



**Mississippi Commission
on College Accreditation**

Standards and Regulations

*for State Authorization of
Academic Degree-Granting
Postsecondary Institutions*



Standards and Regulations for State Authorization of Academic Degree-Granting Postsecondary Institutions

The Mississippi Administrative Code Title 10: Education Institutions and Agencies Part 201: Standards and Regulations of the Mississippi Commission on College Accreditation

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Jackson, Mississippi 39211
601.432.6372
<http://www.mississippi.edu/mcca>

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CHAPTER 1: MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON COLLEGE ACCREDITATION: PURPOSE, ORGANIZATION, AND POWERS

1.1 Commission Purpose

The Mississippi Commission on College Accreditation is responsible for the administration of the Mississippi Commission on College Accreditation Law, Title 37, Chapter 60, Mississippi Code of 1972, as amended.

The Commission shall have the power and authority, and it shall be its duty, to authorize and maintain an approved list of all public and private postsecondary, academic degree-granting institutions or any other entities domiciled, incorporated, or otherwise located in the State of Mississippi which offer postsecondary academic degrees, programs, or coursework. For purposes of this chapter, “domiciled” shall mean conducting postsecondary academic activity, including field placements, within the State of Mississippi. Postsecondary academic degrees include, but are not limited to, associate, bachelor, masters, and doctorate degrees.

1.2 Power and Authority of the Commission

- A. To adopt standards which are in keeping with the best educational practices in accreditation;
- B. To establish rules and regulations for implementing institution approval processes;
- C. To receive reports from the institutions seeking to be placed on the approved list;
- D. To annually review the above-described public and private postsecondary, academic degree-granting institutions;
- E. To authorize and maintain an approved list of public and private postsecondary, academic degree-granting institutions and other entities which offer one or more postsecondary academic degrees and are domiciled, incorporated, or otherwise located in Mississippi;
- F. To establish fees to be paid by participating institutions to cover the Commission’s direct and indirect administrative costs incurred by the Commission or by the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning on the Commission’s behalf;
- G. To execute site visits when deemed necessary by the Commission;
- H. To appoint evaluation teams;
- I. To prescribe duties necessary to carry out the responsibilities of the Commission;
- J. To request the State Attorney General or district attorneys to act on its behalf in bringing court action; and
- K. To enter into and administer interstate reciprocity agreements that allow Mississippi institutions to offer postsecondary distance education.

Exempt from MCCA

- A. Entities with oversight boards (barber/cosmetology schools)
- B. Proprietary schools and colleges subject to regulation under Section 75-60-1 et

seq. (career/occupational schools registered with the Commission on Proprietary School and College Registration (CPSCR))

1.3 Commission Membership

The Commission shall be composed of the Executive Director of the Mississippi Community College Board, the Commissioner of Higher Education, or their designees, and three (3) additional members, one (1) of whom shall be selected by the foregoing two (2) members and who shall represent the private colleges within the state, and two (2) of whom shall be selected by the Mississippi Association of Colleges. The latter three (3) members shall each serve for a term of three (3) years.

1.4 Commission Staff

The Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning appoints such staff as is required for the performance of the Commission's duties and provides necessary facilities for the Commission's operation. The administrator for the Commission is the IHL Director of Regulatory Affairs (henceforth "the Director.") The Director is located at:

Mississippi Institutions for Higher Learning
Mississippi Commission on College Accreditation
3825 Ridgewood Road, Ninth Floor
Jackson, MS 39211
Telephone: (601) 432-6501

Source: *Miss. Code Ann. § 37-101-241 and § 37-101-243 (1972, as amended).*

CHAPTER 2: COMMISSION MEETINGS, MINUTES, AND PUBLIC DOCUMENTS

2.1 Meetings of the Commission

The Commission will meet annually prior to July 1. Additional meetings may be called, as necessary, by the chair of the Commission.

2.2 Locations of Meetings

Regularly scheduled meetings and called meetings of the Commission shall take place in the Paul B. Johnson Building, 3825 Ridgewood Road, Jackson, MS 39211. Commission members may be provided with access to participate via teleconference.

2.3 Commission Meeting Agenda

- A. The Commission Chair and Director shall confer and prepare the agenda for Commission meetings.
- B. Any Commission member may place items on the agenda.
- C. All requests for items to be placed on the agenda must be received by the Director at least twelve (12) days prior to the Commission meeting.
- D. The Commission will only consider matters not on the agenda when a majority of the Commission is present and voting concurs that an additional item be included.

2.4 Member Voting

- A. A quorum of at least three (3) Commission members must be present for the Commission to conduct its business.
- B. A Commission member present may vote for or against any motion, or the member may abstain. Voting by proxy is not permitted.
- C. Minutes of Commission meetings shall reflect the vote of each member on each matter. A unanimous vote may be reflected.

2.5 Minutes of Commission Meetings

- A. Minutes of all Commission meetings shall be the responsibility of the Director.
- B. The Director may secure such assistance as necessary for the preparation of the minutes.
- C. If the Director does not participate in a Commission meeting for whatever reason, the Commission Secretary shall record and prepare the minutes.

- D. Proposed Commission meeting minutes shall become the official minutes upon approval by the Commission.
- E. Approved minutes will be on file in the office of the Director.

2.6 Commission Officers and Their Selection

- A. There shall be the following officers for the Commission: Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary [Mississippi Code 1972, as amended §37-101-241(2).]
- B. Officers shall be elected annually at the May meeting, for a term of one year, with terms to commence on June 1st each year.

2.7 Commission Administrative Procedures

- A. When the Commission adopts, amends, or repeals any of its policies or procedures, the Director shall file with the Secretary of State notice of such intended action and provide notice as required.
- B. Notice of such action shall be filed at least thirty (3) days prior to the adoption of the rule, amendment, or repeal except when imminent peril to the public health, safety, or welfare requires adoption of a rule upon fewer than thirty (3) day notice. Thereafter, when the Commission adopts a rule, amendment, or repeal, the Director shall file with the Secretary of State a certified copy of the rule, amendment, or repeal. The action shall be final thirty (3) days after the filing of the certified copy with the Secretary of State.

2.8 Distribution of Standards and Regulations

Hard copies of the standards and regulations for the Commission are available to the public for a nominal fee. Copies are available from:

Mississippi Institutions for Higher Learning
Mississippi Commission on College Accreditation
3825 Ridgewood Road, Ninth Floor
Jackson, MS 39211

Electronic copies of the standards and regulations are available for download free of charge from the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning website at <http://www.mississippi.edu/mcca/>.

2.9 Public Access to Commission Records

- A. Except where prohibited by law, any person shall have the right to inspect or obtain reproductions of any public record of the Commission.
- B. The right to inspect public records shall be invoked by a written request. Written notification of the time, place, and method of access shall be provided in accordance with section 25-61-5 of the Mississippi code.

- C. The right to obtain a reproduction of a public record shall be acquired by written request. The request must specify which record(s) are to be reproduced and whether the reproductions are to be mailed or received in person. Copies of public records will be available for a nominal fee.
- D. Denial of a request for access to, or copies of, public records of the Commission will be in writing and will contain a statement of the specific reason for the denial.
- E. The provisions of section 2.9 do not apply to government officials, state legislators, or state agencies.

2.10 Listing of Approved Institutions

The Commission shall maintain an approved list of all public and private postsecondary, academic degree-granting institutions or any other entities domiciled, incorporated, or otherwise located in Mississippi which offer postsecondary academic degrees, programs, or coursework. Domiciled shall mean conducting postsecondary academic activity, including field placements, within the state of Mississippi.

The list will be available for download from <http://www.mississippi.edu/mcca/>. Hard copies of this list will be available to the public for a nominal fee. Copies are available from:

Mississippi Institutions for Higher Learning
Mississippi Commission on College Accreditation
3825 Ridgewood Road, Ninth Floor
Jackson, MS 39211

The provisions of section 2.10 do not apply to government officials, state legislators, or state agencies.

2.11 Entities Not Authorized to Operate in Mississippi

The Commission will maintain a list of entities that are not approved to offer postsecondary academic degrees, programs, or coursework in Mississippi. This list is not exhaustive as it contains only those who have applied and been denied approval to offer postsecondary academic degrees, programs, or coursework in Mississippi. It does not include those who have not applied for authorization.

The list will be available for download from <http://www.mississippi.edu/mcca/>. Hard copies of this list will be available to the public for a nominal fee. Copies are available from:

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The provisions of section 2.10 do not apply to government officials, state legislators, or state agencies.

CHAPTER 3: GENERAL POLICIES, PROVISIONS, AND PROCEDURES

3.1 Basic Eligibility

- A. The Commission authorizes and maintains an approved list of all public and private postsecondary, academic degree-granting institutions or other entities domiciled, incorporated, or otherwise located in the State of Mississippi which offer postsecondary academic degrees, programs, or coursework. Postsecondary academic degrees include but are not limited to associate, bachelor, masters, and doctorate degrees.
- B. Domiciled shall mean conducting postsecondary academic activity, including field placements, within the state of Mississippi.
- C. Field placements shall mean site-based learning activities (e.g., clinical, internships, student teaching, practicum, field-based experiences, etc.) in settings (e.g., hospitals, schools, businesses, etc.) in which candidates are working with patients, children, teachers, principals, etc. in Mississippi and are observed/assisted/evaluated by supervisors, preceptors, coaches, teachers, principals, or other individuals to determine that course and/or program requirements have been addressed.
- D. Examples of otherwise located include but are not limited to:
 - a. Maintaining a telephone number with a Mississippi area code;
 - b. Maintaining a postal address (either physical or PO Box) with a Mississippi zip code;
 - c. Maintaining an Internet URL which originates in Mississippi utilizes an ISP which is based in Mississippi; and
 - d. Advertising that the institution is or will be domiciled, incorporated, or otherwise located in the State.
- E. For consideration by the Commission, an institution must demonstrate the potential to comply with all Commission standards, rules and regulations, policies, and procedures including institutional accreditation by a Commission-recognized accrediting agency.
- F. Institutional accreditation must be maintained and where available, professional/programmatic accreditation must be sought and maintained.
- G. Institutions must submit to the Commission documentation of good standing and valid institutional accreditation and, where applicable, programmatic accreditation.

- H. Commission-recognized Accrediting Agencies
The Commission recognizes the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) accrediting Commission, the Association of Biblical Higher Education (ABHE) Accrediting Commission, the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) Commission on Accrediting, Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE), New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE), Higher Learning Commission (HLC), Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, WASC Senior College and University Commission, Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC).
- I. The Commission may consider applications from out-of-state academic degree-granting postsecondary institutions provided the institution:
- is authorized by its home state,
 - holds institutional accreditation by a Commission-recognized accrediting agency, and
 - submits a statement of state need that also addresses any duplication in the surrounding areas of the proposed location.

3.2 Exemptions

- A. Exemptions include:
- Proprietary schools and colleges subject to regulation under Miss. Code Ann. § 75-60-1 et. Seq. (Commission on Proprietary School and College Registration (CPSCR) –career/occupational schools) ;
 - Entities under jurisdiction of the State Board of Cosmetology, State Board of Barber Examiners, State Board of Massage Therapy;
 - Tuition free courses or instruction conducted by employers exclusively for their own employees; and
 - Entities that offer instruction in subjects that are determined to be primarily for personal improvement or cultural purposes and that do not represent to the public that the course of study or instruction will or may produce income for those who take that course of study or instruction; or that the course of study or instruction is transferable to an academic degree granting, accredited institution of higher education.
- B. Out-of-state academic degree-granting postsecondary educational institutions that offer courses and programs exclusively online from their locations outside the borders of the State are not required to apply for Commission approval; however, these institutions must submit, at minimum, the following information to the Commission:
- A self-assessment letter signed by the chief executive officer or the chief academic officer stipulating the institution does not engage in any activities in the State that trigger presence;
 - Documentation demonstrating the institution is operating lawfully in its home state;
 - Documentation of institution’s accreditation status;

- d. Process for resolution of student complaints;
- e. Cancellation/withdrawal and tuition refund policies; and
- f. Information about Mississippi residents enrolled in its online program(s).

The institution is responsible for contacting the applicable Mississippi state licensing boards and/or approval agencies directly regarding those boards/agencies' particular requirements, if any.

3.3 Application

- A. Prior to offering instruction, courses, field placements, or degree programs at or above the associate level in the State, the institution or entity shall submit an application to the Commission that includes but is not limited to:
 - a. Institution charter, articles of incorporation or certificate of authorization, as applicable;
 - b. Current institution catalog;
 - c. Student enrollment application;
 - d. Student contract or agreement;
 - e. Documentation of institutional accreditation, and licensure and approval by appropriate accrediting agencies, state licensing and/or approval boards, and federal agencies;
 - f. Disclosure of any prior loss or denial of:
 - i. Accreditation, with the dates and reason for the loss or denial
 - ii. Licensure or approval by an agency in Mississippi or another state with the dates and reason for the loss or denial;
 - g. Disclosure of any former names of the institution with the dates each former name was used;
 - h. Organizational chart that shows the relationship of the governing board to the institution;
 - i. The names and experience of board members with terms of office and their contractual, employment, personal, or familial financial interests in the institution;
 - j. Position description of the chief executive officer and the name, title, mail and email address, and current vita;
 - k. Position descriptions and current resumes of chief administrative and academic officers, and current vita;
 - l. Roster of faculty including teaching assignments and qualifications and hiring and evaluation policies, and current resume;
 - m. Documentation of eligibility to participate in federal financial assistance programs;
 - n. Tuition and fee schedules;
 - o. Documentation of financial resources and stability;
 - p. Documentation of fair and equitable cancellation and withdrawal policies, and tuition refund policies and processes;
 - q. Documentation evidencing an established, easily accessible, clearly articulated, and comprehensive process for the resolution of student complaints/grievances;

- r. Requirements for each degree program, including representative course syllabi, specifying information such as goals, requirements, and procedures; course content; methods of evaluation; information concerning learning resources;
- s. Documentation of catastrophic events policy and disaster recovery plans and procedures. They should cover emergencies and conditions such as natural disasters, cyber threats, pandemic, or other health-related closures; and explanation of how the institution will assure that students who are affected by such closures will receive the services for which they have paid or reasonable financial compensation for those not received, as well as adequate processes for protection, management, and maintenance of student records in the event of a closure; and
- t. Other information, documentation, and reports as requested by the Commission.

Registration with the Mississippi Secretary of State (SOS) is required; however, such registration alone does not constitute state authorization or approval to grant degrees or offer courses and programs or instruction leading to academic degrees.

- B. The Commission will not consider a college or university or other entity that, in the two (2) years preceding submission of an application, has had its accreditation suspended or withdrawn or has been prohibited from operating in another state or that has substantially the same owners, governing board, or principal officers as a college, university, or other entity that, in the two (2) years preceding submission of an application, has had its accreditation suspended or withdrawn or has been prohibited from operating in another state.
- C. Institutions offering distance education must have a process in place that establishes that the student who registers in a distance education program or course is the same student participating in completing the program or course and receiving academic credit. The institution meets this requirement if (a) student uses a secure login and passcode, or (b) the institution schedules proctored exams, or (c) the institution uses new technologies and practices that verify the student's identity during testing. Unless otherwise provided, all institution policies and guidelines for on and off campus instruction apply to distance education.
- D. An institution seeking approval to offer courses, field placements, or programs potentially leading to professional licensure or certification or related to pre- or post-licensure educational activities must provide documentation that the institution has approval from the appropriate state licensing and/or approval board or agency responsible for professional requirements.
- E. Authorization will be reviewed annually and a list of institutions and their relationship to the Commission shall be published annually after July 1.
- F. Application Process
 - a. Submit a written request for an application along with a nonrefundable fee of \$100 to the Commission. The Commission will mail an application packet.

Mississippi Commission on College Accreditation
3825 Ridgewood Road
Jackson, MS 39211

- b. Submit a complete application to the Commission office by February 1 to the above address along with a nonrefundable \$3,000 application fee and all required documentation and
- c. Apply to the Mississippi Secretary of State (SOS) for articles of incorporation or certificate of authority and submit documentation to the Commission.
- d. The Commission may assemble an evaluation team to review the application and/or make a site visit to applicant institution at the expense of the applicant institution.
- e. The Commission will consider complete applications at its annual meeting in May.
- f. The Commission may deny, approve, approve on conditional status, or approve on provisional status.
- g. Institutions are reviewed annually, and there is an annual renewal fee of \$1,000 (effective July 1, 2023).

3.4 Approvals

- A. Authorized (Approved)
Institution is in compliance with Commission standards, rules and regulations, procedures, provisions, and policies including accreditation in good standing by a Commission-recognized accrediting body. If approved, the institution must among other requirements:
 - a. Submit an annual report by February 1, including reports of enrollment and graduation, documentation of financial resources and stability, and other information and documentation as may be requested by the Commission. The Commission may require more frequent reports and information.
 - b. Maintain accreditation by a Commission-recognized accrediting body and, where available, professional/programmatic accreditation.
 - c. Submit copies of communication from state, federal, and accrediting agencies concerning official action, sanctions, notices.
 - d. Commission staff and the Commission and/or a Commission-appointed evaluation team may conduct announced or unannounced visits to the institution if deemed necessary by the Commission and shall visit the institution along with any Commission-recognized accrediting agency during each of its site visits to the institution. All reasonable and necessary expenses for official travel incurred by the Commission and evaluation team on announced visits will be paid or reimbursed by the institution according to the laws of the State of Mississippi, including lowest unrestricted public carrier fair or personal vehicle mileage at the State rate, actual meal costs not to exceed maximum daily expenditure limits, and lodging. The size of the team shall be determined in relation to the nature, size, and complexity of the institution being evaluated. Each team will be accompanied by the Commission chair and/or his/her designee who will serve as the team chair

unless otherwise designated by the Commission chair. Unannounced visits will not be the expense of the institution.

B. Provisional Approval

Provisional approval may be granted to an in-state institution or an institution that is located outside Mississippi which is accredited by a Commission-recognized accrediting agency when the institution is substantially in compliance with Commission regulations and is continuously making satisfactory progress to full compliance including, if not accredited, achieving accredited status by a Commission-recognized accrediting body. Provisional status requires that the institution:

- a. Demonstrate and document that it is currently accredited or is continuously seeking and making satisfactory progress to full compliance with Commission standards, rules and regulations, provisions, policies, and procedures including accreditation by a Commission-recognized accrediting body.
- b. If accredited, maintain accreditation by a Commission-recognized accrediting body and, where available, professional/programmatic accreditation.
- c. Submit an annual report by February 1, including reports of enrollment and graduation, documentation of financial resources and stability, and other information and documentation as may be required by the Commission. The Commission may require more frequent reports and information.
- d. Submit copies of communication from state, federal, and accrediting agencies concerning official action, sanctions, notices.
- e. Commission staff and the Commission and/or a Commission-appointed evaluation team may conduct announced or unannounced visits to the institution if deemed necessary by the Commission and shall visit the institution along with any Commission-recognized accrediting agency during each of its site visits to the institution. All reasonable and necessary expenses for official travel incurred by the Commission and evaluation team on announced visits will be paid or reimbursed by the institution according to the laws of the State of Mississippi, including lowest unrestricted public carrier fair or personal vehicle mileage at the State rate, actual meal costs not to exceed maximum daily expenditure limits, and lodging. The size of the team shall be determined in relation to the nature, size, and complexity of the institution being evaluated. Each team will be accompanied by the Commission chair and/or his/her designee who will serve as the team chair unless otherwise designated by the Commission chair. Unannounced visits will not be the expense of the institution.
- f. Provisional approval may be granted annually up to three years provided that the Commission considers that the institution is making satisfactory progress to full compliance with Commission standards, rules and regulations, policies, procedures, and provisions including continuing accreditation.
- g. Failure to satisfy the provisions within the specified timeframe will result in:
 - i. Revocation of provisional approval, or
 - ii. Upon the institution's written request and supporting justification and documentation, provisional approval may be extended each year up to three years at the Commission's discretion if it determines that the institution is making a good faith effort to fully comply with Commission regulations.

C. Conditional Approval

Conditional approval may be granted to a yet unaccredited institution that has been in operation less than five (5) years. The Commission will evaluate the extent of the institution's compliance with 4.6 (Financial Resources and Stability), 4.12, and 4.13 (Faculty Qualifications and Faculty Size), and 4.14 (Curriculum) and the institution's potential for achieving full compliance including accreditation by a Commission-recognized accrediting agency. Conditional approval may be granted for a period of one year, not to exceed three (3) years. If conditional approval is granted, the institution must:

- a. Submit its plan and timeline for achieving accreditation by a Commission-recognized accrediting agency.
- b. Submit reports and documentation as may be requested by the Commission including but not limited to enrollment numbers or projections, roster of qualified faculty including position descriptions and resumes, financial reports.
- c. Submit a progress report no later than February 1. The Commission may require more frequent reports and documentation of financial resources and stability.
- d. Commission staff and the Commission and/or a Commission appointed evaluation team may conduct announced or unannounced visits to the institution if deemed necessary by the Commission and shall visit the institution along with any Commission-recognized accrediting agency during each of its site visits to the institution. All reasonable and necessary expenses for official travel incurred by the Commission and evaluation team on announced visits will be paid or reimbursed by the institution according to the laws of the State of Mississippi, including lowest unrestricted public carrier fair or personal vehicle mileage at the State rate, actual meal costs not to exceed maximum daily expenditure limits, and lodging. The size of the team shall be determined in relation to the nature, size, and complexity of the institution being evaluated. Each team will be accompanied by the Commission chair and/or his/her designee who will serve as the team chair unless otherwise designated by the Commission chair. Unannounced visits will not be the expense of the institution.
- e. Conditional approval may be granted annually up to three years provided that the Commission considers that the institution is making satisfactory progress to full compliance with Commission standards, rules and regulations, policies, procedures, and provisions including accreditation by a Commission-recognized accrediting agency.
- f. Failure to satisfy requirements within the specified timeframe will result in:
 - i. Revocation of conditional approval, or
 - ii. Upon the institution's written request and supporting justification and documentation, conditional approval may be extended for each year up to three years at the Commission's discretion if it determines that the institution is making a good faith effort to fully comply with Commission regulations.

3.5 Changes Requiring Notice or Approval

- A. Institutions shall submit to the Commission a notification or a request for approval along with documentation and a detailed description regarding how the change(s) will affect the institution's compliance with Commission standards and regulations, provisions, procedures, and policies.
- a. Closing an institution, a program, a method of delivery, an instructional site, a non-instructional site;
 - b. Changing legal status, form of control, or ownership of an institution;
 - c. Merging/consolidating two or more institutions or entities;
 - d. Acquiring another institution or instruction site;
 - e. Relocating an institution or instructional site of an institution;
 - f. Re-opening a previously closed location;
 - g. Adding a location;
 - h. Entering into a cooperative academic arrangement or other arrangement;
 - i. Initiating programs by distance education;
 - j. Changing or adding method of delivery;
 - k. Offering programs at a higher or lower degree level than authorized;
 - l. Adding a program;
 - m. Changing a program;
 - n. Changing the way the institution measures student progress (clock or credit hours; semesters, trimesters, or quarters; time based or non-time based) ;
 - o. Adding competency-based education programs;
 - p. Change of recognized accreditors;
 - q. Change in institutional accreditation status;
 - r. Change in federal financial assistance program participation status;
 - s. Change in designated central institutional contact, administrators.
- B. An institution must immediately notify the Commission if it is subject to any investigative action, complaint, show-cause or disciplinary action with an accrediting, state, or federal agency including loss of accreditation or loss of eligibility to participate in the federal financial assistance program. Reports and documents commonly included as part of the accreditation or eligibility process must be made available if requested by the Commission.
- C. Commission authorization is not transferable. In the event of a change in ownership of an institution, the new owner must apply for state authorization.

3.6 Institution Closure

- A. Planned Closure (teach-out plans and agreements)
Approval will be withdrawn after all actions involved in the closure have been completed. When an institution plans a closing, institution officials must communicate their plan to the Commission and all parties concerned including current and former students, institution faculty and staff, accrediting bodies, Closed School Unit at the U.S. Department of Education (where federal financial aid is involved), and all affected lending agencies. It is advisable that the

institution provide each current and former student with a copy of their final transcript and review with them their financial records and tuition refund information.

- a. When an authorized postsecondary educational institution proposes to discontinue its operation, the institution shall immediately notify the Commission. The notification must include, but may not be limited to:
 - i. Reason for the closure and supporting evidence;
 - ii. Anticipated official date to terminate teaching activity (final class date);
 - iii. Timeline showing the steps to be taken for an orderly closure of the institution;
 - iv. Ending date of present term;
 - v. A listing by name of all students in all programs with contact information, programs of enrollment, estimated completion dates;
 - vi. Status of all current refunds due or the amount of unearned tuition paid by each student and for which the institution is obligated;
 - vii. Documentation of notice sent to students who have paid any tuition or fees toward future enrollment in a program of study or individual course informing them of the closure and refund information;
 - viii. Documentation of verified agreement with one or more local institutions able to provide sound education to all students in all programs;
 - ix. Proof of notice to students of the closing and instructions for obtaining their records and transcripts;
 - x. Documentation of agreement for disposition and servicing of all student records as required in 4.19 and 3.8 with contact name, complete address, email, and phone number, and instructions as to how students may obtain their records;
 - xi. Updated demographical data;
 - xii. Demonstration that current education obligations by the institution will be met on behalf of the presently enrolled students;
 - xiii. Copy of catalog; and
 - xiv. Certified copy of the petition for bankruptcy if such a petition is filed.
- b. An institution that will cease operations shall maintain sufficient and qualified faculty, staff, and equipment to teach all courses to all currently enrolled students, regardless of the size of the class, until such time as the institution closes.

B. Unplanned Closure

In the event of an unplanned closure (without proper notification and process), the Commission will immediately revoke approval of the institution upon learning of the unplanned closure. Such a revocation status shall be maintained as part of the Commission closure file on the institution and any individuals directly involved, including, but not limited to, the owners, incorporators, chief executive officer, director, and board chair.

3.7 Academic Records Maintenance and Protection

- A. Approved institutions must maintain academic records securely and permanently as required in Rule 4.17 and must protect the personally identifiable information of enrolled or former students. The institution's catastrophic events and disaster

recovery procedures and practices shall include adequate processes for management, maintenance, and protection of student records in the event of closure.

- B. At the end of each institution's academic year, an institution shall consolidate copies of all academic records for all former students who have graduated, withdrawn, or otherwise ceased to attend during the previous academic year. These academic records, for each academic year, shall be stored separately in an identifiable and printable electronic record for each student. The files or records are subject to inspection and shall be made available to the Commission for inspection upon request.
- C. In the event an approved institution operating in the State proposes to discontinue its operation, the chief executive officer, by whatever title designated, or other responsible officer of the institution shall provide the Commission its plan to secure, store, and maintain all student records and submit a copy of the storage/maintenance agreement to the Commission including contact information so that students may request their academic record, which agreement shall include a clause that provides that the Commission be updated if/as information regarding the student records and location changes. Upon request and verification of identity, the agreed upon repository will provide to a student either a copy of the student's academic record as received from the closed institution, or the information contained in the academic record in a standard transcript format.
- D. If the institution is part of an educational system that is continuing to operate in other U.S. locations, the academic records shall be maintained at the main campus or corporate location. Contact information so that a student may request an academic transcript or academic records must be provided to the Commission and must be updated if/as information changes.
- E. If the institution enters into an agreement with another institution to teach out or continue students' degree programs, it is understood that the institution responsible for accepting the transferring students will maintain academic records for the transferring students.
- F. Records shall, without limitation:
 - a. Include academic information as is customarily required by colleges and universities when considering students for transfer or advanced study; and
 - b. Be in a format to ensure a separate identifiable and printable file is provided for each student.

3.8 Complaints

- A. The Commission will investigate as it deems necessary, on its own initiative or in response to a complaint lodged with it, any person, group, or entity subject to, or reasonably believed by the Commission to be subject to, the jurisdiction of the Commission and take action as appropriate.

- B. A person with a complaint concerning an approved institution shall make all reasonable effort to follow the complaint/grievance procedures at the institution and exhaust all avenues available at the institution.

3.9 Penalties, Limitations, Administrative Injunction

- A. The Commission shall take whatever action against colleges and universities or other entities it deems appropriate for violation of standards, regulations, policies, provisions, and procedures. The Commission may deny or revoke approval, place on probation, suspend enrollment, seek an injunction or other action provided by law for any one or combination of the following causes:
 - a. violation of Commission standards, rules and regulations, policies, provisions, and procedures;
 - b. the furnishing of false, misleading, or incomplete information requested by the Commission;
 - c. violation of any commitment made in an application for approval;
 - d. presentation to current or prospective students of misleading, false or fraudulent information relating to a course of instruction, employment opportunity, or opportunities for enrollment in accredited institutions of higher education after entering or completing courses offered by the institution;
 - e. failure to provide or maintain premises or equipment for offering courses or instruction in a safe and sanitary condition;
 - f. failure to maintain financial resources and stability adequate for the satisfactory conduct of courses of study or to retain a sufficient number of qualified faculty;
 - g. the signing of an application or the holding of authorization by a person who has pleaded guilty or has been found guilty of a felony or any other indictable offense;
 - h. the signing of an application or the holding of authorization by a person who is addicted to the use of any narcotic drug or who is found to be mentally incompetent;
 - i. conviction or a plea of nolo contendere on the part of any owner, CEO, operator, or director of an approved institution of any felony under Mississippi law or the law of another jurisdiction;
 - j. continued employment of faculty who have been convicted of, or entered a plea of nolo contendere to, any felony under Mississippi law or the law of another jurisdiction;
 - k. applicant was an owner, senior administrator, or governing board member of an institution that closed without providing a teach-out or refunds to students matriculating at the time of closure or had unpaid fees upon a closure of an institution; and
 - l. incompetence of any owner or administrator to operate a college or university.

- B. The Commission may consider probation or other action for an institution subject to investigative, show-cause or disciplinary action by the Commission, an accrediting agency, or other state or federal agency. The institution may remain in probation or other status and be subject to additional monitoring and oversight until such time as the Commission determines that the adverse action has been

corrected or lifted and the deficiency corrected, but no longer than eighteen months.

- C. The Commission shall serve notice by registered mail to the institution's last known address, together with a statement of the reason(s) for the action.

3.10 Appeal of Commission Decision to Deny or Revoke Approval

- A. An institution must notify the Commission in writing within two (2) weeks after receiving notice of denial or revocation of authorization that it wishes a hearing to appeal the decision. The institution must also notify the Commission at that time if it plans to have legal counsel present at the hearing.
- B. The Commission must schedule a hearing within sixty (60) days after receipt of notification from an institution that it seeks an appeal.
- C. The Commission will notify the institution of its decision following the hearing.

3.11 Fees

Information packet	\$100
Application.....	\$3,000
Annual renewal application	\$1,000
Site visits	Travel + exp
Change of location, change in scope; or additional location	\$250
New course, program, or degree	\$250
Changing legal status, form of control, ownership; merger.....	\$250
Probation requiring oversight, up to	\$1,000
Failure to submit materials or fees timely/delinquent fee.....	\$25 - \$2,500
Copying/Mailing (per page).....	\$0.15

3.12 Access to Records

- A. Pursuant to the Mississippi Public Records Acts of 1983 (the "Act"), effective from and after July 1, 1983, the Commission hereby adopts the following regulations and procedures with respect to such records as may be in its possession. Such rules and procedures are applicable to and shall govern the right to inspect, copy, or reproduce or obtain a reproduction of any public records in the possession of the Commission.
- B. Any person wishing to inspect or copy public records must make the request in writing to the agency and must clearly identify the specific information sought. All requests should be dated and include the name of the requestor, address of the requestor, and current contact information for the requestor. Any response by the Commission for a request for access to records will be forwarded to the requesting party within seven (7) working days of the receipt of such request. If the Commission is unable to produce the requested record within seven working days after the request is made, a written explanation will be provided to requestor(s) stating that the record will be produced and specifying with particularity why the record(s) cannot be produced within the seven-day period.

Absent a mutual agreement between the parties, in no event shall the date for the Commission's production of requested records be any later than fourteen (14) working days from receipt by the Commission of the original request.

- C. Denial by the Commission of a request for access to or copies of public records shall be in writing and shall contain a statement of the specific exemption relied upon by the Commission for the denial. A file of all denials of requests for public records will be maintained by the Commission for a period of no less than three (3) years from the date such denials are made.
- D. Recipient(s) will be assisted by a staff member at a charge not to exceed actual costs. Actual costs for search, review and/or possible redaction of information by a staff member will be based upon the hourly rate of compensation for the lowest paid agency employee qualified to perform the task and multiplied by the actual time utilized to complete the task. Recipient(s) will be charged fifteen cents per page for standard black and white photocopies. For all nonstandard photocopies, actual costs of reproduction will be assessed to recipient(s). Records will be available for inspection and copying by appointment during regular working hours, 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, holidays excluded.
- E. Recipient(s) will deposit cash, check or money order in escrow with the staff prior to receiving material. This estimated amount must be sufficient to cover the estimated cost of the staff member's assistance, copying fees, mailing fees, and/or any associated reproduction fees. Recipient(s) desiring information by mail will be charged actual mailing costs in addition to those costs set forth in subsection (c).
- F. Adequate space to inspect requested documents will be provided at no cost, if available. Recipient(s) will be provided with requested documents by a staff member but no more than one recipient at a time.

3.13 Oral Proceeding

When a political subdivision, an agency, or ten (10) persons request(s) an oral proceeding in regard to a proposed rule adoption within twenty (20) days after the filing of the notice of the proposed rule, the requestor must submit a printed, typewritten, or legibly handwritten request. Each request must be submitted on standard business size paper (8 ½ inches x 11 inches) and include the full name, telephone numbers, physical and mailing address(es) of the requestor(s). All requests shall be signed by the person submitting the request, unless represented by an attorney, in which case the attorney may sign the request.

- A. Notice of Oral Proceeding
 - a. The date, time, and place of oral proceedings shall be filed with the Secretary of State's Office and mailed to each requestor.
 - b. The oral proceedings will be scheduled no earlier than twenty (20) days from the filing of this information with the Secretary of State.

- B. Presiding Officer
The chair, or his/her designee, who is familiar with the substance of the proposed rule, will preside at the oral proceeding on a proposed rule.
- C. Public Presentations and Participation
Public participation will be permitted at oral proceedings in accordance with the following sections.
- a. At an oral proceeding on a proposed rule, persons may make oral statements and make documentary and physical submissions which may include data, views, comments, or arguments concerning the proposed rule.
 - b. Persons wishing to make oral presentations at such a proceeding shall notify the Commission at least three business days prior to the proceeding and indicate the general subject of their presentations. The presiding officer in his or her discretion may allow individuals to participate that have not previously contacted the Commission.
 - c. At the proceeding, those who participate shall indicate their names and addresses, identify any persons or organizations they may represent, and provide any other information relating to their participation deemed appropriate by the presiding officer.
 - d. The presiding officer may place time limitations on individual oral presentations when necessary to assure the orderly and expeditious conduct of the oral proceeding. To encourage joint oral presentations and to avoid repetition, additional time may be provided for persons whose presentations represent the views of other individuals as well as their own views.
 - e. Persons making oral presentations are encouraged to avoid restating matters that have already been submitted in writing. Written materials may, however, be submitted at the oral proceeding.
 - f. There shall be no interruption of a participant who has been given the floor by the presiding officer, except that the presiding officer may in his or her discretion interrupt or end the participant's time where the orderly conduct of the proceeding so requires.
- D. Conduct of Oral Proceeding
- a. Presiding Officer
The presiding officer shall have authority to conduct the proceeding in his or her discretion for the orderly conduct of the proceeding. The presiding officer shall:
 - i. call the proceeding to order;
 - ii. give a brief synopsis of the proposed rule, a statement of the statutory authority for the proposed rule, and the reasons provided by the Commission for the proposed rule;
 - iii. call on those individuals who have contacted the Commission about speaking on or against the proposed rule;
 - iv. allow for rebuttal statements following all participants' comments; and
 - v. adjourn the proceeding.
 - b. Questions
The presiding officer, where time permits and to facilitate the exchange of information, the presiding officer may open the floor to questions or general

discussion. The presiding officer may question participants and permit the questioning of participants by other participants about any matter relating to that rulemaking proceeding, including any prior written submissions made by those participants in that proceeding. No participant shall be required to answer any question.

- c. Physical and Documentary
Submissions presented by participants in an oral proceeding shall be submitted to the presiding officer. Such submissions become the property of the Commission, part of the rulemaking record, and are subject to the Commission's public records request procedure.
- d. The presiding officer may record oral proceedings by stenographic or electronic means.

3.14 Requests for Declaratory Opinions

This subsection sets forth the Commission's rules governing the form, content, and filing of requests for declaratory opinions, the procedural rights of persons in relation to the written requests, and the Commission's procedures regarding the disposition of requests as required by Mississippi Code § 25-43-2.103.

- A. Persons Who May Request Declaratory Opinions
Any person with a substantial interest in the subject matter may make a request to the Commission for a declaratory opinion by following the specified procedures.
- B. Subjects Which May be Addressed in Declaratory Opinions
The Commission will issue declaratory opinions regarding the applicability to specified facts of:
 - a. A statute administered or enforceable by the Commission,
 - b. A rule promulgated by the Commission, or an order issued by the Commission.
- C. Circumstances in Which Declaratory Opinions Will Not Be Issued
The Commission may, for good cause, refuse to issue a declaratory opinion. Without limiting the generality of the foregoing, the circumstances in which declaratory opinions will not be issued include, but are not necessarily limited to:
 - a. The matter is outside the primary jurisdiction of the Commission;
 - b. Lack of clarity concerning the question presented;
 - c. There is pending or anticipated litigation or administrative action, or other adjudication which may either answer the question presented by the request or otherwise make an answer unnecessary;
 - d. The statute, rule, or order on which a declaratory opinion is sought is clear and not in need of interpretation to answer the question presented by the request;
 - e. The facts presented in the request are not sufficient to answer the question presented;
 - f. The request fails to contain information required by these rules or the requestor failed to follow the procedure set forth in these rules;
 - g. The request seeks to resolve issues which have become moot or are abstract or hypothetical such that the requestor is not substantially affected by the rule, statute, or order on which a declaratory opinion is sought;

- h. No controversy exists concerning the issue as the requestor is not faced with existing facts or those certain to arise which raises a question concerning the application of the statute, rule, or order;
- i. The question presented by the request concerns the legal validity of a statute, rule, or order;
- j. The request is not based upon facts calculated to aid in the planning of future conduct, but is, instead, based on past conduct in an effort to establish the effect of that conduct;
- k. No clear answer is determinable;
- l. The question presented by the request involves the application of a criminal statute or sets forth facts which may constitute a crime;
- m. The answer to the question presented would require the disclosure of information which is privileged or otherwise protected by law from disclosure;
- n. The question is currently the subject of an Attorney General's opinion request; or
- o. The question has been answered by an Attorney General's opinion.
 - i. A declaratory opinion will not be issued where a similar request is pending before the Commission, or any other agency, or a proceeding is pending on the same subject matter before any agency, administrative or judicial tribunal, or where such an opinion would constitute the unauthorized practice of law.
 - ii. A declaratory opinion will not be issued if it may adversely affect the interests of the State, the Commission, or any of their officers or employees in any litigation which is pending or may reasonably be expected to arise.
 - iii. Where a request for a declaratory opinion involves a question of law, the Commission may refer the matter to the State Attorney General.
 - iv. A declaratory opinion will not be issued where the question involves eligibility for a license, permit, certificate or other approval by the Commission or some other agency and there is a statutory or regulatory application process by which eligibility for said license, permit, or certificate or other approval may be determined.

D. Form of the Request for a Declaratory Opinion

a. Written Requests Required

Each request must be printed, typewritten, or legibly handwritten request. Each request must be submitted on standard business letter-size paper (8-1/2" x 11"). The request may be in the form of a letter addressed to the Commission or in the form of a pleading as might be addressed to a court.

b. Where to Send Requests

All requests must be mailed or delivered to the Commission at 3825 Ridgewood Road, Jackson, Mississippi 39211. The request and its envelope shall clearly state that it is a request for a declaratory opinion. Oral and telephone requests are unacceptable.

c. Name, Address, and Signature of Requester

Each request must include the full name, telephone numbers, and mailing address of the requestor(s). All requests shall be signed by the person filing the request, unless represented by an attorney, in which case the attorney may sign the request. Any party who signs the request shall attest that the request complies with the requirements set forth in these rules, including but not limited to a full, complete, and accurate statement of relevant facts and that there are no related proceedings pending before any agency, administrative, or judicial tribunal.

d. Single Transaction

A request must be limited to a single transaction or occurrence.

e. Question Presented

Each request must contain the following:

- i. A clear identification of the statute, rule, or order at issue;
- ii. The question for the declaratory opinion;
- iii. A clear and concise statement of all facts relevant to the question presented;
- iv. The identity of all other known persons involved in or impacted by the facts giving rise to the request including their relationship to the facts, and their name, mailing address, and telephone number; and
- v. A statement sufficient to show that the requestor has a substantial interest in the subject matter of the request.

E. Agency Response

- a. Within forty-five (45) days after the receipt of a request for a declaratory opinion which complies with the requirements of these rules, the Commission will, in writing:

- i. Issue an opinion declaring the applicability of the specified statute, rule, or order to the specified circumstances; or
- ii. Decline to issue a declaratory opinion, stating the reasons for its action; or
- iii. Agree to issue a declaratory opinion, or a written statement declining to issue a declaratory opinion, by a specified time but no later than ninety (90) days after receipt of the written request.

b. When Period Begins

The forty-five (45) day period shall begin on the first business day after which the request is received by the Commission.

c. Opinion Not Final for Sixty Days

A declaratory opinion shall not become final until the expiration of sixty (60) days after the issuance of the opinion. Prior to the expiration of sixty (60) days, the Commission may, in its discretion, withdraw or amend the declaratory opinion for any reason which is not arbitrary or capricious. Reasons for withdrawing or amending an opinion include, but are not limited to, a determination that the request failed to meet the requirements of these rules or that the opinion issued contains a legal or factual error.

F. Procedure after Request for Declaratory Opinion Received

- a. Notice by Requestor
The requestor, or his attorney, shall append to the request for a declaratory opinion a listing of all persons, with addresses known to the requestor, who may have an interest in the declaratory opinion sought to be issued, and shall mail a copy of the request to all such persons. The requestor or his attorney shall certify that a copy of the request was mailed to all such persons together with this statement: “Should you wish to participate in the proceedings of this request or receive notice of such proceedings or the declaratory opinion issued as a result of this request, you should contact the Commission within twenty days of the date of this request.”

G. Hearings at the Discretion of the Agency

- a. Provision for Hearing
If the Commission in its sole discretion deems a hearing necessary or helpful in determining any issue concerning a request for a declaratory opinion, the Commission may schedule such a hearing. Notice of the hearing shall be given to all interested parties unless waived. Notice mailed by first class mail seven calendar days prior to the hearing shall be deemed appropriate.
- b. Proceedings at the Hearing
The procedure for conducting a hearing, including but not limited to the manner of presentation, the time for presentation, and whether and how evidence may be taken, shall be within the discretion of the Commission.
- c. Persons Appearing at the Hearing
The Commission shall allow the requestor to participate in any hearing. The Commission may allow any other persons or entities to participate in the hearing.

H. Public Availability of Requests and Declaratory Opinions

Declaratory opinions and requests for declaratory opinions shall be available for public inspection and copying at the expense of the viewer during normal business hours. All declaratory opinions and requests shall be indexed by name, subject, and date of issue. Declaratory opinions and requests that contain information that is confidential or exempt from disclosure under the Mississippi Public Records Act or other laws shall be exempt from this requirement and shall remain confidential.

CHAPTER 4: STANDARDS

Academic degree-granting postsecondary institutions located in Mississippi must meet the following standards. Attention will be paid to the institution's commitment to education, responsiveness to recommendations and suggestions for improvement and, in the case of renewals, record of improvement and progress. The standards represent generally accepted administrative and academic practices and principles of accredited postsecondary institutions. Such practices and principles are generally set forth by institutional and specialized accrediting bodies and academic and professional organizations.

4.1 Legal Compliance

The institution shall be maintained and operated in compliance with all applicable ordinances and laws, including the rules and regulations adopted to administer those ordinances and laws.

4.2 Governance

The institution shall have a system of governance that facilitates the accomplishment of the institution's mission and purposes, supports institutional effectiveness and integrity, and protects the interests of its constituents, including students, faculty, and staff. The institution shall have a governing board consisting of at least five members. The governing board shall ensure that the institution complies with Commission requirements.

4.3 Qualifications of Institutional Officers

- A. The character, education, and experience in higher education of governing board members, administrators, supervisors, counselors, agents, representatives, and other institutional officers shall be such as may reasonably ensure that the institution can maintain the standards of the Commission and progress to authorization and accreditation by a Commission-recognized accrediting agency within the time limits set by the Commission and Commission-recognized accrediting agency.
- B. The chief academic officer shall hold an earned advanced degree appropriate for the mission of the institution, preferably an earned doctorate, awarded by an institution accredited by a recognized accrediting agency and shall demonstrate sound aptitude for and experience with curriculum development and assessment; accreditation standards and processes as well as all relevant state regulations; leadership and development of faculty, including the promotion of scholarship, research, and service; and the promotion of student success.
- C. In the case of renewal, the institutional officers shall demonstrate a record of effective leadership in administering the institution.

4.4 Distinction of Roles

The institution shall define the powers, duties, and responsibilities of the governing body and the executive officers. There shall be a clear distinction in the roles and personnel of the governing board of the institution, the administration, and faculty.

4.5 Financial Resources and Stability

The institution must have financial resources and financial stability to provide education of good quality and to be able to fulfill its commitments to students. The institution shall have sufficient reserves or line of credit so that, together with tuition and fees, it would be able to complete its educational obligations for the current term to currently enrolled students if it were unable to admit any new students. The institution must have the administrative capacity to meet the daily needs of the administration, faculty, and students, including facilities, laboratories, equipment, technology, and learning resources that support the institution's mission and programs.

4.6 Financial Records

Financial records and reports of the institution shall be kept and made separate and distinct from those of any affiliated or sponsoring person or entity. Financial records and reports shall be kept in accordance with the guidelines of the National Association of College and University Business Officers as set forth in *College and University Business Administration*, Sixth Edition or such later edition as may be published. An annual independent audit of all fiscal accounts of the educational institution shall be authorized by the governing board, shall be performed by a properly authorized certified public accountant, and shall be made available to the Commission upon request.

4.7 Institutional Assessment

Continual and effective assessment, planning, and evaluation of all aspects of the institution shall be conducted to advance and improve the institution. These aspects include, but are not limited to, the academic program of teaching, research, and public services, if applicable; administration; financial planning and control; student services; facilities and equipment, and auxiliary enterprises.

4.8 Program Evaluation

- A. The institution shall establish adequate procedures for planning and evaluation, define in measurable terms its expected educational results, and describe how those results will be achieved.
- B. Evaluation criteria shall include mission, labor market and state need, curriculum, enrollment, graduates, student placement, follow-up results, ability to finance each program of study, facilities and equipment, instructional practices, student services, public and private linkages, qualifications of faculty and administrative personnel, and success of its students.
- C. Relating to occupations where state or national licensure is required, graduates must pass the licensing examination at a rate acceptable to the related licensing agency, as applicable.
- D. Prior to establishing a new degree program, the institution shall evaluate the need for the proposed program of study through survey, research, or other means of

measure. The capacity and ability of similar programs at public, private or independent institutions of higher education within Mississippi to meet market needs shall be considered.

4.9 Student Admissions and Remediation

- A. Upon the admission of a student to any undergraduate program, the institution shall document the student's level of preparation to undertake college-level work by obtaining proof of the student's college record, high school graduation, or qualifying scores on a state-approved equivalency examination, and otherwise complying with state standards, policies, procedures, and requirements. The institution shall provide an effective program of remediation for students diagnosed with deficiencies in their preparation for collegiate study.

- B. Upon the admission of a student to any graduate program, the institution shall document that the student is prepared to undertake graduate-level work by obtaining proof that the student holds a baccalaureate degree from an institution accredited by a recognized accrediting agency to offer baccalaureate degrees, or a degree from a foreign institution equivalent to a baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution. The procedures used by the institution for establishing the equivalency of a foreign degree shall be consistent with the standards of evaluation approved by the National Council on the Evaluation of Foreign Education Credentials or its successor; or reviews from evaluation services provided through the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers.

4.10 Faculty Qualifications

The character, education, and experience in higher education of the faculty shall be such as may reasonably ensure that the students will receive an education consistent with the objectives of the course or program of study.

- A. Faculty teaching general education courses at the undergraduate level shall have at least a master's degree in the discipline being taught, from an institution accredited by a recognized accrediting agency, or master's degree with a concentration in the discipline with a minimum of eighteen (18) graduate semester credit hours in the discipline being taught.

- B. Faculty teaching associate degree courses designed for transfer to a baccalaureate degree shall have at least a master's degree in the discipline being taught, from an institution accredited by a recognized accrediting agency, or master's degree with a concentration in the discipline with a minimum of eighteen (18) graduate semester credit hours in the discipline being taught.

- C. Faculty teaching baccalaureate courses shall have at least a master's degree in the discipline being taught from an institution accredited by a recognized accrediting agency, or master's degree with a concentration in the discipline with a minimum of eighteen (18) graduate semester credit hours in the discipline being taught. At least 25 percent of the discipline course hours in each undergraduate

major are taught by faculty members holding the terminal degree—usually the earned doctorate—in the discipline.

- D. Faculty teaching graduate level degree programs shall hold doctorates, or other degrees generally recognized as the highest attainable in the discipline or closely related discipline, awarded by an institution accredited by a recognized accrediting agency.
- E. With the approval of a majority of the institution's governing board, an individual with exemplary experience in the field of appointment, which may include direct and relevant work experiences in the field, professional licensure and certifications, honors and awards, continuous documented excellence in teaching, or other demonstrated competencies and achievements may serve as a faculty member without the degree credentials specified in the above (A) – (D) of this subsection. Such appointments shall be limited and the justification for each such appointment shall be fully documented. The Commission may review the full complement of faculty providing instruction at the institution to verify that such appointments are justified.

4.11 Faculty Size

There shall be a sufficient number of faculty holding full-time teaching appointments who are resident and accessible to the students to ensure continuity and stability of the education program, adequate educational association between students and faculty and among the faculty members, and adequate opportunity for proper preparation for instruction and professional growth by faculty members.

- A. At the associate and baccalaureate levels, there shall be at least one full-time faculty member in each program.
- B. At the graduate level, there shall be at least two (2) full-time faculty members in each program.

4.12 Curriculum

- A. The quality, content, and sequence of each course, curriculum, or program of instruction, training, or study shall be appropriate to the purpose of the institution and shall be such that the institution may reasonably and adequately achieve the stated objectives of the course or program. Each program shall adequately cover the breadth of knowledge of the discipline taught and course work must build on the knowledge of previous courses to increase the rigor of instruction and the learning of students in the discipline. A majority of the courses in the areas of specialization required for each degree program shall be offered in organized classes by the institution. An institution may offer for-credit coursework that does not directly relate to approved programs, provided that it does not exceed twenty-five (25) percent of all courses.
- B. An academic associate degree must consist of at least sixty (60) semester credit hours or ninety (90) quarter credit hours and not more than sixty-six (66) semester credit hours or ninety-nine (99) quarter credit hours. A baccalaureate degree must

consist of at least one-hundred twenty (120) semester credit hours or one-hundred eighty (180) quarter credit hours. A master's degree must consist of at least thirty (30) semester credit hours or forty-five (45) quarter credit hours of graduate level work past the baccalaureate degree.

- C. Courses designed to correct deficiencies, remedial courses for associate and baccalaureate programs, and leveling courses for graduate programs, shall not count toward requirements for completion of the degree.
- D. The degree level, degree designation, and the designation of the major course of study shall be appropriate to the curriculum offered and shall be accurately listed on the student's diploma and transcript.

4.13 General Education

- A. Each academic associate degree program shall contain a general education component consisting of at least fifteen (15) semester credit hours or the equivalent. Each baccalaureate degree program shall contain a general education component consisting of at least thirty (30) semester credit hours or at least twenty-five (25) percent of the total hours required for graduation from the program.
- B. This component shall be drawn from each of the following areas: Humanities and Fine Arts, Social and Behavioral Sciences, Natural Sciences, and Mathematics. It shall include courses to develop skills in written and oral communication and basic computer instruction.
- C. The applicant institution may arrange to have all or part of the general education component taught by another institution, provided that:
 - a. The applicant institution's faculty shall design the general education requirement;
 - b. There shall be a written agreement between the institutions specifying the applicant institutions' general education requirements and the manner in which they will be met by the providing institution;
 - c. At least one-half of the courses shall be offered in organized classes; and
 - d. The providing institution shall be accredited by a Commission-recognized accrediting agency.

4.14 Credit for Work Completed Outside a Collegiate Setting

- A. An institution awarding collegiate credit for course work completed outside a collegiate setting (outside a degree-granting institution accredited by a recognized agency) shall establish and adhere to a systematic method for evaluating that work, shall award credit only in course content which falls with the authorized degree programs of the institution or, if by evaluative examination, in an appropriate manner shall relate the credit to the student's current educational goals, and shall subject the institutions process and procedures for evaluating work completed outside a collegiate setting to ongoing evaluation by the institution's teaching faculty. To these ends, recognized evaluative examinations

such as the Advanced Placement program (AP) or the College Level Examination Program (CLEP) may be used.

- B. No more than half of the credit applied toward a student's associate or baccalaureate degree program may be based on work completed outside a collegiate setting. Those credits must be validated in the manner stated in (A) above. No more than fifteen (15) semester credit hours or twenty-three (23) quarter credit hours of that credit may be awarded by means other than recognized evaluative examinations. No graduate credit for work completed outside a collegiate setting may be awarded. In no instance may credit be awarded for life experience per se or merely for years of service in a position or job.

4.15 Learning Resources

- A. The institution shall maintain and ensure that students have access to learning resources with a collection of books, educational material and publications, on-line materials, and other resources and with staff, services, equipment, and facilities that are adequate and appropriate for the purposes and enrollment of the institution. Learning resources shall be current, well distributed among fields in which the institution offers instructions, cataloged, logically organized, and readily located. The institution shall maintain a continuous plan for learning resources development and support, including objectives and selections of materials. Institutions offering graduate work shall provide access to learning resources that include at least basic reference and bibliographic works and major journals in each discipline in which the graduate program is offered.
- B. Current and formal written agreements with other institutions or with other entities may be used; the collection shall be validated by the institution to be appropriate for the program being offered, and the library shall be reasonably accessible to the students and faculty.

4.16 Facilities

The institution shall have adequate space, equipment, and instructional materials to provide education of good quality. Student housing owned, maintained, or approved by the institution, if any, shall be appropriate, safe, and adequate.

4.17 Academic Records

The institution shall securely and permanently maintain adequate records of each student's academic performance.

- A. The records for each student shall contain:
 - a. Student contact and identification information, including address and telephone number;
 - b. Records of admission documents, such as high school diploma or qualifying scores on a state approved equivalency examination (if undergraduate) or undergraduate degree (if graduate);
 - c. Records of all courses attempted, including grade; completion status of the student, including the diploma, degree or award conferred to the student designating of major course of study; and
 - d. Any other information typically contained in academic records.

- B. Two copies of said records shall be maintained in separate secure places. Records of students who are no longer enrolled at the institution for any reason, including graduation, must be maintained in accordance with Rule 3.7 (Academic Records Maintenance and Protection).
- C. Students in good standing will be provided transcripts upon requests, subject to the institution's obligations, if any, to cooperate with the rules and regulations of governing state and federally guaranteed student loans.

4.18 Accurate and Fair Representation in Publications, Advertising, and Promotion

- A. Neither the institution nor its agents or other representatives shall engage in advertising recruiting, sales, collection, financial credit, or other practices of any type that are false, deceptive, misleading, or unfair. Likewise, all publications, by any medium, shall represent accurately and fairly the institution, its programs, available resources, tuition and fees, requirements, and state authorization and institutional and programmatic accreditation status.
- B. The institution shall provide students, prospective students prior to enrollment, and other interested persons with a printed or electronically published catalog. Institutions relying on electronic catalogs must ensure the availability of archived editions in order to serve the needs of alumni and returning students. The catalog must contain, at a minimum, the following information:
 - a. The institution's mission;
 - b. A statement of admissions policies;
 - c. Information describing the purpose, length, and objectives of the program or programs offered by the institution;
 - d. The schedule of tuition, fees, and all other charges and expenses necessary for completion of the course of study;
 - e. Cancellation and refund policies;
 - f. A definition of the unit of credit as it applies at the institution;
 - g. An explanation of satisfactory progress as it applies at the institution, including an explanation of the grading or marking system;
 - h. The institution's calendar, including the beginning and ending dates for each instructional term, holidays, and registration dates;
 - i. A complete listing of each regularly employed faculty member showing name, area of assignment, rank, and each earned degree held, including degree level, degree designation, and institution that awarded the degree;
 - j. A complete listing of each administrator showing name, title, area of assignment, and each earned degree held, including degree level, degree designation, and institution that awarded the degree;
 - k. A statement of legal control with the names of the trustees, directors, and officers of the corporation;
 - l. A complete listing of all scholarships offered, if any;
 - m. A statement describing the nature and extent of available student services;

- n. Complete and clearly stated information about the transferability of credit to other postsecondary institutions including two-year and four-year colleges and universities;
 - o. Any such other material facts concerning the institution and the program or course of instruction as are reasonably likely to affect the decision of the student to enroll therein; and
 - p. Any disclosures specified by the Commission or defined in Commission standards, policies, and procedures.
- C. The institution shall adopt, publish, and adhere to a fair and equitable cancellation and refund policy.
- D. The institution shall provide to each prospective student, newly enrolled student, and returning student, complete and clearly presented information indicating the institution's current graduation rate by program; and, if required by the Commission, job placement rate by program for any such applicable programs offered by the institution.
- E. Any special requirements, or limitations, of program offerings must be made explicit in writing. Concerning out of state institutions with locations in Mississippi, this may be accomplished by either a separate section in the catalog or a brochure separate from the catalog. However, if a brochure is produced, the student must also be given the regular catalog.
- F. Upon satisfactory completion of the program of study, the student shall be given appropriate educational credentials indicating the degree level, degree designation, and the designation of the major course of study, and a transcript accurately listing the information typically found on such a document, subject to institutions' obligation, if any, to cooperate with the rules and regulations governing state and federally guaranteed student loans.

4.19 Academic Advising and Counseling

The institution shall provide an effective program of academic advising for all students enrolled. The program shall include orientation to the academic program, academic counseling, career information and planning, placement assistance, and testing services.

4.20 Student Rights and Responsibilities

The institution shall establish and adhere to a clear and fair policy regarding due process in disciplinary matters; outline the established grievance process of the institution which shall indicate that students should follow the institution's process utilizing the institution's forms and may contact the Commission using the Commission's student complaint procedures and/or the Mississippi Attorney General to file a complaint about the institution if all other avenues have been exhausted; and publish this policy in a handbook, which shall include other rights and responsibilities of the students. This handbook shall be supplied in print or electronically to each student upon enrollment in the institution.

4.21 Health and Safety

The institution shall provide an effective program of health and safety education reflecting the needs of the students. The program shall include information on emergency and safety procedures at the institution including appropriate responses to illness, accident, fire, and crime.

4.22 Learning Outcomes

- A. An institution must have an objective system of assessing learning outcomes in place for each part of the curriculum and the institution can demonstrate that appropriate learning outcomes are being achieved.

- B. An institution may not deviate from Standard 11 relating to Faculty Size and Standard 14 relating to Credit for Work Completed Outside a Collegiate Setting without a compelling academic reason and then as long as academic objectives are fully met.

