

The Evaluator Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools Volume VII Issue V Spring 2014

Onsite Verification of Placement

In the Spring 2013 issue, details of the new placement definition, as well as the documentation required for verification, were published. Starting in the winter 2014 travel cycle, a new onsite placement verification process was implemented to be better aligned with the new definition.

While generally successful, feedback received from the membership and evaluation teams have triggered additional revisions to the definition to ensure consistency in interpretation.

Definition of Placement: A graduate will be considered placed if one of the following three conditions is met:

1. The position is either included on the list of job titles published by the institution for which the program prepares students:

These job titles must be those published by the institution on its web site in compliance with USDOE Title IV regulations and must be identified in the Department's CIP-to-SOC Crosswalk with the Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) code of this program.

2. It (the position) requires the use of the skills learned in the student's program as a predominant component of the job.

These skills must be those listed in the institution's published program description and a majority of these skills must be documented in the employer's job description as required or desired skills, duties or responsibilities.

3. The student attests to the benefit of the training received as a catalyst in obtaining or maintaining the current position, supporting promotion, or improving job related skills.

Signed acknowledgement, by student or employer, that the training received in the program was beneficial in obtaining or maintaining the position as well as supporting a promotion or improvement of job-related skills.

The Verification Guide

The On-site Placement Verification Guide seeks to determine if a graduate was appropriately classified as placed using one of the three placement conditions of the definition above with the intent of continuity (not short-term or one day employment). Additional revisions have been made to include a short introduction to guide evaluators. As a reminder:

1. If the graduate cannot be reached, then the employer should be contacted.
2. Information conflicting with reported data should be discussed in the team room.
3. This on-site verification guide is **NOT** connected in any way to the Placement Verification Program (PVP) that is being conducted independently at ACICS. Please complete the form by filling in the blanks and circling the appropriate answer. After completing the verification call, give the sheets to the ACICS staff member.

Documentation for Not Available for Placement (Waivers)

Institutions are required to maintain documentation to support all categories on the CAR, including graduates not placed for a number of acceptable reasons. Examples of acceptable forms of documentation include:

Continuing Education:

- ◆ *NSLDS (National Student Loan Data System) print out of student's current loans for an institution*
- ◆ *Unofficial transcripts of current enrollment*
- ◆ *Letters of acceptance from the institution of intended study are appropriate*
- ◆ *Registrar's record of transcripts issued to other college (if available)*

Pregnancy, Health, Death

- ◆ *Signed Attestation from graduate of reason*
- ◆ *Full disclosure of health issues not required (privacy issues)*
- ◆ *Death announcement and/or certificate*

If a graduate has indicated that they are not available for placement because they are caring for a family member (attestation must be available), documentation must be provided to verify the legitimacy of this relationship.

Incarceration

Copy of public record must be provided

F1 Visas

OPT is now acceptable as placement but if international students are classified in this category, visas will be in the graduate files. Institutions cannot use both categories for international students.

Message from the Evaluator Manager

Hello everyone!

We are all ready for the spring in a number of ways, and ACICS is no different! The winter 2014 cycle was brutal, with teams working in sub-zero temperatures in the Midwest. We appreciate your service through that bad weather and hopefully you will be able to defrost in this spring!

Because change at ACICS is a constant, there are a number of critical items that need your attention. Please read through this newsletter as it is ACICS's primary and official means of communication with the evaluator body. Be sure to review the Evaluator Travel information and summary of the soon-to-be-published Memo to the Field.

See you in the field!

Report Templates and Writing Guidelines

New report templates for the full team report (Additional Location Inclusion, Initial Grant, and New Grant) that reflect the new changes in the *Accreditation Criteria* and the addition of appropriate questions, have been uploaded to the Report Templates page on the ACICS Web site. Evaluators are responsible for downloading this version prior to **each** team visit to ensure that the current report is being used for the evaluation.

The *Report Writing and Editing Guidelines 2014*, along with other materials, can be found on the Report Templates web page and evaluators are expected to **follow them**. **Consistent non-compliance with the writing expectations may result in visit assignment restrictions or other action.**

Subject Matter Expert (SME)

We continue to solicit evaluators reaching out to colleagues in their professional associations, organizations, and networks to encourage participation in the ACICS evaluator process. Please share my email address, pwgilliam@acics.org, and I will gladly follow up. We still need experts in the medical fields .

If you know of professionals who would be interested and effective in serving please encourage them to apply by visiting <http://www.acics.org/evaluators>.

Disclosure Regarding ACICS

Evaluators are encouraged to share their affiliation with ACICS but are reminded that such disclosure must be appropriate. When referencing your role in any location or publication (documents, publication, medium), the following terms should not be used

- ◆ Consultant at ACICS
- ◆ Operational Compliance at ACICS
- ◆ Program Expert at ACICS

Instead, the following should be used:

- ◆ Independent Contractor at ACICS
- ◆ Independent Program Evaluator/Team Chair

New Travel Team Member—Mary



Mary most recently worked for the US State Department at the US Embassy, in Khartoum, Sudan as the EducationUSA Advisor. Mary has lived and worked overseas for a number of years. Before her overseas life, Mary worked in sales and management for Scott Paper Company. She has a bachelor of arts in political science from Colorado College and has taken graduate coursework in Intercultural Relations from The University of the Pacific/Intercultural Communication Institute.

She enjoys traveling, nature, wildlife, hiking, cooking, reading and gardening. She has both a professional and personal interest in education and is excited about learning more about the important role accreditation plays in the field of education.

New Travel Team Member—Jan



Jan's background includes college admissions, sales, human resources and recruiting. After graduating from Longwood University with a bachelor's degree in social work, she worked in Enterprise's rental division and human resources/recruiting departments for five years in New Jersey, Virginia, and Maryland.

Prior to joining ACICS, she worked at Westwood College as an admissions representative for almost three years where she learned about ACICS and its position in the sector. Outside of work she enjoys....more travel! With friends and family spread across the East Coast, she enjoys spending time with them whenever possible. This is Jan's second travel cycle and with a full travel load, she is on her way to becoming a road warrior!

New Travel Team Member—Frenika



Frenika has previously worked at Wesley Theological Seminary in a variety of positions, most recently as the executive assistant to the dean. She also worked as a research assistant at a local nonprofit. Frenika has a bachelor of arts in urban economic development from Eastern University and a master of arts in Theology from Wesley Theological Seminary.

She enjoys banging on the piano a bit and reading biographies. She is excited to be a part of the ACICS family and is looking forward to visiting schools with evaluators. With one travel cycle under her belt, Frenika is on her way to becoming a road warrior!

ACICS EVALUATOR TRAVEL: TRANSPORTATION AND HOTEL

TRANSPORTATION

ACICS is utilizing the Concur Travel and Expense System to manage and cover the cost of travel for all team members, using an ACICS Corporate Account. Key elements are reiterated for those evaluators who may have missed the first publication:

- Use of the system is MANDATORY for airfare/train reservations.
- Evaluator profiles MUST be completed prior to using the system to include frequent flier numbers, etc. so that miles may be credited to the evaluator's personal frequent flier account.
- Legal name, as listed on license and/or passport must be in Personify. To correct, please send an email to pwilliam@acics.org
- Do not add any credit cards to your profile. This is necessary to limit the payment options to only the corporate account and avoid errors.
- Tickets in excess of \$1000 will not be processed and purchase will be suspended until approval is received by the staff coordinator.
- Tickets cannot be purchased within 24 hours of travel without administrative approval.

Flight Arrangements – Changing or Canceling

- Flight changes are available for e-tickets that include a single carrier.
- If the trip is already ticketed but has not occurred, you can change the time and/or date of the flight. Your change options will be with the same airline and routing.
- If the trip cannot be completed for whatever reason, ACICS (staff coordinator) MUST be notified immediately. The unused ticket will be the property of ACICS and cannot be used by the evaluator for personal travel. This will constitute a breach of the Canons of Ethical Behavior and subject the evaluator to negative action.

Flight Arrangements – Assistance

Travel Incorporated
4301 Anchor Plaza Pkwy
Suite 125
Tampa, FL 33634
Phone: 866-738-6444

Flight Options—Expanded Selection

Southwest has joined Concur (yahoo!) so additional flight options will now be available via **SWABIZ**. To access the options, simply click on the Southwest SWABIZ sign. Your Rapid Reward number should be added to your profile so that the number will auto-populate during a SWABIZ booking. Please see the attachment for additional instructions for this new option.

Expensing

- On the My Concur page, in the Expense Report column of the Trip List section, click the (expense) button for the appropriate trip. This will pre-populate a new expense report.
- An expense report must be created for **EACH** trip independently.
- Separate reports must be created for ACICS Business Account and out-of-pocket expenses.

Complete all required fields (those with the red bar at the left edge of the field) and the optional fields as directed by ACICS.

HOTEL

To continue with the streamlining of its processes and further alleviate evaluators' out-of-pocket expenses, ACICS will now be covering hotel expenditures (room and taxes). The credit card used to make the hotel reservation will also be used to cover the hotel bill. However, evaluators should provide their own credit card to cover **incidentals (meals)**. The following should apply:

- ◆ The hotel provides two bills, if room service was ordered—the one with the total room and tax (settled to the AMX card) **should be given to the ACICS staff**. The staff member will be expensing the hotel charge.
- ◆ If an extra night is spent at the hotel, the bill should be scanned and emailed to the staff member for processing.

Additional guidance will be provided by the staff member during the pre-visit meeting.

Critical Do's and Don'ts

- Do** select "American Express Air Travel" for airfare and train
- Do** proceed through to the end of the process (Finish) to ensure that the reservation has been made.
- Do** let the ACICS staff know if you find same flight options that are cheaper outside of Concur.
- Do** remember to provide your own credit card at hotel check-in to cover incidental charges.
- Do** provide staff with a copy of your hotel bill that is covered by ACICS.
- Do** create an expense report for each trip.
- Do** review the expense report for accuracy and completion (corporate or "out-of-pocket") prior to submission.
- Do** resubmit any expenses sent back with issues.

- Do not** select "American Express Air Travel" for other expenses – be sure to select "Out of Pocket", including honorarium.
- Do not** include your personal credit card in your Profile.

Final and Proposed Criteria Changes

At its April 2014 Meeting, the Council considered a number of Criteria revisions that will be published in the *Memorandum to the Field*. The following is a summary of those changes that will eventually affect the evaluation process. **Implementation guidance will be formally communicated at a later date to all evaluators.**

Final Criteria Changes

General Education Requirements for Occupational versus Academic Associate's Degree Programs

The Council approved final language to clarify the number of General Education credit hours required for the occupational associate's degree as compared to the academic associate's degree. The final language simplified the general education requirement for occupational associate's degree to be **less than 15 semester credit hours or its equivalent**.

Previous language was confusing to both institutions and evaluation teams in the determination of program credentials. An occupational associate's degree had to have a minimum of 10 semester hours and a maximum of 15 semester hours of General Education; the academic associate's degree had the requirement of a minimum of 15 semester hours of general education. Both credentials had 15 hours as a maximum and as a minimum—hence the confusion and need for revision. Research was conducted to include the re-

view of the requirements of other accreditors and state agencies as well as the distribution of offerings at member institutions.

General Education Glossary Definition

The Council approved final language to strengthen the general education requirements by now mandating that courses be taken from the following general disciplines: humanities, mathematics and sciences, and the social sciences.

Previously, the definition used the term “including” to indicate the collection of disciplines that qualify as general education. The new language has revised this term to “must include” and all institutions will be expected to comply by a Council-directed point in time. This change may require extensive curricula review, revision, and ultimately ACICS re-approval of academic associate's and bachelor's degrees.

Subsequently, the educational activities expert on the evaluation team will be expected to review the collection of general education courses to ensure that the discipline distribution requirement is satisfied.

CGPA Requirements for Graduate Programs (Appendix D)

The Council approved final language to account for professionally recognized and programmatically accredited graduate degree programs that have CGPA or grading standards that differ from the current 3.0 CGPA requirement in item #16 of Appendix D.

ACICS, in keeping with its scope, accredits institutions which offer professional programs. Such programs may have outcomes that are more competency-based and as such, not measured by GPA.

Proposed Criteria Changes

Change of Additional Location and Campus Addition Names and Definitions

The Council proposes to change the names of campus classification from Additional Location to **Branch** and Campus Addition to **Learning Site** with modifications to their definitions.

For many evaluators, this is just a reversal to terms already known. However, in addition to the “name changes”, the Criteria will also include more substantive definition of what differentiates a branch from a learning site. As a result, institutions can then better manage resources and meet those expectations when serving students.

2013 Evaluator Award Winners!

Chair of the Year: Ms. Libby Guinan

Libby's evaluator experience began in 1982. She retired in 2006 after 33 years in the industry. She serves as a team chair, IRC member and was a member of the ACICS Review Board of Appeals.

SR of the Year: Dr. Robert (Bob) Palmatier

Bob has served as a program specialist, educational activities expert, team chair, and student relations expert on a number of ACICS evaluation visits since 2001.

Evaluator of the Year: Mr. Tom Phillips

Over the past ten years, Tom has taken part in more than 100 ACICS team visits in 26 US States, Puerto Rico, and Canada.

Notice of New Requirement for Evaluators

As previously communicated, experts of programs which **require licensure, certification, or registration (federal or state)**, must hold an active/current license, certification, or registration. Current evaluators must email a copy of the documentation to **evaluatormanager@acics.org**. This document must be kept current and will be added to the evaluator's record. Program areas include:

- Nursing ·Surgical Technology ·Dental Hygiene
- Diagnostic Medical Sonography ·Anesthesia Assistant
- Cardiovascular Tech ·HVAC ·Massage Therapy
- Radiologic Tech

Final and Proposed Criteria Changes Cont'd.

Changes are proposed to the Glossary and Sections 1-3-102 & 1-3-103.

Definition of Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

The current Glossary definition of SLOs provide more details than what is normally expected of a definition. However, confusion still remains on the Council's expectations of SLOs, specifically for inclusion in the campus effectiveness plan. To this end, the Council is considering revising the definition to capture the intent of measuring both direct and indirect assessments as a measure of institutional effectiveness. This is the first step in revisiting Section 3-1-111 and taking a close look at making needed changes to this very important component of institutional evaluation and effectiveness.

As a parallel to this change, the Council has laid the initial groundwork in the area of **Direct Assessment Competency-based Programs**.

Direct Assessment Competency-based Programs

In recent months, the Council has been engaged in the development of policies and procedures for the assessment and approval of Direct Assessment Competency-based Programs. The Council proposes to add new entries to the Glossary of Definitions and new criteria which would meet Council standards that are supportive of the requirements of the Department of Education for financial aid eligibility.

Translation of Transcripts into English (Section 3-1-541)

The Council is proposing to modify the requirement that all transcripts in languages other than English must be translated, given that there are non-English institutions that are accredited by agencies

recognized by the US Department of Education.

However, given the internationalization of ACICS, with membership in countries that are non-English speaking, the need to affirm the academic preparation of faculty is still paramount. As such, additional revisions are being proposed to criteria that address the translation of transcripts for general education faculty. This would validate the credentials while respecting the educational quality and oversight of the country of residence.

Given the role of the evaluator in the Criteria implementation process (through peer review), the Council welcomes candid feedback on the proposed changes shared above as well as the others outlined in the Memo to the Field. Comments on the proposed Criteria revisions should be submitted using the form provided by **Friday, July 11, 2014.**

Upcoming Training

Team Chair Professional Development Event

Scheduled for the summer, this event will involve ACICS travel staff, leadership, and team chairs working together to improve and advance the evaluation process. The following topics will be discussed:

- ◆ Evaluating the Campus Effectiveness Plan (CEP) - ACICS Expectations and consistent interpretation of the Standards
- ◆ Preparation of the Team's Report - Presenting the team's finding objectively and professionally.
- ◆ Ensuring consistency across institutional reviews
- ◆ Collaboratively working with ACICS staff to manage the evaluation visit.
- ◆ Communicating with the team and with the institution

Because this event will host more than 40 active chairs, a separate Chair Training Workshop will not be conducted in November. Chair applications must be submitted by **June 16, 2014** for consideration and invitation to the Event.

SR Expertise Assessment & Training

Under the guidance of a core Student Relations Experts group, a 50-question assessment is being developed and set for launch, within the next month, to all active SR evaluators. As previously communicated, the need for consistency extends to the level of expertise of the evaluation teams. The following should be noted:

- ◆ The assessment **MUST** be taken by all SR evaluators. Those individuals who fail to take the test within the designated time period will be removed from the pool.
- ◆ The assessment will be timed—it is expected that the test will be completed in **30 minutes**. The test can only be taken **once**.
- ◆ In order to pass the test and maintain active status, a **80% or B** will need to be obtained.
- ◆ Individuals who fail the test, but score **at least 70%**, will be able to retake the assessment and reapply for reconsideration after at least six months.

The results will be analyzed to develop specific training on those common areas of error.