to the site visit fee and travel expenses incurred in anticipation of a required site evaluation visit. Application fees paid to AALE are not refundable. An institution or program must wait one (1) year from the date of withdrawal from the application for initial accreditation process to begin a new eligibility review.

#### **7. Expiration**

An institution or program that decides not to renew its accreditation and to allow accredited membership to expire at the end of a term must provide written notice to AALE within sixty (60) days of the deadline set for filing an application for renewal of accreditation.

A notice of decision not to renew accreditation and to allow accredited membership to expire at the end of term is presented to the Board of Trustees at the next available meeting for vote to acknowledge date of expiration.

If a required interim report or interim site visit report is not accepted as meeting reporting requirements necessary for extension of accreditation to a full five (5) year term,

- a) term of accreditation awarded for less than five (5) years expires with no grounds for appeal; or
- b) renewal term of accreditation awarded for less than five (5) years expires with no grounds for appeal.

The institution or program is responsible for all fees due through the end of the accreditation term. Membership dues are not pro-rated or refundable.

AALE publishes on the AALE website ([www.aale.org](http://www.aale.org)) the expiration of an institution's or program's accreditation. AALE confirms upon written request from the government authorizing agency of the institution or program and other accrediting agencies with legitimate claim the institution's or program's,

- a) decision not to renew accreditation and to allow accredited membership to expire; or
- b) expiration of accreditation due to failure to meet reporting requirements necessary for extension of accreditation to a full five (5) year term.

## **Section L.**

### **Special concerns**

#### **1. External budget control**

An accredited institution or program 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 institution or program can determine the amount it gives as well as define in broad terms the categories for which it is meant. However, the institution or program 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 or program 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.

#### **2. Articulation agreements (*Programs*)**

AALE requires that accredited programs and their institutions submit for review curriculum and degree or certificate program articulation agreements with other institutions or programs. Articulation agreements must be made with institutions or programs that are accredited by a regional or other nationally recognized institutional accrediting agency, or in the case of an international institution, the institution must be duly authorized to operate as a post-secondary institution of higher learning.

## **Section M.**

### **Public disclosure and notification**

#### **1. Disclosure of accreditation materials**

AALE does not make publicly available any accreditation review materials supplied by an institution or program, or by AALE representatives in the course of an accreditation review, including self-studies, site evaluation visit reports, institution's/program's formal responses to site evaluation visit reports, and other documents and correspondence, unless an institution or program discloses part or all of such materials or information in a manner that misrepresents or distorts the decisions, reports, or findings of AALE made in the course of the accreditation review, or its status of affiliation with AALE. In such cases the Executive Director will notify the chief executive officer of the institution or program and inform them that corrective action must be taken. If the misrepresentation or distortion is not corrected by specified deadline, AALE 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 policy holds for both accredited institutions or programs and applicants for accreditation.

AALE encourages accredited institution or program members to make publicly available information about their accredited membership status (see Section K. Statement of accredited membership) and to share accreditation review materials with stake holders, and if necessary, with their government authorizing agency and other accrediting agencies with legitimate claim to information beyond that made available to the public.

#### **2. Disclosure of applicant status**

Applicant institutions or programs for AALE accreditation agree to refrain from making any promotional use of their application for accreditation prior to the actual awarding of accreditation. In response to a written inquiry from a government authorizing agency or other accrediting agency having legitimate claim, AALE will affirm or deny the applicant status of an institution or program.

#### **3. Disclosure of membership information**

AALE publishes on its website ([www.aale.org](http://www.aale.org)), an annually updated directory of accredited institutions and programs, which states the month and year the institution or program will be up for renewal. In response to a written inquiry from a government authorizing agency, other accrediting agency having legitimate claim, or a member of the public, AALE will release the following information about an institution's or program's status, in a statement prepared in consultation with the institution or program:

- a) date of initial accreditation;
- b) date and nature of current on-site evaluation and subsequent actions by AALE on the institution's or program's accredited status;
- c) date and nature of the next scheduled on-site evaluation;
- d) date of submission and action on the most recent written report required by AALE.

#### **4. Disclosure of Board and Council of Scholars membership**

AALE publishes on its website ([www.aale.org](http://www.aale.org)) an annually updated listing of the names and professional affiliations of the Board of Trustees members and the Council of Scholars members.

#### **5. Non-discrimination policy**

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

#### **6. Notification of accreditation decisions and actions**

AALE provides the following notification of accreditation decisions and actions:

##### *Accreditation award*

AALE notifies in writing an institution or program within thirty (30) days after a final decision is made:

- a) to award an institution or program accreditation for the first time;
- b) to renew an institution's or program's accreditation.

Final decisions awarding accreditation to an institution or program are made publicly available on the AALE website ([www.aale.org](http://www.aale.org)). It is the responsibility of the institution or program to notify their government authorizing agency and other accrediting agencies with legitimate claim as required, or to request in writing that proper documentation be sent directly from AALE.

#### *Adverse decision*

AALE notifies in writing an institution or program within thirty (30) days after a decision is made to deny or revoke accreditation, and simultaneously provides written notification to their government authorizing agency and other accrediting agencies with legitimate claim. AALE also informs their government authorizing agency and other accrediting agencies with legitimate claim, of the institution's or program's right to request reconsideration and right to request appeal, which generate specific timelines as to when a final decision can be communicated to the public.

An adverse decision by the Board of Trustees to deny or revoke accreditation status is not communicated to the public until the available reconsideration and appeals process is completed.

Within sixty (60) days after the date of final decision, AALE makes available to the government authorizing agency of the institution or program, other accrediting agencies with legitimate claim, and the public upon request, a brief statement summarizing the reasons for AALE's determination to deny or revoke and the comments, if any, that the institution or program makes with regard to the final decision.

#### *Suspension*

Automatic suspension is not published. AALE only provides written notification to the government authorizing agency of the institution or program if the suspension lasts more than twenty-nine (29) days.

#### *Administrative warning*

Administrative warning is not published.

#### *Probation*

AALE provides written notification to the government authorizing agency of the institution or program within thirty (30) days of issuing a probation action. AALE publishes probation status on the AALE website ([www.aale.org](http://www.aale.org)) within thirty (30) days of the action in cases where AALE serves as the designated institutional accreditor.

AALE provides to the government authorizing agency of the institution or program upon written request, AALE's reasons for issuing probation, and its plans to monitor the institution or program. AALE does not release its reasons for issuing probation and its plans to monitor the institution or program to another accrediting agency or a member of the public.

#### *Withdrawal*

AALE publishes on the AALE website ([www.aale.org](http://www.aale.org)) the withdrawal of an institution or program from accredited membership, and confirms upon written request from the government authorizing agency of the institution or program and other accrediting agencies with legitimate claim, if the accredited institution or program:

- a) withdrew voluntarily from accredited membership;
- b) withdrew from accredited membership due to closure.

#### *Expiration*

AALE publishes on the AALE website ([www.aale.org](http://www.aale.org)) the expiration of an institution's or program's accreditation and confirms upon written request from the government authorizing agency of the institution or program and other accrediting agencies with legitimate claim, the institution's or program's

- a) decision not to renew accreditation and to allow accredited membership to expire; or,
- b) expiration of accreditation due to failure to meet reporting requirements necessary for extension of accreditation to a full five (5) year term.

## **7. Public information**

AALE publishes on its website ([www.aale.org](http://www.aale.org)) information including, but not limited to:

- a) scope of accreditation;
- b) types of accreditation for which institutions and programs may apply;
- c) eligibility requirements for each type of accreditation;
- d) standards and criteria for each type of accreditation;
- e) accreditation policies and procedures;
- f) names and professional affiliations of Board of Trustees members and the Council of Scholars members;
- g) listing of member institutions and programs, including accreditation status;
- h) list of upcoming accreditation reviews;
- i) meeting schedule of the Board of Trustees.

## **8. Public correction of incorrect or misleading information**

If a member of the public is aware that an accredited institution or program has released incorrect or misleading information about:

- a) accreditation status of the institution or program;
- b) contents of reports of on-site reviews;
- c) AALE's accrediting actions with respect to the institution or program;

that person should provide written notice to AALE of the incorrect or misleading information. The written notification should make the following reference: 'Notification of Incorrect or Misleading Information Released by [insert name of institution or program and legal address]' and contain the location and nature of the misleading or incorrect information.

Within thirty (30) days of AALE's receipt of the written notice, AALE will determine whether the accredited institution or program has released incorrect or misleading information about:

- a) accreditation status of the institution or program;
- b) contents of reports of on-site reviews;
- c) AALE's accrediting actions with respect to the institution or program.

If AALE determines that the institution or program has not released incorrect or misleading information about the foregoing items, AALE will provide written notification to both the member of the public and the institution or program within ten (10) days of the date of its determination.

If AALE determines that the accredited institution or program released incorrect or misleading information, AALE will provide written notification of required correction to the institution or program within ten (10) days of the date of its determination directing the institution or program to correct, revise, or delete, as appropriate, the incorrect or misleading information. Within ten (10) days of the date of its receipt of AALE's notification of required correction, the institution or program must make public correction of the incorrect or misleading information in the form of a written notice to be sent to AALE for publication on the AALE website ([www.aale.org](http://www.aale.org)) and the website of the institution or program. AALE will notify the member of the public upon completion of the public correction.

## **9. Records retention**

AALE keeps all materials related to the last two (2) full accreditation terms of an institution or program. This includes, but is not limited to: application for eligibility review materials; self-study; site evaluation visit report; institution's or program's response to the site evaluation visit report; accreditation decision letter; any requested interim or focused reports; and, any substantive change requests and accompanying reports produced by the institution or program, or AALE. Letters notifying institutions or programs of other accreditation related actions and decisions are kept on permanent file as are the minutes from Board of Trustees meetings and appeals hearings.

AALE keeps on file record of complaints made to AALE about any accredited institution or program member (see Section N. Complaints).

#### **10. Upcoming reviews and public comment**

AALE provides opportunity for third-party comment regarding the qualifications of institutions and programs being reviewed for initial accreditation or renewal of accreditation. Third-party comments are restricted to issues of accreditation (see Appendix B. AALE Program Standards and Appendix C. AALE PK-12 School Standards). Notice of opportunity for third-party comment is posted on the AALE website ([www.aale.org](http://www.aale.org)) under Upcoming Reviews.

Third-party comments on an application must be received in writing by AALE at least sixty (60) days prior to the Board of Trustees meeting at which the application is scheduled for review. The institution or program is notified of any third-party comments received, and has opportunity to respond. Institutional or programmatic responses to third-party comments must be received at least thirty (30) days prior to the Board meeting at which the application is scheduled for review.

The third-party comment procedure will not be used to settle disputes between individuals and institutions or individuals and programs, 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.

Third-party comment is not a substitute for AALE procedures for complaints against member institutions and programs (see Section N. Complaints).

## Section N. Complaints

### 1. Complaint against institution or program (*non-compliance*)

To ensure timely, fair, and equitable resolution of complaints against an accredited institution or program member alleging failure to comply with AALE Standards and criteria or procedures, AALE employs the following procedures:

- a) A person must file with the Executive Director a written complaint, signed by the complainant, alleging in detail the issue(s) of non-compliance with AALE Standards and criteria or procedures. The complainant must file the complaint within 120 days of discovering the facts giving rise to the complaint. Complainants are required to obtain and use an official complaint form available through the AALE national office (aaleinfo@aale.org).
- b) AALE staff acknowledges receipt of the complaint within ten (10) days of the date of receipt by AALE at the address designated in the complaint form.
- c) Within forty-five (45) days of the date of AALE's receipt of the complaint, the Executive Director determines whether the complaint alleges facts that raise issues relating to an institution's or program's compliance with AALE Standards and criteria or procedures.
- d) If the Executive Director concludes that the complaint does not raise such issues, the Executive Director closes the matter and informs the complainant in writing.
- e) If the Executive Director determines that the complaint does raise issues relating to the institution's or program's compliance with AALE Standards and criteria or procedures, the Executive Director sends the complaint (complainant's identity removed) to the chief executive officer of the institution and/or director of the program and requests the chief executive officer and/or director to respond within thirty (30) days of the date of receipt of the complaint from AALE.
- f) The Executive Director reviews the response of the institution or program within forty-five (45) days of the date of AALE's receipt of the response from the institution or program. The complainant does not receive a copy of the institution's or program's response.
- g) If the response from the institution or program shows that the institution or program is not out of compliance on the issue(s) raised in the complaint, the Executive Director closes the matter and informs the institution or program and the complainant in writing.
- h) If the response from the institution or program shows that the institution or program is out of compliance with AALE's Standards and criteria or procedures, the Executive Director appoints a duly qualified individual to investigate the issues raised by the complaint and the response, and to prepare a report for the Board of Trustees within sixty (60) days of the date of AALE's referral of the matter. AALE uses the procedures for selecting members of a site visit team to appoint an investigator.
- i) Investigation can include, but is not limited to, review of documents, individual interviews by telephone and/or on-site visits. The complainant does not receive a copy of the report of investigation.
- j) Within ten (10) days of the date of AALE's receipt of the report of investigation, the Executive Director forwards the complaint, the response, and the report of investigation to the Board for consideration at its next regularly scheduled meeting. At the meeting, the Board reviews the complaint, the response, and the report of investigation and decides the issues presented by the matter. The Board may decide as follows:
  - i. The institution or program is found to be in compliance with AALE Standards and criteria or procedures. Written notification of the decision is sent to the institution or program and the complainant within fifteen (15) days of the Board's decision and the matter is closed by AALE.
  - ii. The institution or program is found to be generally in compliance with AALE Standards and criteria or procedures, but the complaint has merit in the particular circumstance. A show cause letter requesting: a) remediation of the problem, or b) explanation of why administrative warning (see Section I. Administrative warning) should not be invoked, is sent to the institution or program within fifteen (15) days of the Board's decision.
  - iii. The institution or program is found to be in non-compliance with AALE Standards and criteria or procedures and placed on probationary status (see Section I. Probation) and receives written notification within fifteen (15) days of the Board's decision. Public notification is issued according to AALE policy (see Section M. Notification of accreditation decisions and actions).

## **2. Complaint against institution or program (other than non-compliance)**

AALE considers complaints pertaining to matters outside AALE Standards and criteria or procedures when the reported conditions are substantially documented and reflect conditions within an accredited institution or program member that jeopardize the quality of the educational program or the general welfare of the institution or program, or that impair attainment of the institution's or program's stated learning objectives. When in receipt of such a complaint AALE:

- a) does not respond to any allegations regarding the personal lives of individuals concerned with its member and affiliate institutions or programs;
- b) does not adjudicate isolated individual grievances, does not 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;
- c) does not act on a complaint that includes matters currently the subject of, or directly related to, litigation in which the member institution or program is a party, until such litigation is resolved, and only then will AALE weigh results of such litigation in its deliberation.

To ensure timely, fair, and equitable resolution of complaints against an accredited institution or program member alleging issues other than non-compliance with AALE Standards and criteria or procedures, AALE employs the following procedures:

- a) A person must file with the Executive Director a written complaint signed by the complainant, alleging in detail the issue(s). The complainant must file the complaint within 120 days of discovering the facts giving rise to the complaint. Complainants are required to obtain and use an official complaint form available through the AALE national office (aaleinfo@aale.org).
- b) AALE staff acknowledges receipt of the complaint within ten (10) days of the date of receipt by AALE at the address designated in the complaint form.
- c) Within forty-five (45) days of the date of AALE's receipt of the complaint, the Executive Director determines whether the complaint reflects conditions within an institution or program that jeopardizes the quality of the educational program or the general welfare of the institution or program, or that impair attainment of the institution's or program's stated learning objectives.
- d) If the Executive Director concludes that the complaint does not raise such an issue, the Executive Director closes the matter and informs the complainant in writing.
- e) If the Executive Director determines that the complaint does raise such an issue, the Executive Director sends the complaint (complainant's identity removed) to the chief executive officer of the institution and/or program and requests the chief executive officer and/or director to respond within thirty (30) days of the date of receipt of the complaint from AALE.
- f) The Executive Director reviews the response of the institution or program within forty-five (45) days of the date of AALE's receipt of the response from the institution or program. The complainant will not receive a copy of the institution's or program's response.
- g) If the response from the institution or program shows that the institution or program is not engaged in conduct that jeopardizes the quality of the educational program or the general welfare of the institution or program, or that impairs attainment of the institution's or program's stated learning objectives, the Executive Director closes the matter and informs the institution or program and the complainant in writing.
- h) If the response from the institution or program shows that the institution or program is engaged in conduct that jeopardizes the quality of the educational program or the general welfare of the institution or program, or that impairs attainment of the institution's or program's stated learning objectives, the Executive Director appoints a duly qualified individual to investigate the issues raised by the complaint and the response, and to prepare a report for the Board of Trustees within sixty (60) days of the date of AALE's referral of the matter. AALE uses the procedures for selecting members of a site visit team to appoint an investigator. Investigation can include, but is not limited to, review of documents, individual interviews by telephone and/or on-site visits. The complainant does not receive a copy of the report of investigation.
- i) Within ten (10) days of the date of AALE's receipt of the report of investigation, the Executive Director forwards the complaint, the response, and the report of investigation to the Board for consideration at its

next regularly scheduled meeting. At the meeting, the Board reviews the complaint, the response, and the report of investigation and decides the issues presented by the matter. The Executive Director notifies the complainant, the institution or program, and the investigator of the of the Board's decision within fifteen (15) days of the date of the meeting of the Board.

The procedures for reviewing complaints pertaining to matters outside AALE Standards and criteria or procedures are not judicial and serve only as a method or means to communicate the allegations, determine the facts, and resolve the issue(s) presented by the complaint. The Executive Director has the authority to stop the complaint process pertaining to matters outside AALE Standards and criteria or procedures at any point or at any time evidence appears that would disqualify the complaint under policies outlined above, or if the complaint otherwise moves beyond the accreditation scope or jurisdiction of AALE.

### **3. Complaint against AALE**

To ensure timely, fair, and equitable resolution of complaints against AALE, the following procedures are employed:

- a) A person must file with the Executive Director a written complaint signed by the complainant alleging in detail the issue(s). The complainant must file the complaint within 120 days of discovering the facts giving rise to the complaint. Complainants are required to obtain and use an official complaint form available through the AALE national office (aaleinfo@aale.org).
- b) The Executive Director acknowledges receipt of the complaint within ten (10) days of the date of receipt by AALE of the complaint at the address designated in the complaint form.
- c) The Executive Director determines whether the complaint alleges facts that raise issue(s) concerning, a member of the Board of Trustees, a member of the Council of Scholars, or an AALE employee or representative.
- d) If the complaint concerns the activity of a member of the Board of Trustees or the Council of Scholars, or the Executive Director, the complaint is referred to the Executive Committee of the Board within thirty (30) days of the date of receipt of the complaint by AALE.
- e) The Executive Committee investigates the allegations of the complaint, completes the investigation, and renders a final decision within sixty (60) days of the date of the referral of the complaint.
- f) The Chair of the Board notifies the complainant in writing of the final decision within fifteen (15) days of the date of Executive Committee's decision.
- g) If the complaint concerns the activity of an AALE employee or representative other than those identified in (d), the complaint is addressed by the Executive Director.
- h) The Executive Director investigates the allegations of the complaint, completes the investigation, and renders a final decision within ninety (90) days of the date of receipt of the complaint by AALE.
- i) The Chair of the Board notifies the complainant in writing of the final decision within fifteen (15) days of the date of the Executive Director's decision.

The procedures for reviewing complaints pertaining to AALE Board members, Council of Scholars members, employees and representatives are not judicial and serve as a method or means to communicate the allegations, determine the facts and resolve the issue(s) presented by the complaint. The Executive Committee has the authority to stop the complaint process pertaining to an AALE Board member, Council of Scholars member, AALE employee or representative at any point or at any time evidence appears that would disqualify the content of the complaint.

### **4. Student complaints**

Institutions and programs are required to maintain a file of written student complaints on-site and to make these records available upon request to AALE.

## Appendix A. AALE BYLAWS

### AALE Bylaws (2016rev)/06.2017

#### ARTICLE I NAME AND PURPOSE

**A. Name:** The name of this organization is “AMERICAN ACADEMY for LIBERAL EDUCATION,” herein after referred to as “AALE”.

**B. Purpose:** AALE is an autonomous, non-governmental, non-profit corporation organized under the District of Columbia Non-Profit Corporation Act exclusively for educational, research, mutual improvement, and professional purposes. It shall have the necessary and incidental powers to carry out its corporate purposes, which include but are not limited to:

- a) defend the purposes and advance the cause of liberal arts education;
- b) establish standards for accrediting educational institutions and programs offering liberal arts education;
- c) accredit institutions and programs based on these standards;
- d) undertake research and support programs pertaining to the quality of liberal arts education;
- e) sustain the integrity of education by focusing discussions and actions on matters of educational substance; and
- f) provide a forum for discussion and analysis and a mechanism for common action to accomplish the above purposes.

#### ARTICLE II CONSTITUENCY AND MEMBERSHIP

**A. Constituency and membership:** AALE shall consist of colleges, universities, schools, programs, individuals and organizations concerned with liberal education. Membership shall be afforded in appropriate categories as established by the Board of Trustees.

**B. Membership categories and duties:** Membership categories and duties established by the Board of Trustees include but are not limited to:

1. Accredited membership. Institutions and programs holding accredited or preaccredited membership shall maintain compliance with AALE Standards, adhere to all AALE policies and procedures, and pay annual dues in the amount determined by the Board of Trustees. Failure to do so, after notice from AALE, shall initiate a review of accredited or preaccredited membership status under procedures established by the Board of Trustees. Accredited membership has no voting privilege.

2. Affiliate or Associate membership. Institutions, programs, and organizations holding affiliate or associate membership shall adhere to all AALE policies and procedures governing their category of membership and pay annual dues in the amount determined by the Board of Trustees. Failure to do so, after notice from AALE, shall initiate a review of membership status under procedures established by the Board of Trustees. Affiliate or Associate membership has no voting privilege.

3. Individual membership. Members of the Board of Trustees and members of the Council of Scholars shall adhere to all AALE policies and procedures governing their category of membership. Failure to do so, after notice from AALE, shall initiate a review of membership status under procedures established by the Board of Trustees. Membership on the Board of Trustees and on the Council of Scholars has voting privilege as designated by the Bylaws.

**C. Membership meetings:** A membership meeting may be scheduled during the annual meeting of the Board of Trustees. Notice specifying time, place, and business to be conducted shall be posted on the aale.org website at least ninety (90) days in advance of the meeting. The Board of Trustees may call special membership meetings upon thirty (30) days written notice to the members stating the purpose of the meeting.

### ARTICLE III BOARD OF TRUSTEES

**A. Board of Trustees.** AALE shall be governed by a Board of Trustees, herein after referred to as the “Board”.

**B. Board membership.** The Board shall consist of a Chair, a Vice Chair/Treasurer, a Secretary, the AALE President (ex-officio), and up to seventeen (17) additional voting members, with every seventh member being a representative of the public. The Chair of the Council of Scholars (ex officio) and the Executive Director (ex officio) shall serve as non-voting members. The composition of the Board shall reflect various perspectives and expertise in AALE’s constituency and membership.

1. Public members. At least one (1) in every seven (7) members of the Board must be a “public member”. A Board member serving as a “public member” may not be: (a) an employee, member of the governing board, owner, or shareholder of, or consultant to, an institution or program that either is accredited or preaccredited by AALE or an affiliate member of AALE, or has applied for accreditation or preaccreditation by AALE or affiliate membership in AALE; (b) a member of any trade association or membership organization related to, affiliated with, or associated with AALE; or (c) a spouse, parent, child, or sibling of an individual identified in (a) or (b). Public members shall hold a baccalaureate degree or higher, but not be employed in academia nor retired from a professional career in academia. Public members are to have an understanding of the purposes of liberal education as manifested through educational experience or affiliation with associations and activities related to liberal education. Public members may be sought for their professional competencies in areas relevant to AALE, such as law, accounting, financial management, public or political relations, regulatory compliance, or evaluation and monitoring.

2. Academic members. The Board shall include at least one (1) voting member whose current primary position is in higher education administration, and it shall have at least one (1) voting member whose current position is on the faculty of a higher education institution.

3. Council of Scholars members. No more than one (1) member of the Board shall be a member of the Council of Scholars while serving on the Board.

4. Accredited and affiliate members. Not more than five (5) members of the Board shall be from accredited, preaccredited or affiliate member institutions or programs of AALE.

**C. Board election and term of office.** Individual members of the Board shall be elected by the Board of Trustees to serve a four-year term consistent with any policies and procedures established by the Board.

1. Vacancies. If a member leaves the Board for any reason before completing a term of office, the Board may fill that portion of the term not yet expired consistent with any policies and procedures established by the Board.

2. Removal from office. A member may be removed from the Board for cause or for nonperformance by a two-thirds vote of the Board, with the Board member being considered for removal not participating in the vote consistent with any policies and procedures established by the Board.

**D. Board duties.** The Board is to provide leadership, determine policies and procedures, maintain AALE and its programs, establish and amend the purposes and scope of AALE’s work, develop funding for AALE consistent with its purposes, and possess controlling management of the funds and properties of AALE on its behalf and consistent with its purposes. To assist in the performance of its duties, the Board shall:

1. Executive Committee. The Board shall elect an Executive Committee and delegate to the Executive Committee responsibility for leadership of AALE when the Board is not in session consistent with any policies and procedures established by the Board.

2. President. The Board shall appoint a President and delegate to him/her responsibility for AALE constituency, member, and public relations when the Board is not in session consistent with any policies and procedures established by the Board.

3. Executive Director. The Board shall appoint an Executive Director and delegate to him/her responsibility for the day-to-day administration of AALE activities and programs consistent with any policies and procedures established by the Board.

**E. Board meetings.** The Board shall meet at least twice during the calendar year at times and at places proposed by the Executive Committee and agreed to by the Board. Meetings may be conducted by conference phone call.

1. Annual meeting. One (1) Board meeting shall be designated as an “annual meeting,” and the agenda for the meeting shall include annual elections conducted consistent with any policies and procedures established by the Board. Notice of the annual meeting shall be posted publically at least thirty (30) days in advance of the meeting.

2. Special meetings. Special meetings may be called by the Chair or at the request of a majority of the Board’s members. The Chair shall determine the time and place for such meetings and the rules governing them are the same as provided for Board meetings in Article II.

3. Meeting procedures. Meetings, proceedings, hearings, and other official sessions of the Board shall be conducted according to rules provided in Article VI.

**F. Board meeting quorum.** At any Board meeting, one third of the voting members of the Board plus one (1) shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business and voting.

**G. Board voting.** Each voting member of the Board has a single vote. Board members are provided with a statement of AALE conflict of interest policy and are required to follow guidelines for recusal. Proxy votes are not allowed.

**H. Board committees.** The Board shall have the following standing committees: Executive Committee, Nominating Committee, and Finance Committee. Members who have served at least one (1) year on the Board are eligible for election or appointment to standing committees according to policies and procedures established by the Board.

1. Executive Committee. The Executive Committee shall consist of the Chair, the Vice Chair/Treasurer, the Secretary, and the President (ex-officio) as voting members and the Executive Director (ex-officio) as a non-voting member. The Executive Committee is responsible for leadership of AALE when the Board is not in session consistent with any policies and procedures established by the Board.

2. Nominating Committee. The Nominating Committee shall consist of three (3) voting Board members. The Nominating Committee is responsible for nominating individuals for election to positions on the Board, Executive Committee, and Council of Scholars as well as for administering review of, and amendment to, the Bylaws consistent with any policies and procedures established by the Board.

3. Finance Committee. The Finance Committee shall consist of three (3) voting Board members including the Vice-Chair/Treasurer who chairs the Committee. The Finance Committee is responsible for preparing the annual budget for Board approval, arranging for required audits, and assisting the Vice-Chair/Treasurer with financial duties as needed consistent with any policies and procedures established by the Board.

4. Ad hoc committees. The Chair of the Board shall appoint ad hoc committees at the request of the Board or the Executive Committee to fulfill a prescribed function within a specific time.

**I. Board training.** A newly elected Board member shall attend an orientation session explaining the functioning of the Board and his/her role as a Board member and a training session on AALE standards, policies and procedures, as well as the scope of their accreditation decision-making authority prior to his/her participation in a meeting of the Board.

1. Additional training. During a term of office, a Board member shall participate in training sessions related to on-going board service, as well as any new changes in policies and procedures.

## **ARTICLE IV**

### **OFFICERS OF THE BOARD**

**A. Officers of the Board.** The Officers of the Board shall be a Chair, Vice-Chair/Treasurer, and Secretary.

**B. Officers election and term of office.** An officer of the Board shall be elected by the Board to serve a two-year term consistent with any policies and procedures established by the Board.

1. Vacancies. If a Board member who holds the position of an officer leaves the Board for any reason and vacates the office before completing his/her term, the Board may fill that portion of the officer's term not yet expired by appointing a replacement to serve until the next annual election.

**C. Duties of the officers.** An officer of the Board shall serve on the Executive Committee and fulfill the responsibilities of the position to which he/she has been elected:

1. Chair. The Chair shall approve agendas for and preside at all Board, Executive Committee, and membership meetings and perform all other duties pertaining to this office consistent with any policies and procedures established by the Board.

2. Vice-Chair/Treasurer. The Vice-Chair/Treasurer shall act for the Chair in his/her absence or inability to serve, oversee the proper stewardship of AALE funds, ensure that the financial records are accurately maintained, present the annual budget and required audits for Board approval, and perform all other duties pertaining to this office consistent with any policies and procedures established by the Board.

3. Secretary. The Secretary shall keep an accurate record of Board, Executive Committee, and membership meetings and all AALE policy documents, ensure proper archiving for AALE minutes and records, issue official notices as required by the Bylaws, and perform all other duties pertaining to this office consistent with any policies and procedures established by the Board.

## **ARTICLE V**

### **COUNCIL OF SCHOLARS**

**A. Council of Scholars.** The AALE Board of Trustees shall be served by an advisory body, the Council of Scholars herein after referred to as "Council".

**B. Council of Scholars membership.** The Council shall consist of up to fifteen (15) members, all of whom shall be faculty/scholar or administrator/scholar in the liberal arts. The Council shall have a range of perspectives and include members with expertise in the humanities and sciences. Members of the Council act as individuals in accordance with the policies, procedures, and interests of AALE and do not serve as representatives of types of institutions, professions, groups, or other organizations, however defined.

1. Academic members. The Council shall include one (1) or more voting members whose current primary position is in higher education administration, and it shall have at least one (1) or more voting members whose current position is on the senior faculty of a higher education institution.

**C. Council of Scholars election and term of office.** Individual members of the Council of Scholars shall be elected by the Board to serve a four-year term consistent with any policies and procedures established by the Board. The Chair of the Council of Scholars is appointed by the Board from among the individual members of the Council to serve a two-year term consistent with any policies and procedures established by the Board.

1. Vacancies. If a member leaves the Council of Scholars for any reason before completing a term of office, the Board may fill that portion of the term not yet expired consistent with any policies and procedures established by the Board.

2. Removal from Council. A member may be removed from the Council of Scholars for cause or for nonperformance by a two-thirds vote of the Board consistent with any policies and procedures established by the Board.

**D. Council of Scholars duties.** The Council develops accreditation standards, applies AALE Standards in reviewing accreditation applications for recommendations to the Board, and provides recommendations pertinent to the operation of AALE's accreditation function, including but not limited to a) accreditation procedures and b) accreditation policy issues for consideration by the Board.

1. Chair of the Council of Scholars. The Chair of the Council of Scholars approves the agendas for and presides at Council meetings. He/she performs all other duties pertaining to this office consistent with any policies and procedures established by the Board.

**E. Council of Scholars meetings.** The Council shall meet at least twice during the calendar year. Meetings shall be convened by the Chair of the Council. Meetings may be conducted by conference phone call.

1. Special meetings. Special meetings may be called by the Chair of the Council or at the request of a majority of the Council's members. The Chair of the Council shall determine the time and place of such meetings; the rules governing special meetings are the same as provided for Council meetings in Article VI.

2. Meeting procedures. Meetings and other official sessions of the Council shall be conducted according to rules provided in Article VI.

**F. Council of Scholars meeting quorum.** At any Council meeting, one third of the voting members of the Council plus one (1) shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business and voting.

**G. Council of Scholars voting.** Each Council member has a single vote on all matters delegated to the Council by the Bylaws. Council members are provided with a statement of AALE conflict of interest policy and are required to follow guidelines for recusal. Proxy votes are not allowed.

**H. Council of Scholars training.** A newly elected Council member shall attend a training session on AALE standards, policies, and procedures, as well as his/her role in the accreditation application review process prior to his/her participation in a meeting of the Council.

1. Additional training. During a term of office, a Council member shall participate in training sessions related to on-going service on the Council, as well as any new changes in policies and procedures.

## **ARTICLE VI**

### **PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY**

**A. Parliamentary authority.** Robert's *Rules of Order*, revised, shall govern all meetings of the Board, the Executive Committee, the Council of Scholars, membership meetings, and the parliamentary procedures of AALE in so far as these rules are not inconsistent with applicable statutes, AALE's Articles of Incorporation, and these Bylaws, unless other specific procedures are established by the Board.

## **ARTICLE VII**

### **POWER OF ATTORNEY**

**A. Power of Attorney.** The Chair, Vice-Chair/Treasurer, and Secretary each shall have authority as attorney-in-fact to execute and acknowledge on behalf of the AALE, legal documents, or other instruments in connection with the operations of AALE as approved generally and specifically by the Board.

## **ARTICLE VIII**

### **PROPERTY AND INDEMNIFICATION**

**A. Administration of property.** The Board, representing AALE as a corporation, shall have powers designated by these Bylaws to sue and be sued, to purchase, take, receive, lease, accept as gift, devise or bequest, or otherwise acquire, own, hold, improve, use and deal in and with real or personal property, or any interest therein, and otherwise dispose of all or any part of its property and assets; to make contracts and incur liabilities, borrow money at such rates of interest as the Board may determine, issue its notes, bonds, and other obligations, and secure its obligations by mortgage or pledge of all or any of its property, franchises, and income; to conduct its affairs, carry on its operations, hold property, and have offices and exercise its powers in any part of the world; to elect or appoint officers and agents of the corporation, and define their duties and fix their compensation; to make and alter policies, not inconsistent with its Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, or with the laws of the (District of Columbia), for the administration and regulation of the affairs of AALE.

Notwithstanding the above, AALE shall not engage in any business or other activity which is not in the furtherance of and exclusively for its educational, research, mutual improvement, and professional purposes, and which does not comply fully with the Sherman Act, the Clayton Act, and the Federal Trade Commission Act.

**B. Funds.** The funds of AALE shall be deposited in such depositories as may be approved by the Board, but such depositing authority may be delegated by them to a member of the Executive Committee.

**C. Indemnification.** AALE shall defend against suit or legal proceedings, pay the expenses of, and indemnify against judgment or loss, any Board or Council of Scholars member, officer, agent, or employee or former Board or Council of Scholars member, officer, agent, or employee of the corporation arising out of any connection with or activities on behalf of AALE provided that person is not guilty of acting in bad faith. This provision shall not be deemed to be exclusive of any other rights to which such person may otherwise be entitled under any Bylaw, agreement, or vote of the Board; or under law or regulation.

By majority vote of the disinterested members of the Board, AALE may indemnify officers and Board members if the officer or Board member acted in good faith; reasonably believed (in the case of official conduct) that the conduct was in the best interests of AALE and in all other cases was at least not opposed to the best interests of AALE; and in the case of a criminal proceeding, had no reasonable cause to believe the conduct was unlawful. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Board may not indemnify an officer who is also not a member of the Board for a proceeding by or in the right of AALE (unless for expenses reasonably incurred by the proceeding); receipt of financial benefit to which the officer is not entitled; an intentional infliction of harm on AALE; or an intentional violation of criminal law.

## **ARTICLE IX**

### **ACCREDITATION STANDARDS**

**A. Accreditation standards.** Standards for accreditation approved through procedures stipulated in the Bylaws and other AALE documents shall go into effect only after approval by the Board of Trustees, following an opportunity for comment by accredited and preaccredited members of AALE. Such standards for accreditation shall be explicitly stated and published, and shall serve as AALE's sole criteria for awarding or denying accreditation. Accredited and preaccredited members are responsible for maintaining compliance with all standards as they are developed.

**B. Procedures for developing standards.** The proper procedures for developing proposals to establish and amend the accreditation standards shall be governed by these Bylaws and by decisions of the Board taken in a manner appropriate to the nature and scope of projected changes. Such procedures shall include the establishment of appropriate comment periods. Notice of proposed changes to the standards must be sent to all relevant accredited and preaccredited members at least thirty (30) days before votes by the Board. (The term "relevant" as used here means that changes affecting higher education will be sent to institutional and programmatic college and university members and changes affecting PK-12 education will be sent to institutional pre-collegiate members.)

**C. Comments on standards.** Comment on the standards is possible at any time through the National Office. Accredited and preaccredited members may comment on proposed revisions and additions to standards that are applicable to their category of accreditation.

## **ARTICLE X**

### **AMENDMENTS**

**A. Amendments.** Amendments to these Bylaws may be proposed by any member of the Board or Council of Scholars or by any accredited or preaccredited member of AALE in good-standing. The Nominating Committee shall submit proposed amendments to the Board, the Council of Scholars, and accredited and preaccredited members of AALE at least thirty (30) days prior to consideration thereof by the Board consistent with policies and procedures established by the Board. Amendments shall be adopted by a two-thirds vote of the total voting membership of the Board.

**Record of approved amendments:**

June 13, 2017. Article II.B.2 lines 1, 2, 6 “sustaining” changed to “associate”

June 13, 2017. Article III.H.1 line 2 “the Chair of the Council of Scholars (ex officio)” eliminated

June 13, 2017. Article V.D.1 line 2 “and serves on the Executive Committee” eliminated

## **Appendix B. AALE PROGRAM STANDARDS**

available at [www.aale.org](http://www.aale.org)

## **Appendix C. AALE PK-12 SCHOOL STANDARDS**

available at [www.aale.org](http://www.aale.org)

## **Appendix D. COVID-19 POLICIES**

*(COVID-19 policies are subject to revision or extension by the AALE Board of Trustees as needed during the COVID national emergency)*

### **1. On-line instruction - Standard 3: Curriculum**

The mission of the American Academy for Liberal Education (AALE) is to promote excellence in liberal education by providing recognition of schools and programs that maintain the highest standards of liberal arts learning. AALE achieves its mission by articulating standards designed to support excellence in liberal arts learning and teaching, offering rigorous peer-review accreditation, and fostering dialogue on the ends and means of quality liberal arts education.

AALE recognizes that as a result of COVID-19, accredited member schools and programs have been required to close their facilities in response to mandated closure orders issued by state and national authority. Any operations allowed on-site have been severely limited by national CDC guidelines. Faced with these extraordinary challenges, member schools and programs have continued to serve their students by delivering classroom instruction on-line.

AALE's policy regarding on-line instruction falls under Standard 3. Curriculum, and states the following:

*AALE PK-12 School Standards*

Standard 3. Curriculum

3.g The school maintains a policy on the use of off-site or distance education classes that meet graduation requirements that is consistent with its learning objectives.

*AALE Program Standards (post-secondary)*

Standard 3. Curriculum

3.g The program maintains a policy on the use of distance education and correspondence education courses to meet program requirements that is consistent with its learning objectives and meets all requirements of the institution's policy on distance education and correspondence education at which the program is offered.

Permission to use on-line technology to provide instruction and to facilitate opportunities for student learning during COVID-19 conditions has been granted by state authorizers of PK-12 education to schools on a *temporary basis*, and by the US Department of Education for institutions of higher learning. AALE acknowledges this permission, and is not requiring a school or program to file a substantive change report to previous policy submitted for review under Standard 3, assuming that the changes made were *temporary* and enacted *solely* to address continuation of instruction during a COVID-19 mandated closure.

AALE will be requiring all accredited member schools and programs to submit, a) narrative summary describing measures taken to continue instruction during COVID-19 closure that began on or after March 1, 2020, and b) any plans designed to accommodate future mandated closure for any period of time during the academic year 2020-2021.

### **2. Temporary extension of accreditation**

In light of the COVID-19 interruption to the delivery of on-site education and corresponding educational practices in and outside of the US, the American Academy for Liberal Education (AALE) is adopting the following policy pertaining to extension of accreditation.

Effective August 1, 2020 through August 31, 2021 the Executive Director can bring a request for extension of accreditation for administrative good cause due to unusual circumstances directly to the AALE Board of Trustees. The review and vote by the full Board can be conducted electronically outside of a regularly scheduled Board decision-making session.

Actions taken by the Board of Trustees under the Temporary Extension of Accreditation Policy for 2020-21 are final and are not subject to the appeals process outlined in the AALE Policies and Procedures Handbook.

**2. Virtual site visits\* (\* policy effective through August 31, 2021 is extended through December 31, 2022)**

In light of the COVID-19 interruption to the delivery of on-site education and corresponding educational practices in and outside of the US, the American Academy for Liberal Education (AALE) is adopting the following temporary policy pertaining to site visits for initial accreditation and renewal of accreditation and required interim site-visits.

Effective August 1, 2020 AALE will allow for virtual site visits to occur for all site visits scheduled through December 31, 2020.

Effective January 1, 2021 through August 31, 2021 virtual site visits will be allowed on a case-by-case basis. The AALE Executive Committee will review the operating conditions at the institution where the site visit is to be conducted and available travel/lodging conditions to and near the institution to determine if the health safety of the site visitors can be ensured to the reasonable satisfaction of the full Executive Committee. If the Executive Committee concludes that operating conditions at the institution and/or available travel/lodging conditions to and near the institution place the health safety of site visitors at risk, a virtual site visit will be allowed.

Virtual site visits will be interactive, and can include conference phone calls and video sessions. Simple exchange of document reviews or emails will not constitute a virtual site visit.

Then within a reasonable amount of time after a virtual site visit, an on-site visit will be required to review facilities. The follow-up on-site visit may be conducted by one (1) site visitor chosen by the site visit team.

**3. Initial accreditation decision-preaccreditation**

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the inability to perform in-person site visits, the American Academy for Liberal Education (AALE) is unable to award initial accreditation to an institution or program until it has completed a follow-up in-person visit. However, AALE understands the need for institutions and programs to communicate to parents, students and the public that an institution or program is on the pathway to accreditation.

If the institution or program has met all standards during their initial review and virtual site evaluation visit, it will be awarded preaccreditation until such time that an in-person, limited site visit can be performed to confirm the findings of the virtual site visit.

If the institution or program has not met all standards during their initial review and virtual site evaluation visit, but it is at a minimum approaching meeting all standards, the AALE Board of Trustees may award preaccreditation. However, in such a case, the institution or program has five (5) years to meet all accreditation standards, submit an updated application and self-study, and be considered for a full award of accreditation. In addition, AALE will require such institution or program to submit an annual report as well as progress reports during the period of preaccreditation demonstrating that it is continuing to make progress toward meeting all standards. If progress is not being made, the Board reserves the right to withdraw an award of preaccreditation. An institution or program that has preaccreditation action withdrawn or fails to become fully accredited within five (5) years of an award of preaccreditation must wait for two (2) years prior to making a new application for an award of accreditation.

AALE Board actions taken under this policy are not subject to reconsideration and the appeals process. An institution or program awarded preaccreditation under this policy is subject to all membership requirements established by the Board.

**Additional resources** *(available upon request):*

- Application for post-secondary Program accreditation eligibility review
- Application for PK-12 School accreditation eligibility review
- Self-Study overview
- Site visit planning guide
- Fees schedule (annual)

**Additional resources** *(internal use):*

- Board of Trustees Handbook
- Council of Scholars Handbook
- Site Visitors Handbook