



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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CHAPTER 1: PURPOSE, ORGANIZATION, AND POWERS

1.1 Commission Purpose

A. 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 Title 37, Chapter 60, Mississippi Code of 1972, “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.

B. Definitions

a. Academic degree or program or coursework shall mean a course of study leading to a for-credit credential including a degree, certificate, or other generally recognized credential.

b. An entity shall mean bible college, seminary, religious affiliated institution, or any other specialized institution providing instruction that satisfy requirements leading to a for-credit credential

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 or entity approval processes;

C. To receive reports from the institutions or entities seeking to be placed on the approved list;

D. To annually review the above-described public and private postsecondary, academic degree-granting institutions or entities;

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 or entities to cover the Commission’s direct and indirect administrative costs incurred by the Commission of 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 or entities to offer postsecondary distance education.

Exempt from MCCA

- A. 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);
- B. Entities under jurisdiction of the State Board of Cosmetology and Barbering, State Board of Massage Therapy;
- C. Tuition free courses or instruction conducted by employers exclusively for their own employees; and
- D. 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.

1.3 Commission Membership

Pursuant to HB 3 from the 2025 legislative session, effective July 1, 2025, the Commission shall be composed of the Executive Director of the Mississippi Community College Board, the Commissioner of Higher Education, the Executive Director of the Mississippi Alliance of Independent Colleges and Universities or their designees, and four additional members representing institutions that are part of the Mississippi Association of Colleges and Universities to be selected by the current MCCA Commissioners, one who shall represent the public community colleges, one who shall represent the public universities, one who shall represent the private colleges, and one who shall represent the proprietary schools. The latter four members shall each serve for a term of three 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.”)

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

CHAPTER 2: POLICIES GOVERNING ACTIVITY OF THE COMMISSION

2.1 Meetings of the Commission

The Commission will meet annually prior to July 1. Additional meetings may be scheduled or 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

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 affirmed at the annual meeting, with terms to commence prior to July 1 each year (or commence on July 1 of each year).

2.7 Commission Administrative Procedures

A. When the Commission adopts, amends, or repeals any of its standards and regulations, the Director shall file with the Secretary of State notice of such action and provide notice as required.

B. Notice of such action shall be filed at least thirty (30) 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 (30) 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 (30) 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 Commission on College Accreditation
3825 Ridgewood Road
Jackson, MS 39211

2.9 Access to Commission 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 standards and regulations with respect to such records as may be in its possession. Such standards and regulations are applicable to and shall govern the right to inspect, copy, reproduce, or obtain a reproduction of any public records in the possession of the Commission.

B. Except where prohibited by law, any person shall have the right to inspect or obtain reproductions of any public record of the Commission.

C. 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.

D. Any person wishing to inspect or copy public records must make the request in writing to the Commission and must clearly identify the specific information sought. The request must specify whether the reproductions are to be mailed or received in person. Copies of public records will be available for a nominal fee. 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 the 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. 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, unless there is a mutual agreement between the parties.

E. Denial by the Commission of a request for access to or copies of public records shall be in writing and shall contain a statement specifying 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.

F. 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.

G. Recipient(s) will submit a check or money order to the staff prior to receiving material. This amount must cover the actual 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 Standard D.

- H. Adequate space to inspect requested records will be provided at no cost, if available. Recipient(s) will be provided with requested records by a staff member but no more than one recipient at a time.
- I. The provisions of section 2.9 do not apply to Mississippi government officials, state legislators, or state agencies.

2.10 Listing of Approved Institutions and Entities

A. 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.

B. Academic degree or program or coursework shall mean a course of study leading to a for-credit credential including a degree, certificate, or other generally recognized credential.

C. An entity shall mean bible college, seminary, religious affiliated institution, or any other specialized institution providing instruction that satisfy requirements leading to a for-credit credential.

D. 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 Commission on College Accreditation
3825 Ridgewood Road
Jackson, MS 39211

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

2.11 Institutions and Entities Not Authorized to Operate in Mississippi

A. The Commission will maintain a list of institutions and entities that are not authorized to offer postsecondary academic degrees, programs, or coursework in Mississippi. This list is not exhaustive as it contains only those who have been denied approval to offer postsecondary academic degrees, programs, or coursework in Mississippi.

B. 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 Commission on College Accreditation
3825 Ridgewood Road
Jackson, MS 39211

C. The provisions of section 2.11 do not apply to Mississippi government officials, state legislators, or state agencies.

CHAPTER 3: REGULATIONS AND PROCEDURES

3.1 Eligibility for Operating in Mississippi

- 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 placements, within the State of Mississippi.
- C. Field placements shall mean site-based learning activities (e.g., clinicals, 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. Academic degree or program or coursework shall mean a course of study leading to a for-credit credential including a degree, certificate, or other generally recognized credential.
- E. An entity shall mean bible college, seminary, religious affiliated institution, or any other specialized institution providing instruction that satisfy requirements leading to a for-credit credential.
- F. 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 or utilizes an ISP which is based in Mississippi
 - d. Advertising that the institution or entity is or will be domiciled, incorporated, or otherwise located in Mississippi.
- G. For consideration by the Commission, an institution or other entity must demonstrate the potential to comply with all Commission statutes, standards and regulations, policies, and procedures including institutional accreditation by a United States Department of Education (USDE) recognized accrediting agency.
- H. Institutional accreditation must be maintained and where available, a recognized USDE programmatic accreditation must be sought and maintained.

- I. Institutions or other entities must submit to the Commission documentation of good standing and valid institutional accreditation and, where applicable, programmatic accreditation.
- J. The Commission recognizes institutional accrediting agencies and programmatic accrediting agencies recognized by the United States Department of Education (USDE).
- K. An institution or other entity meets the requirements set forth in this chapter if it is a participant in good standing with the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA). Notwithstanding such recognition or if the institution or entity falls outside the scope of the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (SARA), the institution or entity must satisfy MCCA standards and regulations for state authorization and any relevant Mississippi requirements governing programs leading to licensure or certification.

3.2 Exemptions

Exemptions include:

- A. 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);
- B. Entities under jurisdiction of the State Board of Cosmetology and Barbering, State Board of Massage Therapy;
- C. Tuition free courses or instruction conducted by employers exclusively for their own employees; and
- D. 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.

3.3 Physical Presence

For the purpose of state authorization, an institution or entity has physical presence and therefore must seek authorization to operate in Mississippi if it engages in any of the following activities in Mississippi:

- A. Establishes a physical location for students to receive synchronous or asynchronous instruction;
- B. Requires students to physically meet in a location for instructional purposes more than twice per full-term (quarter or semester) course for a total of more than six hours;
- C. Establishes an administrative office in Mississippi;
- D. Provides information to students for the purpose of enrolling students, advising students, administering exams, recruiting students, or providing student support services (or any other services to prospective or current students) from a physical site operated by or on behalf of the institution or entity in Mississippi, or partners or

contracts with a third-party provider or other entity located in Mississippi to provide information to students for the purpose of enrolling students, advising students, administering exams, recruiting students, or providing student support services (or any other services to prospective or current students);

- E. Offers a short course that requires more than 20 contact hours in one six-month period;
- F. Provides physical office space to instructional or non-instructional staff;
- G. Maintains a mailing address or phone exchange in Mississippi;
- H. Carries out field study or field research located at a field station, research station or other physical site at which a faculty member or other institutional or any other entity employee or contractor supervises or otherwise directs two or more students in an activity exceeding the allowable short course length (refer to Standard E) and which either bears academic credit or is a requirement for the course or program;
- I. Operates career or information booths at fairs or other public gatherings in Mississippi;
- J. Presents institutional or any other entity information at secondary schools, postsecondary schools, or other entities in Mississippi;
- K. Advertises in local media or publications that originate in Mississippi.

Establishing a physical presence in Mississippi will require initial and annual approval.

For the purpose of distance education, should a Non-SARA institution or entity offer distance education to Mississippi residents, Commission approval is required. Initial and annual approval is required.

For the purpose of placements, field placements include but not limited to clinicals, 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. Institutions or entities offering field placements in Mississippi are required to apply for Commission approval. Institutions or entities are required to apply for the current academic year.

3.4 Unaccredited Institutions and Entities

- A. Distance education providers must be accredited and in good standing with an accrediting agency that is approved by the United States Department of Education (USDE).
- B. No unaccredited institution/entity or institution/entity accredited by an unapproved USDE accrediting agency may offer distance education in Mississippi or to Mississippi residents for academic credit or a degree.

3.5 Distance Education

The Commission adopts the definition of distance education by the United States Department of Education as authorized by the Higher Education Act of 2008.

- a. Distance education is education that uses one or more of the following technologies in providing educational content to students:
 - i. The Internet; or
 - ii. One-way/two-way transmissions through open broadcast, cable microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite or wireless communication devices, audio conferencing; or
 - iii. Video cassettes, DVDs, CD-ROMs, or other media used in conjunction with any of the above technologies.

3.6 Student Verification

Institutions or any other entities offering distance education shall have a policy or process in place that establishes that the student who registers in a distance education program and/or course is the same student participating in and completing the course and/or program and receiving academic credit.

3.7 Authorization for Non-SARA Distance Education Programs

- A. Out-of-state academic degree-granting postsecondary educational institutions or any other entities that offer courses and/or programs via distance education from their locations outside the borders of Mississippi are required to apply for Commission approval.
- B. The Commission will not consider a college or university or any 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 any other entity.
- C. Institutions or any other entities must submit the initial application, supporting documentation, and fees. Institutions or any other entities shall submit the initial application, supporting documentation, and fees. Applicants must submit a written request for an application.
- D. Institutions or any other entities must provide the annual report application, supporting documentation, and fees. Applicants must submit a written request for an application.
- E. If an institution or entity requires approval from another Mississippi agency, the institution or entity shall provide documentation of the approval to the Commission.

F. The Commission may request additional information needed to make a determination regarding an application. If any section of any application is deemed insufficient or inappropriate, the applicant shall receive written notification after the Commission meets.

G. At the discretion of the Commission, if an application is denied, the institution or entity may appeal or reapply during the following annual reporting period or later.

H. The Commission may consider initial and/or annual report applications at its annual meeting.

3.8 Authorization to Operate in Mississippi

A. Registration with the Mississippi Secretary of State (SOS) Business Services Division is required; however, such registration alone does not constitute state authorization or approval to grant degrees or offer courses or programs or instruction leading to a for-credit credential including a degree, certificate, or other generally recognized credential.

B. Prior to offering instruction, courses, or degree programs at or above the associate level in Mississippi, the institution or entity shall submit an application, supporting documentation, and fees to the Commission.

C. Field placements are exempt from Standard A. However, prior to offering field placements, the institution or entity shall submit an Experiential Learning Placement Application, supporting documentation, and fee to the Commission. The Commission may consider applications for field placements at its scheduled, called, and/or annual meetings. Field placements shall mean site-based learning activities (e.g., clinicals, 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. Nursing clinicals are exempt from the above application materials. However, contact must be made with the IHL Director of Nursing Education for additional information. Refer to Appendix C.

E. If an institution or entity requires approval from another Mississippi agency, the institution or entity shall provide documentation of the approval to the Commission.

F. The Commission will not consider a college or university or any 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 any other entity.

G. Institutions and other entities shall be reviewed annually, and a list of institutions and their relationship to the Commission shall be published annually after July 1.

H. Institutions or any other entities shall submit the initial application, supporting documentation, and fees. Applicants must submit a written request for an application.

I. Institutions or any other entities must provide the annual report application, supporting documentation, and fees. Submit a written request for an application.

J. The Commission may request additional information needed to make a determination regarding an application. If any section of any application is deemed insufficient or inappropriate, the applicant shall receive written notification after the Commission meets.

K. At the discretion of the Commission, if an application is denied, the institution or entity may appeal or reapply during the following annual reporting period or later.

L. The Commission may consider initial and/or annual report applications at its annual meeting.

3.9 New In-State Institutions and Entities

A. The Commission may consider applications from new in-state “start-up” academic degree-granting postsecondary institutions and any other entities, where Mississippi is the home-state, at its scheduled, called, and/or annual meetings.

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

C. Prior to offering instruction, courses, or degree programs at or above the associate level in Mississippi, the institution or entity shall submit an application, supporting documentation, and fees to the Commission.

D. If an institution or entity requires approval from another Mississippi agency or organization, the institution or entity shall provide documentation of the approval to the Commission.

E. Institutions and any other entities shall be reviewed annually, and a list of their relationship to the Commission shall be published annually after July 1.

F. Institutions or any other entities shall submit the initial application, supporting documentation, and fees. Applicants must submit a written request for an application.

G. Institutions or any other entities shall provide the progress report application and/or annual report application at the request of the Commission.

H. The Commission may request additional information needed to make a determination regarding an application. If any section of any application is deemed insufficient or inappropriate, the applicant shall receive written notification after the Commission meets.

I. At the discretion of the Commission, if an application is denied, the institution or entity may appeal or reapply during the following annual reporting period or later.

J. If the institution or entity is not making satisfactory progress and/or making a good faith effort to receive conditional approval by the third year, the Commission shall deny the application. The institution or entity may appeal or reapply during the following reporting period or later.

3.10 Use of Institution Name

A. The use of terms such as university, college, school, institution, or institute in the institution’s or entity’s name shall require approval by the Commission.

B. Authorization is required prior to operation, advertising, marketing, offering courses or programs or instruction leading to a for-credit credential including a degree, certificate, or other generally recognized credential.

3.11 Fees

In-State Fees-Mississippi Institutions Only	
Description	Fees
Site Visits	Travel + expenses
Delinquent Fee	\$500 Fees will increase by an additional \$500 for every 30 days that fees and/or materials are not paid or submitted on time.
Reinstatement Fee	\$1,000 The fee for reinstatement of authorization of a suspended institution or entity is \$1,000. The fee for reinstatement of authorization of a institution or entity placed on probation requiring oversight by the accrediting agency is \$1,000.
Application Request (Start-up Institutions/Entities)	\$100
New Institution Application (Start-up Institutions/Entities)	\$3,000
State Fee (SARA Renewal Fee)	\$2,000/year for institutions with fewer than 2,500 FTE \$4,000/year for institutions with 2,500 to 9,999 FTE \$6,000/year for institutions with 10,000 or more FTE

Out-of-State Fees	
Description	Fees
Site Visits	Travel + expenses
Delinquent Fee	\$500 Fees will increase by an additional \$500 for every 30 days that fees and/or materials are not paid or submitted on time.
Reinstatement Fee	\$1000 The fee for reinstatement of authorization of a suspended institution or entity is \$1,000. The fee for reinstatement of authorization of a institution or entity placed on probation requiring oversight by the accrediting agency is \$1,000.
Initial/Annual Renewal Application (distance education programs and those with a presence or wanting to establish a presence in Mississippi)	Mirror NC-SARA Fee Schedule plus program fee(s) will be assessed Institutions/Entities with a physical location in Mississippi prior to December 2024, will not be assessed a program fee(s). Should there be a break in service, the institution/entity will follow the current fee structure.
Clinicals (not to include nursing), Internships, Educator Preparation, or other Field-Based Experiences	Mirror NC-SARA Fee Schedule
Nursing Clinicals	Contact IHL Director of Nursing Education
Change of location or additional location	\$250
New Program of Study or Degree or Change to Program	\$250 A fee of \$250 must accompany each application for approval to offer a new program of study or degree or change to program unless the new program or degree or program modification request is included in the institution's/entity's initial or renewal application. Fee includes one new program or degree or change to program only.
Changing Legal Status, Form of Control, Ownership	\$250
Other substantive changes requiring Commission approval	\$250 Fee includes one substantive change only.
Copying/Mailing (per page)	\$0.15

*In addition to an application fee, out-of-state institutions and other entities will be assessed a program fee for each program of study or degree offered to Mississippi residents. A course fee will be assessed for each course offered to Mississippi residents not offered in a Commission

- \$500 per course
- \$1,000 per certificate
- \$2,000 per associate's degree
- \$3,000 per bachelor's degree
- \$4,000 per master's degree
- \$5,000 per educational specialist degree
- \$6,000 per doctorate or professional degree

In-state and out-of-state fees are nonrefundable.

3.12 Authorization and Conditional Approval

A. Authorized (Approved)

To receive Commission approval, an institution or other entity must be in compliance with Commission standards, rules and regulations, procedures, provisions, and policies including accreditation in good standing by a United States Department of Education (USDE) recognized accrediting body. If approved, the institution or entity must among other requirements:

- a. Submit an annual report application, supporting documentation, and fees by the deadline specified in the notification letter from the Commission;
- b. Maintain institutional accreditation by a USDE recognized accrediting body and, where available, 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 or entity if deemed necessary and shall visit the institution or entity along with any USDE recognized accrediting agency during each of its site visits. 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 or entity 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 or entity 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 or entity.

B. Conditional Approval

a. Accredited Institution or Entity

i. Conditional approval may be granted to an in-state institution/entity or an institution/entity that is located outside the borders of Mississippi which is accredited by a USDE recognized accrediting agency when the institution/entity is substantially in compliance with Commission standards and regulations and is continuously making satisfactory progress to full compliance.

b. Unaccredited Institution or Entity

ii. Conditional approval may be granted to an unaccredited institution or entity physically located in Mississippi that has been in operation less than five (5) years. The Commission will review applications based on statutory and regulatory requirements and the institution's or entity's potential for achieving full compliance including accreditation by a USDE recognized accrediting agency.

- c. Conditional approval may be granted for a period of one year, not to exceed three (3) years. If conditional approval is granted, the institution or entity must:
- i. 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 USDE recognized accrediting body;
 - ii. If accredited, maintain institutional accreditation by a USDE recognized accrediting body and, where available, programmatic accreditation;
 - iii. If not accredited, submit the progress report application and timeline for achieving accreditation by a USDE recognized accrediting agency upon Commission request;
 - iv. Submit an annual report application by the deadline specified in the notification letter from the Commission. Additional reports and information may be required upon the request of the Commission.
 - v. Submit copies of communication from state, federal, and accrediting agencies concerning official action, sanctions, and/or notices;
 - vi. Commission staff and the Commission and/or a Commission-appointed evaluation team may conduct announced or unannounced visits to the institution or entity if deemed necessary by the Commission and shall visit the institution or entity along with any USDE recognized accrediting agency during each of its site visits to the institution or entity. 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 or entity 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 or entity 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 or entity.
 - vii. Failure to satisfy the provisions within the specified timeframe will result in:
 - i. Revocation of conditional approval, or
 - ii. Conditional approval may be extended at the Commission's discretion.

3.13 Changes Requiring Notice or Approval

- A. Institutions or entities shall submit to the Commission a Change Requiring Notice or Approval Form. Out-of-State institutions or entities (located outside the borders of Mississippi) requesting Commission approval are assessed the appropriate fees. Submit a written request for an application/form.

Changes Requiring Notice

- a. Awarding dual or joint academic awards.
- b. Entering into a cooperative academic arrangement or other arrangement.
- c. Changing the governance of an institution or entity.
- d. Closing an institution, an entity, a program, a method of delivery, an off-campus instructional site, or a program at an off-campus instructional site.
- e. Change in institutional accreditation status.
- f. Change in federal financial assistance program participation status.
- g. Change in designated central institutional contact, administrators.
- h. Change of recognized accreditors.
- i. Participating in the federal Prison Education Program providing Pell Grant access to confined or incarcerated students.

Changes Requiring Approval

- a. Changing the way an institution or entity measures student progress, whether in clock hours or credit-hours; semesters, trimesters, or quarters; or time-based or non-time-based methods or measures.
- b. Acquiring another institution or entity or any program or location of another institution or entity.
- c. Merging/consolidating two or more institutions or entities.
- d. Changing the legal status, form of control, or ownership of an institution or entity.
- e. Relocating an institution or entity or an off-campus instructional site of an institution or entity (including a branch campus).
- f. Offering courses or programs at a higher or lower degree level than currently authorized.
- g. Initiating programs by distance education.
- h. Adding a program.
- i. Changing a program.
- j. Adding an additional method of delivery to a currently offered program.
- k. Adding competency-based education programs.
- l. Adding programs with completion pathways that recognize and accommodate a student's prior or existing knowledge or competency.
- m. Re-opening a previously closed program or off-campus instructional site.
- n. Adding a new off-campus instructional site/additional location including a branch campus.

B. An institution or entity 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 or entity, the new owner must apply for state authorization.

D. For accreditation purposes, institutions and entities should follow their accrediting agency's Substantive Change Policy and Procedures.

3.14 Institution/Entity Closure

A. Planned Closure

Approval will be withdrawn after all actions involved in the closure have been completed. When an institution or entity plans a closing, institution or entity officials must communicate their plan to include teach-out plans and agreements to the Commission and all parties concerned including current and former students, faculty and staff, accrediting bodies, Closed School Unit at the United States Department of Education (where federal financial aid is involved), and all affected lending agencies. It is advisable that the institution or entity 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 or entity proposes to discontinue its operation, the institution or entity shall notify the Commission and submit a Closing an Institution application within sixty (60) days.

b. An institution or entity 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 or entity closes.

c. An institution/entity and its owners are jointly and separately responsible to arrange at their expense for the storage and safekeeping of all student records required to be maintained and destruction of records not required to be maintained. This includes paying the costs of the transfer of records to the third-party repository and for the costs of maintaining the records.

d. Neither the Commission nor the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning shall store or maintain records.

B. Unplanned Closure

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

a. An institution/entity and its owners are jointly and separately responsible to arrange at their expense for the storage and safekeeping of all student records required to be maintained and destruction of records not required to be maintained. This includes paying the costs of the transfer of records to the third-party repository and for the costs of maintaining the records.

b. Neither the Commission nor the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning shall store or maintain records.

3.15 Academic Records Maintenance and Protection

A. Approved institutions or other entities must maintain academic records securely as required in Standard 4.17 and must protect the personally identifiable information of enrolled or former students in accordance to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). The institution's or other entity'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 academic year, an institution or entity 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 or entity operating in Mississippi proposes to discontinue its operation, the chief executive officer, by whatever title designated, or other responsible officer of the institution or entity 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 the Commission be updated when 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 entity, or the information contained in the academic record in a standard transcript format.

D. If the institution or entity 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 record must be provided to the Commission and must be updated when information changes.

E. If the institution or entity enters into an agreement with another institution/entity to teach out or continue students' degree programs, it is understood that the institution or entity 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.

3.16 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, institution, 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 or entity shall make all reasonable effort to follow the complaint/grievance procedures and exhaust all avenues available at the institution or entity.

3.17 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, rules and 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 or any other entity after entering or completing courses offered by the institution or any other entity;
- 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 or entity 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 or entity 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 or entity; and
- l. incompetence of any owner or administrator to operate a college or university or any other entity.

B. The Commission may consider probation or other action for an institution or any other entity subject to investigative, show-cause or disciplinary action by the Commission, an accrediting agency, or other state or federal agency. The institution or entity 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 certified mail to the institution's or entity's last known address, with a statement of the reason(s) for the action.

3.18 Appeal of Commission Decision to Deny or Revoke Approval

- A. An institution or entity must notify the Commission in writing by the deadline specified in the notification letter that it wishes a hearing to appeal the decision. The institution or entity 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 or entity that it seeks an appeal.
- C. The Commission will notify the institution or entity of its decision following the hearing.

3.19 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.

3.20 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 typed or legibly handwritten.

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 Mississippi Commission on College Accreditation 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 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

4.1 Legal Compliance

The institution or entity 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 or entity shall have a system of governance that facilitates the accomplishment of the institution's/entity's mission and purposes, supports institutional effectiveness and integrity, and protects the interests of its constituents, including students, faculty, and staff. The institution or entity shall have a governing board consisting of at least five members. The governing board shall ensure that the institution or any other entity 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 or any other entity can maintain the standards of the Commission and progress to authorization and accreditation by a United States Department of Education (USDE) recognized accrediting agency within the time limits set by the Commission and USDE recognized accrediting agency.

B. The executive, administrative, and academic officers shall hold an earned advanced degree appropriate for the mission of the institution or entity, preferably an earned doctorate, awarded by an institution/entity accredited by a USDE recognized accrediting agency and have work experience, professional licensures and certifications, and/or other demonstrating competencies and achievements that reasonable prepare them for their positions.

C. The institution or entity shall have a chief executive officer whose primary responsibility is to the institution or entity and who is not the presiding officer of the governing board.

D. The chief academic officer shall hold an earned advanced degree appropriate for the mission of the institution or entity, preferably an earned doctorate, awarded by an institution/entity accredited by a USDE 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, service; and the promotion of student success.

E. In the case of renewal, the officers of the institution or entity shall demonstrate a record of effective leadership in administering the institution/entity.

4.4 Distinction of Roles

The institution or other entity 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 or entity, the administration, and the faculty.

4.5 Financial Resources and Stability

A. The institution or entity 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 or entity 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 or entity 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 or entity's mission and programs.

B. Out-of-State Institutions (located outside the borders of Mississippi)

Institutions or other entities that want to offer courses or programs must have a Federal Composite Financial Score of 1.5 or greater as calculated by an independent certified public accountant. Institutions or entities with a score between 1.0-1.49 may be considered for authorization. Institutions or entities with a score below 1.0 will not be considered for state authorization.

4.6 Financial Records

A. Financial records and reports of the institution or other entity shall be kept and made separate and distinct from those of any affiliated or sponsoring person or organization.

B. 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.

C. An annual independent audit of all fiscal accounts of the educational institution or entity shall be authorized by the governing board, shall be performed by a independent 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 or entity shall be conducted to advance and improve the institution/entity. These aspects include, but are not limited to, the academic program of teaching, research, and public service, if applicable; administration; financial planning and control; student services; facilities and equipment, and auxiliary enterprises.

4.8 Program Evaluation

A. The institution or entity 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, ability to finance each program of study, facilities and equipment, instructional practices, student services, public and private partnerships, 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 or entity 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 or other entities within Mississippi to meet market needs shall be considered. Information may include but not be limited to the following items:

Program Demand: Select one or both of the following to address student demand:

- Survey of Student Interest
 - Number of surveys administered:
 - Number of completed surveys returned:
 - Percentage of students interested in program:

Include a brief statement that provides additional information to explain the survey.

- Include Market Analysis or Evidence of Labor Market Need
- Include Employment Opportunities for Graduates (state, region, nation)

4.9 Student Admissions and Remediation

A. Upon the admission of a student to any undergraduate program, the institution or other entity 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 or other entity 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 or other entity 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 or entity accredited by a United States Department of Education (USDE) recognized accrediting agency to offer baccalaureate degrees, or a degree from a foreign institution equivalent to a baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution/entity. The procedures used by the institution or entity 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 or entity 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 or entity accredited by a USDE 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 or entity 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 or entity accredited by a recognized accrediting agency.

E. The institution or entity shall document and justify the qualifications of its faculty.

F. With the approval of a majority of the institution's or entity'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 by the institution or entity. The Commission, at its discretion, may review the full complement of faculty providing instruction at the institution or other entity.

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 or entity and shall be such that the institution or entity 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 or entity. An institution/entity 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 or entity may arrange to have all or part of the general education component taught by another institution or entity, provided that:

- a. The applicant institution's or entity's faculty shall design the general education requirement;
- b. There shall be a written agreement between the institutions/entities specifying the applicant institutions'/entitys' general education requirements and the manner in which they will be met by the providing institution/entity;
- c. At least one-half of the courses shall be offered in organized classes; and
- d. The providing institution or entity shall be accredited by a United States Department of Education (USDE) recognized accrediting agency.

4.14 Credit for Work Completed Outside a Collegiate Setting

A. An institution or entity awarding collegiate credit for course work completed outside a collegiate setting (outside a degree-granting institution or entity

accredited by a USDE 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/entity 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/entities process and procedures for evaluating work completed outside a collegiate setting to ongoing evaluation by the institution's/entity'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 4.14A. 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.

C. 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 or entity shall maintain and ensure that students have access to learning resources with a collection of books, educational materials and publications, online materials, and other resources and with staff, services, equipment, and facilities that are adequate and appropriate for the purpose and enrollment of the institution or other entity. Learning resources shall be current, well distributed among fields in which the institution or entity offers instructions, cataloged, logically organized, and readily located. The institution or entity shall maintain a continuous plan for learning resources development and support, including objectives and selections of materials. Institutions or entities 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 or entity to be appropriate for the program being offered, and the library shall be reasonably accessible to the students and faculty.

4.16 Facilities

A. The institution or other entity shall have or provide access to administrative, classroom, equipment, laboratory space, instructional materials, and learning resources to support quality education based on the type, level, and method of delivery of program, course, or instruction

being offered. The institution or other entity shall meet general standards of safety, cleanliness, maintenance, health, and lighting and shall comply with any federal, state, and local laws and ordinances.

B. Student housing owned, maintained, or approved by the institution or entity, if any, shall be appropriate, safe, and adequate. The institution or entity shall comply with any federal, state, and local health and safety laws and ordinances.

4.17 Academic Records

The institution or other entity shall securely 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 major course of study; and
- d. Any other information contained in academic records including but not limited to:
 - i Full and correct name and address of the authorized main location of the institution or entity
 - ii Status of student (active, withdrawn, probation, leave of absence, death, or graduate)
 - iii Official date recorded for all student withdrawals and graduations
 - iv Beginning date or academic term with the year for each course attempted
 - v Indication of credits given by transfer from another institution/entity or credit by exam
 - vi Cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA)
 - vii Date the transcript was last updated and/or printed
 - viii Signature of an institution or entity official

B. Two copies of said records shall be maintained in separate secure places. Records of students who are no longer enrolled at the institution or other entity for any reason, including graduation, must be maintained in accordance with Standard 3.15 (Academic Records Maintenance and Protection).

C. Students in good standing will be provided transcripts upon request, subject to the institution's or entity's obligation, 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 or entity 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 or entity, its programs, available resources, tuition, fees, requirements, state authorization, institutional and programmatic accreditation status.

B. The institution or entity shall provide students, prospective students prior to enrollment, and other interested persons with a printed or electronically published catalog. Institutions or entities 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 or entity's mission;
 - b. A statement of admissions policies and entrance requirements;
 - c. Information describing the purpose, length, and objectives of the program or programs offered by the institution or other entity;
 - d. The schedule of tuition, fees, and all other charges and expenses necessary for completion of the course of study;
 - e. Cancellation, withdrawal, and refund policies;
 - f. A definition of the unit of credit as it applies at the institution or other entity;
 - g. An explanation of satisfactory progress as it applies at the institution or entity, including an explanation of the grading or marking system; a description of any probation and suspension policies;
 - h. The institution's or entity's calendar, including the beginning and ending dates for each instructional term, holidays, and registration dates;
 - i. A complete listing of each employed faculty member showing name, area of assignment, rank, and each earned degree held, including degree level, degree designation, and institution or entity 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 or entity that awarded the degree;
 - k. A statement of legal control with the names of the trustees, directors, and officers of the corporation;
 - l. If applicable, location, telephone number, electronic mail and web address of the principal office of the corporation owning the institution or entity;
 - m. Disclosures of what programs, if any, satisfy educational requirements for professional licensure;
 - n. A complete listing of all scholarships offered, if any;
 - o. A statement describing the nature and extent of available student services;

- p. Complete and clearly stated information about the transferability of credit to other postsecondary institutions including two-year and four-year colleges and universities or other entities;
 - q. Any other facts concerning the institution or entity and the program or course of instruction as are reasonably likely to affect the decision of the student to enroll therein;
 - r. Any disclosures specified by the Commission or defined in Commission standards, rules and regulations, policies, provisions, or procedures.
- C. The institution or other entity shall adopt, publish, and adhere to a fair and equitable cancellation, withdrawal, and refund policy.
- D. The institution or entity shall provide to each prospective student, newly enrolled student, and returning student, complete and clearly presented information indicating the institution's or entity'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 or entity.
- E. Any special requirements, or limitations, of program offerings must be made explicit in writing. Concerning out-of-state institutions or entities 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 a printed or electronically published catalog.
- F. Upon satisfactory completion of the program of study, the student shall be given appropriate educational credentials indicating the degree level, degree designation, the designation of the major course of study, and a transcript accurately listing the information typically found on such a document, subject to institutions' or entity's obligation, if any, to cooperate with the rules and regulations governing state and federally guaranteed student loans.

4.19 Student Services

The institution or entity shall provide an effective program of student services to help students succeed. The program shall include orientation, academic counseling, financial aid counseling, disability services, career information and planning, placement assistance, and testing services.

4.20 Student Rights and Responsibilities

The institution or entity shall establish and adhere to a clear and fair policy regarding due process in disciplinary matters; outline the established grievance process which shall indicate that students should follow the institution's or entity's process utilizing the institution's or entity'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 or entity if all other avenues have been exhausted; and publish the policy in a handbook, which shall include

other rights and responsibilities of the students. The handbook shall be supplied in print or electronically to each student upon enrollment in the institution or entity.

4.21 Health and Safety

The institution or other entity 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 or entity including appropriate responses to illness, accident, fire, and crime.

4.22 Learning Outcomes

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

**MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON COLLEGE ACCREDITATION
ADDITIONAL ITEMS**

APPENDIX

Appendix A	Data Reporting-Mississippi SARA Institutions Only
Appendix B	Provisional Approval
Appendix C	Nursing Education
Appendix D	Other Regulatory Matters

APPENDIX A: DATA REPORTING-MISSISSIPPI SARA INSTITUTIONS ONLY

- A. Institutions are required to annually report to NC-SARA the number of exclusively distance students enrolled in the institution engaged in distance education, disaggregated by state, territory, or district in which the students are located, including the home state. This includes both degree and non-degree for-credit courses. Institutions shall also report the numbers of their students engaged in certain experiential learning placements disaggregated by state and two-digit Classification of Instruction Programs (CIP) codes.
- B. Follow the NC-SARA data reporting schedule.
- C. Failure to submit materials on time will result in a delinquent fee in the amount of \$500 and being placed on provisional status for SARA. Fees will increase by an additional \$500 for every 30 days that fees and/or materials are not paid or submitted on time.
- D. The provisions of Appendix A have been developed to reflect Section 6 of the SARA Policy Manual.

APPENDIX B: PROVISIONAL APPROVAL

- A. The Commission may, at its discretion, provisionally approve institutions for participation in SARA in any of the circumstances set forth in the SARA Policy Manual.
- B. An institution admitted to or renewed for SARA participation in provisional status will be subject to the oversight measures that the Commission deems necessary for purposes of ensuring SARA requirements are met. The Commission, in its discretion, may allow the institution a period of time not to exceed twelve (12) months from the date of determination that the institution in provisional status does not meet the requirements of SARA to come into compliance with SARA standards under the supervision of the Commission. Should an extension of provisional status exceed one year, the Commission will follow procedures set forth in the SARA Policy Manual.
- C. At the end of the provisional status period, if an institution approved to operate under SARA in provisional status is no longer subject to any of the conditions set forth in the SARA Policy Manual, the Commission shall grant the application if the criteria justifying provisional status no longer apply.
- D. At the end of the provisional status period, if the Commission determines that the institution approved to operate under SARA in provisional status does not meet the requirements of SARA, the Commission may disallow any further enrollments under SARA, notify SREB and NC-SARA, and remove the institution from SARA participation. The Commission may allow any students enrolled in the institution under SARA provisions at the time of the finding of noncompliance a period of six (6) months in which to conclude their work at the institution.
- E. The provisions of Appendix B have been developed to reflect Subsections 3.2 and 3.3 of the SARA Policy Manual.

APPENDIX C: NURSING EDUCATION

The Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning (Board) is empowered by the State Legislature (Miss. Code [1991 Supp.] § 37-129-1, et seq.) and required to establish by rules and regulations and promulgate uniform standards for accreditation of Schools of Nursing in the State of Mississippi in so far as concerns the eligibility of graduates of such schools to take the examination prescribed by law to become registered nurses authorized to practice the profession of nursing as registered nurses in Mississippi, and in so far as concerns student nurses attending such schools being eligible to participate in any of the following student nurse scholarship programs or other program of assistance now existing or hereafter established by legislative enactment.

The Board is also required to issue to such Schools of Nursing upon an annual basis certificates of accreditation as may be proper under such standards.

The Board, in recognizing that each unit in nursing offering nursing degree programs has individual characteristics and goals, maintains that each shall implement its own philosophy, purposes, and objectives. All programs in nursing shall be based on sound educational principles under the guidance of a competent faculty. The total program of nursing education shall meet the required standards of accreditation as prescribed by the Board.

Mississippi nursing schools (units in nursing) should prepare students for nursing careers according to the type of program that they offer. Rigid conformity to a specific and fixed curriculum is not expected. Rather, the Board approves programs which are of superior caliber and encourages creative and intelligent experimentation based on sound principles.

In carrying out its statutory responsibilities with regard to nursing degree program accreditation, it is the intent of the Board to ensure that all such programs in the State under its jurisdiction meet State accreditation standards in a consistent manner. Many changes have occurred in nursing education since Mississippi's nursing school accreditation law was enacted. The number of programs has increased and the quality of nursing education has improved substantially. All nursing degree programs in Mississippi not only meet mandatory State accreditation standards, but also have achieved or are in the process of achieving accreditation by one of the three national, non-profit accrediting bodies, Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN), Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE), and National League for Nursing Commission for Nursing Education Accreditation (NLN CNEA). The Board recognizes that ACEN, CCNE, and/or NLN CNEA accreditation for Mississippi nursing programs is desirable because of the quality of standards, emphasis placed on outcomes, and importance in the national marketplace for recruiting faculty and students.

Undergraduate and Graduate Nursing Clinical Courses in Mississippi by Out-Of-State Programs
Out-of-state undergraduate and/or graduate nursing education degree programs offering clinical experiences in Mississippi are expected to maintain the standards required of the Mississippi-based programs. The Mississippi Commission on College Accreditation (MCCA) serves as the

state portal agency for SARA and the state regulator for postsecondary academic degree-granting institutions. Institutions desiring to place nursing students in clinical practicums must be SARA institutions. If not, the authorization process for Non-SARA Distance Education Programs through MCCA must be completed. Clinical practicums in the state are considered domiciled and trigger a physical presence. Therefore, the program will need to be reviewed by IHL Nursing Education. This process may take up to three (3) months. To request a review of the nursing education program degree or questions, contact the Director of Nursing Education at Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning Academic and Student Affairs.

Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning
Academic and Student Affairs Nursing Education
3825 Ridgewood Road
Jackson, MS 39211
<http://www.mississippi.edu/nursing/>

APPENDIX D: Other Regulatory Matters

A. Relation to Federal and State Laws and Policies

The foregoing standards and regulations as adopted by the Commission are meant to incorporate, and do not purport to supplant or modify, those laws, statutory enactments, regulations, and policies which may govern or relate to subject matter of these standards, rules and regulations, policies, provisions, and procedures.

B. Relation to United States Department of Education Recognized Accrediting Agencies

The foregoing standards and regulations as adopted by the Commission are meant to incorporate, and do not purport to supplant or modify, those criteria, practices, policies, and procedures which may govern or relate to subject matter of these standards, rules and regulations, policies, provisions, and procedures.

