

4. Retention of Commission Files and Records

Procedures for the Retention of Accrediting Commission Files and Records

The Accrediting Commission of the Distance Education and Training Council conducts the voluntary accreditation program for distance education institutions through an open and frank exchange of information with applicant institutions, members of the Examining Committees, and the Commission.

In order to maintain this free exchange of information (much of it proprietary in nature), the Accrediting Commission has an understanding with applicant institutions and with volunteer evaluators that all data, information, and reports used in the accrediting process are held in the strictest confidence.

To assure that confidentiality is maintained, the Accrediting Commission will use this procedure for the retention and protection of information and records:

1. From the time of the receipt of an applicant for accreditation or re-accreditation until the time the Accrediting Commission takes action on such application and that action is accepted or not appealed by the applicant institution, the Accrediting Commission will retain a working file for that applicant institution. This working file includes, but is not limited to, the application; all school reports; individual evaluator and Chairman's reports; correspondence between the Commission, the Examining Committee, the school, and other interested parties; school responses to letters and reports; and other documents related to the application.
2. When the Accrediting Commission takes action on an applicant institution and the institution has accepted the action of the Commission, the Commission will maintain in its files one copy of each of the following until the Commission completes the next full review of the school:
 - A. Application for Accreditation
 - B. Examination Schedule
 - C. Self-Evaluation Report
 - D. Chair's Report
 - E. Institution's response to the Chair's Report
 - F. Commission letter notifying the institution of the action and the institution's response to this letter
 - G. Follow-up Progress Report

The Commission will destroy all other documents.

3. When the Accrediting Commission takes action to deny, withdraw, or terminate accreditation for an applicant institution and after the action is accepted by the institution, the time for appeal expires or the institution's appeal is denied, the Commission will retain in its files one copy of each document listed in 2. A. through G. above, for a period of one year. After one year, only the documents listed in 7. A. through C. below will be retained permanently.

4. When the Accrediting Commission decides to defer action on a new application for accreditation, all documents listed in 1 above will be retained for a period of one year. If the applicant does not pursue the application within that time, only the documents listed in 7. A. through C. below will be retained.
5. When an institution makes application for accreditation and the application is not perfected, all documents related to the applicant will be retained for a period of one year. After one year, only the available documents listed in 7. A. through C. below will be retained.
6. When an accredited institution resigns from accreditation and the Commission accepts the resignation, only the documents listed in 7. A. through C. below will be retained.
7. Except for the following, the institution's previous record with the Commission will be destroyed if the documentation is related to a prior distinct, completed accreditation action. The documents that will be retained permanently are:
 - A. Application of Accreditation
 - B. Examination Schedule
 - C. Chair's Report and the institution's response
8. The institution's Annual Report to the Accrediting Commission will be destroyed after a two-year period.
9. The Commission will also retain documents relating to any substantive changes and notifications (see C.1. Policy on Substantive Change and Notification).
10. The minutes of each Accrediting Commission meeting will be retained permanently.

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