

# Discussion of Processes and Procedures Regarding Denial of Accreditation

May 2012

## Overview of this Report

This agenda item follows up on a discussion regarding changing the Commission's policies and processes related to denying accreditation after an initial accreditation site visit. This agenda item presents additional language for the Denial of Accreditation section of the Accreditation Handbook's Chapter 8.

## Staff Recommendation

This is an action item. Staff proposes that the COA continue its discussion from the February, March, and April 2012 meetings to determine language regarding the inclusion of Denial of Accreditation at an initial site visit. Text reflecting these changes will be made in the Handbook to guide both review teams and institutions undergoing accreditation. Staff has developed this agenda item based on input from the COA at its April meeting.

## Background

The COA initially discussed the topic of Denial of Accreditation at its February 2012 meeting (<http://www.ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/coa-agendas/2012-02/2012-02-item-15.pdf>) and revisited the topic at the March 2012 (<http://www.ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/coa-agendas/2012-03/13-Denial of Accreditation FINAL.pdf>) and April 2012 meetings (<http://www.ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/coa-agendas/2012-04/2012-04-item-15.pdf>).

After affirming at the February meeting that the COA believes the Accreditation Handbook needs to be changed to allow teams to recommend denial of accreditation as a result of an initial accreditation site visit. The March and April meetings focused on what parameters and processes should be developed and implemented in exercising this option.

## Handbook Changes

Staff currently proposes changing two portions of Chapter 8 of the Accreditation Handbook. The first change alters the text of the section Denial of Accreditation while the second change proposes changes to the table General Guidelines for Initial Site Visit Team Recommendations.

Staff proposes that because of the complexity, the COA take this discussion in several parts and this agenda item is presented in that manner. Below is draft language that, once finalized and adopted by the COA, would replace the language currently found on page 49 of Chapter 8 in the Denial of Accreditation section. Because this is a wholesale revision and reconsideration to the denial section of the handbook, it is not done in tracked changes. Part I and II are presented for possible action, while III and IV are only for discussion at this time.

## **Part I. General Definitions, Parameters, and Operational Implications for Denial of Accreditation**

### ***Denial of Accreditation***

The COA can deny accreditation upon either an initial visit or a revisit to an institution. Although a recommendation of Denial of Accreditation typically comes after a finding of probationary status at an initial visit and after the institution has been provided with an opportunity to institute improvements, a review team can recommend Denial of Accreditation at **any time** if the situation warrants the finding in accordance with this section of the Handbook.

#### *a) Initial Visits*

A COA finding of Denial of Accreditation upon an initial visit means that extremely serious and pervasive issues exist at an institution whereby the COA has determined that it highly unlikely that the issues and concerns identified by a review team and COA can be successfully addressed and rectified in a timely manner given the particular facts in the matter and given either the leadership or the infrastructure in place.

#### *Parameters to be Used in Considering a Team Recommendation of Denial of Accreditation at an Initial Site Visit*

If on an initial site visit, the review team's findings are more serious than what is defined in the Accreditation with Probationary Stipulation section above, the review team may consider Denial of Accreditation at an initial site visit. These findings might include:

- Significant misrepresentations that were apparently intentionally made to the site visit team and/or in the documents presented to the site visit team
- The institution qualifies for the ruling of Probationary Stipulations in the table General Guidance for Initial Site Visit Team Recommendations (based upon the number of standards unmet), but the team feels that candidates and/or students in the K-12 classroom are possibly being harmed or a disservice is being done to them due to the degree to which those standards are not being met. The degree of harm makes the determination “denial” instead of “probationary.”
- The institution has blatantly and systematically disregarded the policies and processes of the Commission on Teacher Credentialing regarding program approval, program implementation, and candidate completion, establishing a pattern of disregard.  
The institution is routinely credentialing candidates who were clearly not meeting all credential requirements
- An overwhelming number of the standards were found to be not met, suggesting that candidates are not able to acquire the knowledge, skills, and abilities required in the standards.

b) *Revisits*

If an accreditation team, upon conducting a revisit to an institution that received major or probationary stipulations, finds that the stipulations have not been adequately addressed or remediated, or determines that significant and sufficient progress has not been made towards addressing the stipulations. If an accreditation team finds that: (a) sufficient progress has been made, and/or (b) special circumstances described by the institution justify a delay, the COA may, if requested by the institution, permit an additional period of time for the institution to remedy its severe deficiencies. If the COA votes to deny accreditation, all credential programs must close at the end of the semester or quarter in which the decision has taken place. In addition, the institution's institutional approval ceases to be valid at that time and the institution will no longer be a CTC approved program sponsor.

Operational Implications (for either Initial Visits or Revisits)

An institution receiving *Denial of Accreditation* **must**:

- Take immediate steps to close all credential programs at the end of the semester or quarter in which the COA decision occurs.
- Announce that it has had its accreditation for educator preparation denied. All students enrolled in all credential programs must be notified that accreditation has been denied and that all programs will end at the end of the semester, quarter, or within 3 months of when the COA decision occurs.
- File a plan of discontinuation within 90 days of the COA's decision. The plan must give information and assurances regarding the institution's efforts to place currently enrolled students in other programs or to provide adequate assistance to permit students to complete their particular programs.
- Upon the effective date of the closure of credential programs, as determined by the COA, remove from all institutional materials and website any statements that indicate that its programs are accredited by the CTC.

The revisit report of the team, the action of the COA, and the new accreditation decision will be posted on the CTC's website.

Furthermore, an institution receiving a *Denial of Accreditation* would be prohibited from re-applying for institutional approval for a minimum of two years.

**Part II. Discussion of Procedures to be Used by COA Regarding Denial of Accreditation**

Denial of Accreditation on a **revisit** requires a simple majority vote. Denial of Accreditation for an **initial** visit requires a 2/3 majority vote of COA members present at the meeting. In determining a decision of Denial of Accreditation after an **initial** site visit, the following protocol will be followed:

- The COA takes action at a regularly scheduled meeting (via a 2/3 majority vote) to deny accreditation.

- The institution may apply for reconsideration by submission of an institutional rejoinder. The rejoinder must be received within 30 days of the COA Action to Deny Accreditation for an initial visit.
- The COA will reconsider its decision at the next regularly scheduled COA meeting after receiving the institutional rejoinder.
- During reconsideration, the COA may uphold its previous decision or change the decision.
- COA may choose to employ the option of sending a “mini” site visit team (1-2) to focus on those areas where the issue of fact is in dispute. The mini team would be focused solely on the areas as directed by the COA. In such cases, the action for the reconsideration would take place after the findings from the “mini” site visit team.
- After COA Action to reconsider, if Denial of Accreditation is confirmed by the COA, no further COA process is available to the institution and the institution must adhere to the operational implications of accreditation.

### **Part III. Consideration of Appropriate Due Process for an Initial Visit**

Because an accreditation decision of Denial of Accreditation has far reaching and serious implications for an institution and for the Commission, the COA might wish to consider a process that ensures that the decision for an **initial visit** was based upon correct factual information provided to the team. To be considered and discussed:

- 1) Whether to allow the institution to request reconsideration after the COA votes to Deny Accreditation
- 2) If reconsideration is allowed, what process would need to be followed?
- 3) If reconsideration is allowed, what may an institution provide in the way of information that would be helpful to this process (an institutional rejoinder)?
- 4) What are the procedures that need to be put in place (timelines, etc)

The following information is for consideration and discussion only. The language provided is possible draft Handbook language in order to help the COA progress in its discussions about this topic. It may certainly change significantly in future revisions as a result of COA discussion.

#### *Institutional Rejoinder*

The institutional rejoinder serves a very limited purpose, that is, to ensure that the COA’s decision is based upon a true and factual understanding of the implementation of the institution and its programs. A rejoinder may **only** respond to one or both of the following:

- 1) Errors in fact. The institution may rejoin any items in the report that are factually incorrect. Evidence must be provided that the items are not factually correct, and the institution must show that the team relied on this incorrect information upon which to base its standard findings and accreditation recommendation or that the COA based its accreditation decision on this incorrect information
- 2) Procedural Concerns. The rejoinder may also cite any procedural concerns with the visit. If the unit is contesting the judgments of the accreditation team, the rejoinder must indicate the grounds for such a stance and provide

documentation to support it. This information should be summarized, cited, and included in an appendix as appropriate.

The rejoinder must be limited to documentation that might have influenced the site visit team's recommendation that the institution had in its possession at the time of the visit but was not reviewed by the site visit team. The rejoinder must show that the site visit team was factually incorrect in its statements or understanding. The rejoinder must not be an argument mounted in opinion. The Commission staff must receive the rejoinder within 30 business days of the COA meeting where the Denial of Accreditation was discussed.

**Part IV. Possible changes to the General Guidelines for Initial Site Visit Team Recommendations**

Changes to the table General Guidelines for Initial Site Visit Team Recommendations found on page 51:

Common Standards Less than Fully Met		Range of Accreditation Recommendations				Denial of Accreditation
# Met with Concerns	# Not Met	Accreditation	with Stipulations	with Major Stipulations	with Probationary Stipulations	
0	0	•				
1-2	0	●————●				
1-2	1-2		●————●			
1-2	3-4			●————●		
3-4	0		●————●			
3-4	1-2		●————●			
3-4	3-4			●————●		
3-4	5+				●————●	
5+	0-2			●————●		
5+	3+				●————●	

**Next Steps**

This topic will continue to be brought back to the COA until the COA believes that it has thoroughly considered the matter and has adopted new handbook language.