



AdvancED Policies and Procedures for Accreditation and Certification

Updated June 29, 2018

The AdvancED policies and procedures outlined in this document represent the unified policies and procedures for accreditation and certification from AdvancED and its Accreditation Divisions: North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), Northwest Accreditation Commission (NWAC), and Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI), herein collectively referred to as AdvancED. These policies are effective immediately upon approval by the AdvancED Global Commission.

DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of these policies and procedures, the listed terms are defined as:

1. **Accreditation.** A voluntary method of quality assurance developed more than 100 years ago by American universities and secondary schools and designed primarily to distinguish institutions adhering to a set of educational standards and policies. Accreditation applies to an entire institution or system.
2. **Certification.** A voluntary process of quality assurance that yields a documented recognition of achievement of a defined process or program. Certification may apply to a process or program of an institution or to an institution as a whole.
3. **Institution.** Any educational unit such as a school, association, charter school authorizer, corporation, or education service agency (ESA) that is seeking accreditation or certification as a single entity.
4. **System.** Any organization such as a corporation, district, ESA, or system of institutions that is seeking accreditation for the system as a whole, including the organization's system-level and all of the institutions managed by the system.

POLICY I: POLICY MANAGEMENT, APPLICABILITY AND RECOGNITION

- 1.01 **Management.** The revision and adoption of the accreditation and certification policies and procedures of AdvancED shall be the responsibility of the AdvancED Global Commission.
- 1.02 **Applicability.** These policies and procedures apply to all institutions or systems seeking AdvancED accreditation and/or certification.
- 1.03 **Recognition.** Institutions or systems that achieve accreditation and/or certification will be awarded the applicable accreditation and/or certification recognition representative of all three AdvancED accreditation and certification divisions.

POLICY II: TERM AND PROCESS REQUIREMENTS OF ACCREDITATION AND CERTIFICATION

2.01 Eligibility for Accreditation and Certification.

- a. Accreditation only. Accreditation may be conferred to an institution or a system. For systems accreditation, all schools managed by the system must be accredited or in the accreditation process, and the system-level is conferred accreditation in addition to the accreditation that is conferred to each institution.
- b. Certification only. Certification may be conferred to an institution but not to a system. All institutions within a system may be certified, but such a circumstance does not mean the system-level is conferred a certification in addition to its institutions. Certification is conferred under the name of the institution whether the certification was earned by the institution as a whole or by a program(s) within the institution.
- c. Simultaneous Accreditation and Certification. An institution may be both accredited and certified. The expiration dates for any accreditation status or any certification status may be the same or may be different. An institution must earn accreditation and certification separately and may maintain or lose either accreditation or certification without automatically jeopardizing the status of the other. Accordingly, any AdvancED actions to drop accreditation or certification must be applied to each status separately.
- d. Accreditation is not a requirement for certification. An institution may earn and maintain certification without any intent to pursue accreditation.

2.02 Term of Accreditation or Certification. The term of accreditation and/or certification is five years as long as the institution or system continues to satisfy the following:

- a. General Requirements of Policy 2.03.
- b. Accreditation Requirements of Policy 2.04 for institutions or systems seeking to achieve and maintain accreditation.
- c. Certification Requirements of Policy 2.05 for institutions seeking to achieve and maintain certification.
- d. Additional Requirements of Policy 2.06 for institutions and systems.

2.03 General Requirements. In order to achieve and maintain AdvancED accreditation or certification, an institution or system must:

- a. Maintain membership in the AdvancED Improvement Network (AIN).
- b. Adhere to AdvancED policies, Standards, and Assurances for accreditation and/or certification.
- c. Submit all required reports and demographic updates within prescribed timeframes.
- d. Pay all required fees within prescribed timeframes.

2.04 Accreditation Requirements. In addition to the general requirements, and in order to achieve and maintain accreditation, an institution or system must:

- a. Notify AdvancED of its intent to pursue accreditation by submitting an application or by written notification if already an AIN member.
- b. Meet the appropriate set of accreditation Standards and Assurances.
- c. Authentically engage in continuous improvement to achieve results.
- d. If not yet accredited at any status, host a Readiness Review by AdvancED.
 - i. If AdvancED determines the institution or system does not possess the capacity to meet the policies, Standards and Assurances required to achieve accreditation, the

- institution or system will remain a member of AIN and must host another Readiness Review in order to pursue accreditation.
- ii. If AdvancED determines the institution or system has the capacity to meet policies, Standards and Assurances required to achieve accreditation, the institution or system will be conferred with the status of candidate.
 - e. Host an Engagement Review within a timeframe established by the AdvancED Accreditation Office after achieving the status of candidate and at least once every five years thereafter.
 - f. Between twelve months and four weeks prior to a scheduled Engagement Review, submit to AdvancED documentation to support the Engagement Review.
 - g. Submit a progress report(s) on Improvement Priorities as identified by the Engagement Review Team within timeframes as defined by the institution's or system's accreditation status and/or as prescribed by the AdvancED Accreditation Office.

2.05 Certification Requirements. In order to achieve and maintain certification, an institution must meet the following criteria in addition to the general requirements listed in 2.04:

- a. Notify AdvancED of its intent to pursue certification by submitting an application or by written notification if already an AIN member.
- b. Meet the appropriate set of certification Standards and Assurances.
- c. If desired, host an optional pre-visit(s) to the institution by AdvancED.
- d. Host a certification review within a timeframe established by the AdvancED Accreditation Office and at least once every five years thereafter.

2.06 Additional Requirements. In addition to satisfying the conditions outlined in 2.02, an institution or system must adhere to the following:

- a. **Compliance with Applicable Governmental Requirements.** The institution or system must comply with all applicable governmental requirements, including any requirements for governmental approval, recognition, or accreditation. An institution's or system's loss of its governmental approval, recognition, accreditation, or certification may be grounds for an accreditation review, monitoring review, or certification review that may result in a change in accreditation or certification status in accordance with the procedures outlined in this document.
- b. **Non-discriminatory Admission of Students.** Institutions and systems accredited or certified through AdvancED shall not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, sex, national or ethnic origin, age, or disabilities or act unlawfully in the administration of their educational policies, scholarship, admission, and loan programs.
- c. **Records Retention.** Institutions and systems are required to maintain and implement a records retention system that meets applicable government requirements for all operating, financial, personnel, and student records. The records retention system applies to paper and electronic records, includes appropriate back-up systems, and details consistent processes for records destruction.
 - i. Institutions and systems must have written procedures for the ongoing access and maintenance of all relevant records in the event the institution or system ceases operation.

- ii. The institution or system must document to AdvancED via the process for Substantive Change the location of where the records will be housed and contact information for that location.

- d. **Institutional Integrity and Due Process.** An institution or system is required to represent itself accurately in all aspects of the accreditation process and/or certification process. If an institution or system misrepresents itself, including but not limited to the following: misrepresentation of its accreditation or certification status to the public; has any condition that may be detrimental to the students and/or clientele of the institution or system; or falsely reports its compliance with the policies and Standards for accreditation and/or certification; the institution's or system's accreditation and/or certification may be dropped. If an institution's or system's accreditation and/or certification is recommended to be dropped, the institution or system shall be afforded due process in consideration of such action.

- e. **Substantive Change.** An institution and system must report to AdvancED within sixty (60) days of occurrence any substantive change in the institution and system, which changes the scope and/or has an impact on the institution's or system's ability to meet the AdvancED Standards and policies. The report of a substantive change must describe the change itself as well as detail the impact of the change on the quality of education in the institution or system. Substantive change areas include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - i. Cease of operation/closure of the institution or system. Include the location of where student records will be housed and the contact information for that location.
 - ii. Change in physical location of the institution or system.
 - iii. Consolidation or reorganization of the institution.
 - iv. Change in mission and purpose of the institution.
 - v. Governance structure of the institution or system, including changing to a charter school or charter school system, being the subject of a governmental takeover, or a change in ownership.
 - vi. Grade levels served by the institution or system.
 - vii. Staffing, including administrative and other non-teaching professional personnel.
 - viii. Available facilities, including upkeep and maintenance.
 - ix. Level of funding.
 - x. School day or school year.
 - xi. Establishment of an additional location geographically apart from the main campus.
 - xii. Student population that causes program or staffing modification(s).
 - xiii. Available programs, including fine arts, practical arts and student activities.

Institution or system failure to submit a substantive change may result in changes to the institution's or system's accreditation and/or certification status or loss of accreditation and/or certification.

- f. **Credits or Grade Placement.** The institution must maintain written policy and procedures for credits and grade placement and should be designed to ensure proper academic placement of the student.

- i. The institution shall accept and classify transfer credits earned or grade placement from institutions that are accredited by a recognized national, regional,¹ or state accrediting agency without further validation based on the school's policies and procedures governing such offerings.
- ii. The institution may accept credits or grade placement from non-accredited institutions when validated by one or more of the following procedures: a review of the student's academic record, an analysis of a sending institution's curriculum, a review of a portfolio of student work, or through an assessment of scholastic performance. The receiving institution must maintain policies and procedures to govern the acceptance of credit or grade placement from non-accredited sources.
- iii. The institution should provide prompt and accurate transcript services for students entering or leaving the institution in accordance with local policy.

¹ Recognized regional accrediting agencies include the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), Northwest Accreditation Commission (NWAC), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI), Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools (MSA CESS), and New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC).

2.07 AdvancED Responsibilities. AdvancED is responsible for supporting and monitoring institution and system adherence to the AdvancED Standards and policies, conducting an Engagement Review to every accredited school or system at least once every five years; conducting a Certification Review to every institution holding a certification at least once every five years; reviewing all institution and system reports; granting an accreditation or certification status for all institutions or systems; responding to complaints by and about institutions and systems; and maintaining accurate, complete, and timely records.

- a. **Codes of Conduct.** In performing the responsibilities outlined in 2.07, all agents of AdvancED shall adhere to the AdvancED Code of Ethics, AdvancED Conflict of Interest Policy, and AdvancED Confidentiality Statement, including Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) Compliance and/or other governmental privacy regulations as applicable.
 - i. **Code of Ethics.** AdvancED Representatives agree to adhere to the AdvancED Code of Ethics. The code outlines the ethical behaviors that are essential to the proper performance of AdvancED duties and to the maintenance of confidence in our work by our institutions and systems, other clients, and the public.
 1. **Conflicts of Interest.** We conduct ourselves in a manner which seeks to avoid a conflict of interest or any appearance of a conflict of interest. We abide by the AdvancED Conflict of Interest Policy.
 2. **Impartiality.** We treat all institutions and systems that are or may seek AIN membership, accreditation, or certification services with impartiality and courtesy.

3. **Confidentiality and Privacy.** We treat information obtained through institutions' or systems' participation in the accreditation and/or certification process as confidential and shall not disclose such information except in a manner that is consistent with AdvancED policies, governmental regulation, or judicial procedure. We respect the privacy rights of all individuals in the performance of AdvancED duties.
4. **Transparency.** We are committed to providing timely, complete, and accurate information to the public and appropriate stakeholders. All information about the organization will fully and honestly reflect the policies and practices of AdvancED.
5. **Legal Compliance.** We are knowledgeable of and comply with all applicable laws, regulations, and requirements.
6. **Responsible Stewardship.** We manage the organization and its resources responsibly and prudently. We use organizational resources only for AdvancED purposes.
7. **Inclusiveness and Diversity.** We promote inclusiveness and seek diversity in officers, staff, board members, agents, contractors, and volunteers and the institutions, systems, and other clients we serve in order to enrich our effectiveness.

ii. **Conflict of Interest Policy.**

The AdvancED Conflict of Interest Policy is designed to ensure the highest level of ethical conduct of employees, volunteers, and agents of AdvancED (hereinafter referred to as "AdvancED Representatives" or "Representatives") and to avoid public perceptions and financial consequences detrimental to AdvancED that could arise from the misuse, or perception of misuse, of an individual's position or influence.

1. **Conduct.** AdvancED adheres to the highest legal and ethical standards applicable in our business. AdvancED's business is conducted in the strict observance of both the letter and spirit of all applicable laws and regulations, including the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act and the integrity of each AdvancED Representative is of utmost importance. Business dealings that appear to create conflicts of interest between AdvancED and an AdvancED Representative are unacceptable. A potential or actual conflict of interest occurs whenever an AdvancED Representative is in a position to influence a decision that may result in a personal gain for the AdvancED Representative or an immediate family member as a result of AdvancED's business dealings. AdvancED Representatives shall conduct themselves in a manner which seeks to avoid a conflict of interest or any appearance of a conflict of interest between their personal interests and interests of AdvancED.

2. **Full Disclosure.** AdvancED Representatives shall disclose to the Chief Accreditation Officer any possible conflict of interest, at the earliest possible time, in a written disclosure statement. The Chief Accreditation Officer is responsible for reviewing all submitted statements and making decisions concerning resolutions of conflicts.
3. **Conflicts of Interest.** An AdvancED Representative shall be considered to have a possible conflict of interest if such individual has an existing or potential financial or other interest which impairs or might appear to impair independent, unbiased judgment in discharging responsibilities on behalf of AdvancED.
 - a. Such interests may include, but are not limited to:
 - i. Any financial or other interests in institutions and systems that are AIN members or seeking AIN membership, accredited, seeking accreditation, and/or certified or seeking certification services through AdvancED;
 - ii. Employment or consulting arrangements with institutions or systems engaged in the accreditation or certification without prior disclosure to the Chief Accreditation Officer;
 - iii. Ownership of some or all of an institution or system;
 - iv. The holding of mortgages, liens, or other debt instruments or interest upon an institution or system engaged in the accreditation and/or certification;
 - v. Service as an officer or director of an institution or system that is engaged in the accreditation and/or certification; or
 - vi. The possession of any of the listed interests by a spouse, child, other relative or close friend.
 - b. While institutions and systems are specifically noted in the above examples (i-vi), conflict of interest may be with any clients, vendors, or matters of AdvancED operations where an AdvancED Representative is in a position to benefit, directly or indirectly, from his/her dealings with AdvancED.
 - c. If an AdvancED Representative is uncertain about whether a particular interest should be declared, the individual shall describe the interest in writing to the Chief Accreditation Officer who will issue a binding ruling as to whether the matter in question constitutes a reportable conflict of interest.
4. **Prohibited Actions.** In circumstances in which an AdvancED Representative has a possible conflict of interest, the Representative shall not:
 - a. Participate in financial or other agreements with any institutions or systems, clients, or vendors where a possible conflict of interest might exist;

certification reports, AdvancED shall promptly notify the institution or system and allow the institution or system a time to oppose such process.

- a. Nothing contained herein shall obligate AdvancED to oppose such process, and all cost incurred in opposing said process shall be the responsibility of the school/school system/education provider seeking protection.
4. Information shall not be deemed confidential or proprietary for purposes of this policy, if said information:
 - a. Is already known to AdvancED at the time of disclosure;
 - b. Is or becomes publicly known through no wrongful act of AdvancED or its agents; or
 - c. Is disclosed by the actions of a non-restricted third party.
 5. Nothing contained herein shall interfere with the legal obligation of AdvancED to report instances of child abuse, sexual harassment, or discrimination or any other affirmative reporting requirements under any applicable laws and/or governmental regulations.
- b. **Gifts.** Members of Engagement Review Teams, Certification Review Teams, other review teams as conducted by AdvancED, and other agents of AdvancED who provide services to institutions and systems are prohibited from accepting gifts, other than branded logo items of minimal value, from institutions and systems.
- c. **Investigations and Due Process.** In performing its duties, AdvancED may investigate an accredited institution or system or a certified institution on any matter related to possible violations of AdvancED Standards and Policies at any time. AdvancED shall use its judgment and discretion in determining if a complaint rises to a level justifying an investigation. Investigations will only be initiated when supported by substantial evidence and when they involve matters that could seriously hinder or disrupt the educational effectiveness of the institution and ability of the institution to meet the AdvancED Policies or Standards for accreditation or certification.

All investigations shall be conducted with proper attention to due process, and procedures shall be followed to protect the rights of all parties. The accreditation status of an accredited institution or system or the certification status of a certified institution may be changed as deemed appropriate through the investigative process; and timelines set forth in Policy III may not necessarily apply to special investigations and subsequent monitoring reviews. When warranted by a change of status recommendation, the results of an investigation shall be reported to the appropriate AdvancED Regional Commission and the AdvancED Global Commission.

- d. **Maintenance of and Public Access to Institution and System Records.** AdvancED maintains a record retention system that includes procedures for maintenance and access to institution and system records. AdvancED retains all institution and system final accreditation and certification reports and official correspondence for a 10-year period, documenting two full terms of accreditation or certification. AdvancED makes available

for public access the institution's and system's accreditation and certification status, institution's and system's term of accreditation and certification, and institution's and system's date of initial accreditation and certification. AdvancED reserves the right to make available for public access the institution's or system's Engagement Review Report, Certification Review Report, and any progress, special, or interim accreditation reports.

POLICY III: STATUSES FOR ACCREDITATION AND CERTIFICATION

3.01 Status. Accreditation or certification status is based on the performance of an institution or system in areas related to policies, Standards, and Assurances. No provisions in Policy III prevent an institution's or system's accreditation status from being changed upon a different timeline established due to the findings of a special investigation and/or possible subsequent monitoring reviews.

- a. **Accreditation Status.** Accreditation status is a designation provided by AdvancED that defines the institution's or system's standing relative to the results of an Engagement Review and/or due to the findings of a progress report(s), special review, and/or subsequent monitoring reviews.

There are three accreditation statuses that may be conferred on an institution or system. The accreditation status is based on the performance of an institution or system in areas related to the applicable set of accreditation Standards, policies, Assurances, student performance results, and stakeholder feedback.

- i. **Accredited.** A status conferred to an institution or system in good standing, and based on the most recent Engagement Review, meets all or a substantial number of Standards and criteria and has documented performance results and an Index of Education Quality® (IEQ®) score at acceptable levels.

The institution or system having a status of Accredited will continue with that status through the assigned expiration date of the five-year accreditation term as long as the institution or system continuously meets the policies, Standards, and Assurances for accreditation.

- ii. **Accredited Under Review.** A status conferred to an institution or system in fair standing; and based on the most recent Engagement Review, fails to meet a substantial number of Standards or criteria, and has an IEQ score in the bottom 5% of reviews administered in the school year and/or documented levels of poor/unsatisfactory performance results. Additionally, an institution or system may be conferred the status of Accredited Under Review based on the results of a special review or monitoring review wherein the institution or system fails to meet a substantial number of Standards or criteria, or is in noncompliance with policies and Assurances impacting the effective operations of the institution or system.

An institution or system having a status of Accredited Under Review will submit an annual progress report(s) to AdvancED on Improvement Priorities identified in the most recent review report, host an onsite

monitoring review within one year of the previous review, and host subsequent monitoring reviews as prescribed by AdvancED.

An institution or system having a status of Accredited Under Review will continue with that status until the institution or system successfully documents adequate progress in Improvement Priorities and/or by providing documented evidence of substantially meeting policies, Standards and Assurances for accreditation.

- iii. **Accredited Under Conditions.** A status is conferred to an institution or system in poor standing with the following conditions:
- a. Has held the status of Accredited Under Review for at least twelve (12) months and,
 - b. Has failed to demonstrate, with documented evidence, substantive progress in addressing the circumstances for which the institution was conferred the status of Accredited Under Review.

OR

- c. Has been found by an investigative team to no longer adhere to the accreditation Standards, policies and Assurances (refer to section 6.04); fails to cooperate with any Special Review Team investigation or request for information; and circumstances warrant such action.

Only an institution or system having a status of Accredited Under Conditions may be recommended for drop of accreditation.

- (a) **Intent to File Response.** Within thirty (30) calendar days of the AdvancED Global Commission's ratification of the institution's or system's status of Accredited Under Conditions, the institution or system must notify AdvancED in writing of its intent to file a written response that the institution or system should not have its accreditation dropped.
- (b) **Response.** Within sixty (60) calendar days of submitting the intent to file a written response, the institution or system must submit to AdvancED a written response that the institution or system should not have its accreditation dropped. The response must be substantiated by documented evidence(s) that address the circumstances for the institution having been conferred the status of Accredited Under Conditions. Additionally, a documented improvement plan, inclusive of strategies, timelines and dedicated resources targeted toward the identified circumstances must accompany the response.
- (c) **AdvancED Decision.** Within thirty (30) calendar days of AdvancED receiving the institution's or system's written response with substantiating evidence and improvement plan, AdvancED will notify the institution or system of AdvancED's decision to either:

- (1) Continue the institution's or system's status of Accredited Under Conditions not to exceed one year from the date of Commission ratification. AdvancED may extend the institution's or system's status of Accredited Under Conditions for one year at a time until the institution or system has successfully documented sufficient progress to warrant a change in status to Accredited Under Review.

OR

- (2) Proceed with procedures to drop the accreditation of the institution or system according to Policy 3.02b.

- b. **Certification Status.** Certification status is a designation provided by AdvancED that defines the standing of an institution relative to the results of a certification review, a special review, and/or subsequent monitoring reviews.

There are three certification statuses that may be conferred on an institution. The certification status is based on the performance of an institution in areas related to the applicable set of certification Standards, policies and Assurances.

- iv. **Certified.** A status conferred to an institution or system in good standing, and based on the most recent Certification Review, meets all or a substantial number of Standards.

The institution having a status of Certified will continue with that status through the assigned expiration date of the five-year certification term as long as the institution continuously meets the policies, Standards, and Assurances for certification.

- v. **Certified Under Review.** A status conferred to an institution in fair standing, and based on the most recent certification review, fails to meet a substantial number of Standards. Additionally, an institution may be conferred the status of Certified Under Review based on the results of a special review wherein the institution fails to meet a substantial number of Standards or is in noncompliance with policies and Assurances affecting the effective operations of the institution related to the certification areas.

An institution having a status of Certified Under Review must host an onsite monitoring review within one year of the certification review and subsequent monitoring reviews as prescribed by AdvancED.

An institution having a status of Certified Under Review will continue with that status until the institution substantially meets policies, Standards and Assurances for certification.

- vi. **Certified Under Conditions.** A status conferred to an institution in poor standing with the following conditions:

- a. Has held the status of Certified Under Review for at least twelve (12) months, and
- b. Has failed to host prescribed monitoring reviews or fails to progress in substantially meeting policies, Standards, and Assurances for certification.

OR

- c. Has been found by an investigative team to no longer adhere to the certification Standards, policies, and Assurances (refer to section 6.04); fails to cooperate with any Special Review Team investigation or request for information; and circumstances warrant such action.

Only an institution having a status of Certified Under Conditions may be recommended for drop of certification.

- (a) **Intent to File Response.** Within thirty (30) calendar days of the Commission’s ratification of the institution’s status of Certified Under Conditions, the institution must notify AdvancED in writing of its intent to file a written response that the institution should not have its certification dropped.
- (b) **Response.** Within sixty (60) calendar days of submitting the intent to file a written response, the institution must submit to AdvancED a written response that the institution should not have its certification dropped. The response must be substantiated by documented evidence(s) that address the circumstances for the institution having been conferred the status of Certified Under Review. Additionally, a documented improvement plan, inclusive of strategies, timelines and dedicated resources targeted toward the identified circumstances must accompany the rationale.
- (c) **AdvancED Decision.** Within thirty (30) calendar days of AdvancED receiving the institution’s written response with substantiating evidence and improvement plan, AdvancED will notify the institution or system of AdvancED’s decision to either:
 - (1) Continue the institution’s status of Certified Under Conditions not to exceed one year from the date of Commission ratification. AdvancED may extend the institution’s status of Certified Under Conditions for one year at a time until the institution has successfully documented sufficient progress to warrant a change in status to Certified Under Review, or
 - (2) Proceed with procedures to drop the certification of the institution or system according to Policy 3.02b.

3.02 Non-accredited or Non-certified Status. There are two non-accredited statuses that may be conferred on an institution or system, which are candidate for accreditation and dropped from accreditation, and one non-certified status that may be conferred on an institution

which is dropped from certification. Any AIN member institution or system that has not yet achieved any accreditation and/or certification status remains as an AIN member.

- a. **Candidate for Accreditation.** The AIN member institution or system becomes a candidate once it has hosted a Readiness Review. The Readiness Review Team and AdvancED Accreditation Office find that the institution or system has the capacity to meet the Standards, policies and Assurances required to earn accreditation, but the institution or system has not yet hosted the Engagement Review. The institution or system must host the Engagement Review within the timeframe established by the AdvancED Accreditation Office.
 - i. The institution or system may remain as an AIN member if it has hosted the Readiness Review and been found by the Readiness Review Team and the AdvancED Accreditation Office to not have the capacity to meet the Standards, policies, or Assurances to earn accreditation. In such a case, the institution or system will not be conferred the status of candidate.
 - ii. The institution or system must host another Readiness Review if again pursuing accreditation.

- b. **Dropped.** The institution or system will receive a dropped status if it:
 - Does not meet the Standards, policies and/or Assurances of the accreditation process or certification process; or
 - Finds it is no longer able to meet the AdvancED accreditation and/or certification Standards, policies and/or Assurances and notifies the respective AdvancED Accreditation Office that it wishes to have its accredited status or certification status dropped; or
 - Has been Accredited Under Conditions and/or Certified Under Conditions and fails to make substantial progress within the timeframe established by the AdvancED Accreditation Office on the circumstances for the institution having been conferred the status of Accredited Under Review and/or Certified Under Review; or
 - Fails to pay AIN and other fees related to accreditation and/or certification within prescribed timelines.
 - i. The dropped status is effective on the date set by the AdvancED Global Commission.
 - a. An institution or system that has been dropped from accreditation or certification must remove all references to its accredited or certification status from institution and/or system diplomas, certificates, websites, buildings, literature, and any other public facing documents or media.
 - b. A dropped institution or system may seek reinstatement for accreditation or certification within one year of receiving the dropped status. After one year, the dropped institution or system must reapply and follow the same procedures as new institutions or systems.

- c. **Future or Expected Status.** An institution or system that does not hold a current status of accreditation and/or certification may not project future or expected

accreditation or certification status. All candidate institutions or systems are not accredited or certified until such status is officially granted by the appropriate AdvancED Regional Commission and ratified by the AdvancED Global Commission. In any public announcements regarding the institution's or system's pursuit of accreditation or certification, the institution or system must avoid any implication that the AIN membership or candidate status equates with accreditation or certification or automatically leads to accreditation or certification. AdvancED's Global Commission shall have full authority and discretion to deny accreditation or certification status to any institution or system determined by AdvancED to be in violation of this policy.

- d. **Ongoing Monitoring.** The status of an institution or system is regularly monitored by AdvancED's Accreditation Offices and may be changed by the appropriate AdvancED Regional Commission and ratified by the AdvancED Global Commission based on new or corrected information provided by the institution or system, Engagement Review Team Reports, Certification Review Team Reports, reports from special reviews, complaints submitted, or other sources.

3.03 Reinstatement. Institutions or systems may request reinstatement of their accreditation and/or certification status in accordance with the following conditions and steps for reinstatement:

- a. Within twelve (12) months of the AdvancED Global Commission action to drop accreditation and/or certification status, AdvancED receives the institution's or system's request for reinstatement of accreditation and/or certification status. The institution may request/access the AdvancED Request for Reinstatement form from the AdvancED Accreditation Office.
- b. The institution or system completes the Request for Reinstatement form and submits the form, the AIN fee for the current school year, and the reinstatement fee to the AdvancED Finance Department at the address located on the reinstatement form.
- c. Within fifteen calendar (15) days of receiving the Request for Reinstatement form, AIN fee, and reinstatement fee, the AdvancED Accreditation Office contacts the institution or system to confirm receipt of the reinstatement request form and fees and to request that:
 - i. Within thirty (30) calendar days, the institution or system must submit to the AdvancED Accreditation Office a written rationale for the institution or system to be reinstated to its accreditation and/or certification status at the time of being dropped. If the institution or system has been dropped for cause, the rationale must be substantiated by documented evidence(s) that address progress toward the circumstances for the institution having been conferred the status of Accredited Under Conditions and/or Certified Under Conditions. Additionally, a documented improvement plan, inclusive of strategies, timelines and dedicated resources targeted toward the identified circumstances must accompany the rationale.
 - ii. Within thirty (30) calendar days of receiving the written rationale with substantiating documentation and improvement plan from the institution or system, the

AdvancED Accreditation Office forwards the Request for Reinstatement form, the rationale for reinstatement with its substantiating evidence and improvement plan, accreditation and/or certification actions or recommendations for review, and action to the appropriate AdvancED Regional Commission with final ratification by the AdvancED Global Commission at the next scheduled AdvancED Regional and Global Commission meetings.

- d. Upon AdvancED Regional Commission action and AdvancED Global Commission ratification to reinstate the institution's or system's accreditation and/or certification status, the institution or system is reinstated with an expiration date not to exceed one year from the date of Commission ratification. AdvancED may extend the institution's or system's status of Accreditation Under Conditions or Certification Under Conditions for one year at a time until the institution or system has successfully documented sufficient progress to warrant a change in status to Accredited Under Review or higher or Certified Under Review or higher.
- e. Upon the institution or system being reinstated to the status of accredited and/or certified, the institution or system is reinstated to the original accreditation term and/or certification term. The institution or system must satisfy all requirements of the accreditation and/or certification term in which it is being reinstated.
- f. An institution or system that dropped in its fifth year of the accreditation or certification term and reinstates must host an Engagement Review for accreditation and/or a certification review for certification upon reinstatement.

POLICY IV: PROCEDURES FOR INITIAL ACCREDITATION AND/OR CERTIFICATION

4.01 Overview. Institutions or systems seeking initial accreditation must demonstrate that they meet the AdvancED Standards, policies, and Assurances for accreditation and/or certification, have the capacity to support institution or system improvement and are committed to growth in student learning and organizational effectiveness.

4.02 General Guidelines. Following are general guidelines for all institutions or systems seeking initial accreditation or certification: An institution or system must:

- a. Demonstrate financial stability before it may be accredited or, in the case of an institution, certified.
- b. Certify that it possesses the appropriate licenses to operate if licensing is required by any governmental authority applicable to the institution or system.
- c. For accreditation, host a Readiness Review within the timeframe established by the AdvancED Accreditation Office.
- d. For accreditation, host an Engagement Review after becoming a candidate for accreditation within the timeframe established by the AdvancED Accreditation Office.

- e. For certification, an institution must host a Certification Review within the timeframe established by the AdvancED Accreditation Office.

4.03 Application for Accreditation and/or Certification and Review Fees. The institution or system must complete and submit all required application materials.

The review fees for accreditation and/or certification are in the same amount and are calculated using the same formula. If an institution is applying simultaneously for both accreditation and certification, only one review fee is applied.

4.04 For Accreditation – Readiness Review and Candidacy Status. Upon receipt of completed application materials and fees, the appropriate AdvancED Accreditation Office coordinates a Readiness Review with the institution or system seeking accreditation. The purpose of the review is to:

- a. Determine if the institution or system has the capacity and integrity to meet and adhere to the AdvancED Standards, policies, and Assurances.
- b. Determine if the institution or system has the capacity to support continuous improvement.
- c. Make a determination if the institution or system should become a candidate for accreditation or remain as an AIN member.

Upon achievement of candidate status, the institution or system authentically engages in the accreditation process and continuous improvement, submits any required documents, and prepares for its first Engagement Review. In the case of systems, all institutions within the system also authentically engage in the accreditation process and continuous improvement, submit required documents, and participate in the preparations for the system Engagement Review, including participating in school reviews, as may be required.

4.05 For Accreditation – Engagement Review and Accreditation Recommendation. The candidate institution or system hosts an Engagement Review within the timeframe established by the AdvancED Accreditation Office. The Engagement Review Team makes an accreditation recommendation that is reviewed, along with other documentation, by the AdvancED Accreditation Office, the AdvancED Regional Commission which grants the final accreditation status, and the AdvancED Global Commission which reviews and ratifies the final accreditation actions.

4.06 For Accreditation – Remaining in Candidacy Status. If accreditation is not conferred on the institution or system after hosting its initial Engagement Review, the institution or system remains as a candidate for accreditation. To achieve accreditation, the institution or system must:

- a. Meet the requirements specified in the Engagement Review Report.

- b. Host a follow-up onsite Engagement Review within the timeframe established by the Accreditation Office to address, at a minimum, the requirements specified in the Engagement Review Report.
- c. Provide documentation to the Engagement Review Team that addresses the requirements specified in the Engagement Review Report.

The Engagement Review Team makes an accreditation recommendation that is reviewed, along with the submitted documentation, by the Accreditation Office, the AdvancED Regional Commission, which grants the final accreditation status, and the AdvancED Global Commission which reviews and ratifies the final accreditation actions.

If the institution or system fails to meet the requirements specified in the Engagement Review Report, its candidacy status will be removed. The institution or system may remain an AIN member and must inform AdvancED if it wishes to continue to seek accreditation.

4.07 For Certification – Certification Review and Certification Recommendation. The AIN member institution must host a Certification Review within the timeframe established by the AdvancED Accreditation Office. The Certification Review Team makes a certification recommendation that is reviewed, along with other documentation, by the Accreditation Office, the AdvancED Regional Commission which grants the certification status, and the AdvancED Global Commission which reviews and ratifies the final certification actions.

- a. If certification is not conferred, the institution may remain an AIN member and must inform AdvancED if it wishes to continue to seek certification.

4.08 For Accreditation – Institutions from a System that is System Accredited. Institutions applying for initial accreditation that are part of systems that are system accredited use the following procedures:

- a. The institution (school) completes and submits an application for accreditation.
- b. The system verifies that the institution meets AdvancED Accreditation Standards, policies, and Assurances and is actively engaged in the system’s process for quality Assurance.
- c. Upon receiving the system’s verification, the AdvancED Accreditation Office makes an accreditation recommendation that is submitted for action to the appropriate AdvancED Regional Commission for the relevant jurisdiction with ratification by the AdvancED Global Commission.
- d. Upon earning accredited status, the institution engages in the system’s approved plan for accreditation.
- e. If the institution is not recommended for accreditation, the system must submit a plan for how it will address any noted deficiencies to ensure the institution is ready for accreditation within a year.

- 4.09 Continuing Accreditation or Certification.** Upon achieving an accreditation status or certification status, the institution or system engages in continuous improvement and meets and adheres to the AdvancED Standards, policies, and Assurances required of all institutions or systems to maintain their accreditation status, and in the case of institutions, their certification status.

POLICY V: PROCEDURES FOR CONSOLIDATED, REORGANIZED, AND OTHER SCHOOLS

- 5.01 Consolidated Institutions.** With the concurrence of the AdvancED Regional Commission, a consolidated school may retain continuing accreditation provided that at least one of the institutions involved in the consolidation is accredited by AdvancED at the time of the consolidation. There must be no break in accreditation. The institution must submit written notification of consolidation to the appropriate AdvancED Accreditation Office. The AdvancED Accreditation Office will review the notification with the appropriate AdvancED Regional Commission for concurrence and submit appropriate forms/notification to the appropriate AdvancED Office.
- 5.02 Reorganized Institutions.** A new institution(s) formed by reorganization of an accredited school may retain continuing accreditation with the concurrence of the appropriate AdvancED Regional Commission. The reorganized institution must submit written notification of its reorganization to the appropriate AdvancED Accreditation Office. The AdvancED Accreditation Office will review the notification with the AdvancED Regional Commission and determine whether the reorganized school may continue its accreditation or be required to apply as a new institution and follow the new institution procedures.
- 5.03. Extension or Branch Campuses.** An extension or branch campus of an institution can be accredited as part of the main campus provided all of the following conditions are met:
- a. The extension or branch campus is under the direct supervision of the administrative head of the main campus institution.
 - b. The director or supervisor of the extension or branch campus reports directly to the administrative head of the main campus institution.
 - c. The extension or branch campus only serves students who are enrolled in the main campus institution.
 - d. The extension or branch campus provides a program of services that are a part of the total educational program of the main campus, and it does not duplicate services or programs.
 - e. The extension or branch campus operates under the same identification number (or identifier) as the main campus as provided by the regulating governmental authority. If this requirement is met, but is in opposition to any of the other provisions in Policy 5.03, the extension or branch campus may be accredited as part of the main campus institution.

- 5.04. Schools within a School.** Schools within a school are treated as separate schools and are required to comply with all AdvancED accreditation requirements if the state education agency has provided them with distinct school numbers. If the schools share the same state-provided school number, they may be treated as one school by AdvancED.

POLICY VI: PROCEDURES REGARDING COMPLAINTS BY AND ABOUT ACCREDITED AND/OR CERTIFIED INSTITUTIONS OR SYSTEMS

- 6.01 Written complaint.** Any complaints submitted by and about institutions or systems must be submitted in writing, both paper or electronic notices are acceptable. All complaints should include the following information to allow for proper review and if determined, in the sole discretion of AdvancED, appropriate investigation:

- a. The name, address, phone number and other pertinent contact information of the complainant.
- b. A description of the circumstances or events and any relevant documentation that support the complaint.
- c. A statement of relationship with the individual involved, if the complainant is not the aggrieved individual. Complaints concerning individual students will only be investigated or sent to the school if the complaint is made or authorized by a student of majority age or by an individual that has the legal authority and right to represent the student.
- d. The name, address and other contact information for the individual at the school/school system that has been contacted by the complainant to resolve the problem or situation.
- e. Permission for representatives of AdvancED to access pertinent records concerning the complainant if such records are not available to the public.
- f. A statement of first-hand knowledge of the substance of the complaint, unless the complaint is supported by reliable documentation which is referenced in the complaint.

- 6.02. Complaints Regarding Conflicts of Interest.** Any complaint that identifies a potential conflict of interest shall be filed with the Chief Accreditation Officer of AdvancED. Any complaints submitted regarding potential conflicts of interest must be submitted in writing, both paper or electronic notices are acceptable. All complaints should include the following information to allow for proper review and if determined, in the sole discretion of AdvancED, appropriate investigation:

- a. The name, address, phone number, and other pertinent contact information of the complainant.
- b. A description of the circumstances or events and any relevant documentation that support the complaint.
- c. A statement of relationship with the individual involved, if the complainant is not the aggrieved individual.

6.03. Complaints Regarding Child Abuse, Sexual Harassment or Discrimination. Any complaint that identifies potential child abuse, sexual harassment or discrimination on the part of a student or staff member, shall be forwarded immediately to the appropriate agency authorized to investigate such complaints. Unsigned complaints concerning potential child abuse, sexual harassment, or discrimination will be forwarded to the principal and the superintendent or other similar official in the institution's or system's organization. Findings by the appropriate agency may result in action by AdvancED's Global Commission.

6.04 Individual Grievances. Isolated and individual grievances between an institution or system and person are not investigated by AdvancED. AdvancED will acknowledge to the person filing the complaint, in writing, the receipt of the complaint.

- a. AdvancED Accreditation Office will contact the complainant to review the requirements of Policy 6.01 if the complaint received by AdvancED does not meet such requirements and to inform the complainant that the substance of the complaint will be shared with the institution or system according to 6.03(b). This contact may be made by AdvancED through written, email and/or telephone conversation. This contact affords the complainant the opportunity to append additional information as necessary and proceed with the complaint to AdvancED or to withdraw a submitted complaint. Under no circumstances will AdvancED encourage the complainant to withdraw a complaint. Rather, this is to transparently communicate AdvancED procedures to the complainant.
- b. AdvancED will notify the institution or system of each complaint that is of an individual grievance. AdvancED reserves the right to:
 - i. Share with the institution or system the substance of the complaint, or
 - ii. Notify the institution or system according to the requirements of Policy 6.03(c).
- c. The AdvancED notification to the institution or system may request the institution or system to:
 - i. Within 30 days, respond in writing to AdvancED communicating its handling of the complaint, or
 - ii. Address the complaint according to the institution's own policy and procedure for managing complaints but that no written response is required to AdvancED.
 - iii. A copy of the complaint and the institution's or system's response to the complaint, if required, will be maintained by the appropriate AdvancED Accreditation Office.
- d. If several individual complaints against a school suggest a particular violation or pattern of violations which might affect the institution's or system's ability to meet AdvancED Standards, policies or Assurances, further investigation may be authorized and shall occur within a reasonable period of time.

6.05 Investigation of Complaints. AdvancED will pursue complaints that are determined by AdvancED to sufficiently identify potential violations of AdvancED Standards, policies or Assurances. AdvancED will notify the institution or system in writing of each complaint and will request the institution or system to:

- a. Within 30 days, respond in writing to AdvancED communicating its handling of the complaint.
- b. If AdvancED determines that an institution's or system's response to a complaint does not sufficiently address the complaint or if an institution or system fails to address the complaint in a timely manner, the information about the complaint will be shared with
 - i. The Engagement Review Team scheduled for the next review of the institution or system if an Engagement Review is scheduled during the current year, or
 - ii. Representatives of a Special Review Team being sent to the institution or system to conduct a special review to investigate the complaint. The Special Review Team is charged with
 - a. Investigating said complaint, as well as, investigating the possible violation of any other AdvancED Standards, policies, or Assurances that may be discovered through a diligent and thorough investigation, and
 - b. Recommending an Accreditation or Certification status of the institution or system.
- c. The findings from an investigation of a complaint may result in changes to an institution's or system's accreditation or certification status.
- d. The AdvancED Regional Commissions and the AdvancED Global Commission do not have civil authority to impose any order of settlement on an institution or system or its representatives. Complainants seeking a settlement, payment, or compensation should pursue their concern through the channels offered by a State Department of Education or other legal or governmental authority having jurisdiction over the subject matter.

POLICY VII: APPEAL PROCEDURES

- 7.01 Right to Appeal.** An institution or system has the right to appeal a decision made to place the institution or system on any of the listed statuses:
- i. Accredited Under Conditions
 - ii. Drop of Accreditation
 - iii. Certified Under Conditions
 - iv. Drop of Certification

An accredited or certified institution or system remains accredited or certified until the final disposition of the appeal. The accreditation or certification status of the institution or system does not change until all rights of appeal pursuant to the Policy are exhausted. The appellate process shall be carried out in a timely and expeditious manner to ensure protection of the public interest as well as the institution.

- 7.02 Adverse Decision.** When an institution or system has been conferred any of the listed statuses:
- i. Accredited Under Conditions
 - ii. Drop of Accreditation
 - iii. Certified Under Conditions
 - iv. Drop of Certification

- a. Within fourteen (14) calendar days after the adverse decision is ratified by the AdvancED Global Commission, AdvancED shall notify the institution or system in writing, delivered by overnight service or Certified Mail, Return Receipt Requested.
- b. The written notification shall specify the Standards, policies, and/or Assurances not met. A copy of this Policy shall be provided to the institution or system along with the notice of the adverse decision.
- c. After the AdvancED Regional Commission vote for an adverse decision and following ratification by the AdvancED Global Commission, if no notice of intent to appeal is filed as provided in Section 7.04 , the decision becomes final.

7.03 Grounds for Appeal. The grounds on which an appeal may be taken are:

- a. Departure by the AdvancED Global Commission from the procedures established by written policy, or agreement, or by recognized custom which is of such significance as to affect materially the adverse decision;
- b. The citing by the AdvancED Global Commission of factually incorrect information as basis for its decision which is of such significance as to affect materially the Commission's adverse action;
- c. Bias, as evidenced by a demonstrable intent on the part of evaluators, the AdvancED Global Commission, or the AdvancED Global Commission's professional staff to prejudice the evaluation or other review of the institution's status of accreditation, such bias being of such significance as to affect materially the AdvancED Global Commission's adverse accrediting action; or
- d. The adverse action is arbitrary and capricious.

7.04 Appeal Procedures. An institution or system wishing to appeal shall do so in accordance with the procedures set forth as follows:

- a. Within ten (10) calendar days of receipt of the written notice of the decision for adverse action, the institution or system shall file its intent to appeal the decision to place the institution or system on any of the listed statuses:
 - i. Accredited Under Conditions
 - ii. Drop of Accreditation
 - iii. Certified Under Conditions
 - iv. Drop of Certification

See Section 7.03 for grounds for an appeal.

- b. A notice of an intent to appeal shall be filed only with the prior authorization of the governing authority of the institution or system and documentation or evidence of such authorization shall be included in the notice of intent to appeal.

- c. The notice of intent to appeal shall be submitted via overnight service or Certified Mail, Return Receipt Requested to the Chief Accreditation Officer of AdvancED.
- d. The notice of intent to appeal shall contain a statement of the ground(s) on which the appeal will be made but need not provide evidence in support of the appeal.
 - i. The institution or system shall submit to the Chief Accreditation Officer of AdvancED a bond for costs of the appeal in the amount of twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000.00) that accompanies the notice of intent to appeal.
 - ii. After the costs of the appeal have been deducted from the amount of the bond, any unused portion of the bond shall be returned to the institution or system.
 - iii. If the costs of the appeal exceed the amount of the bond, the institution or system shall pay the additional costs to AdvancED.
- e. Within twenty (20) calendar days of filing notice of intent to appeal, the institution's or system's written appeal shall be submitted in person or by certified mail, return receipt requested, to the AdvancED Chief Accreditation Officer.
 - i. The institution's or system's written appeal shall set forth its argument and supporting evidence as the basis for its appeal. Only evidence previously submitted to AdvancED may be included in the submission. New evidence will not be considered.
 - ii. At the time of filing the written appeal, the institution or system shall advise the Chief Accreditation Officer it will present oral arguments at the appeals hearing and, if so, with or without legal counsel. In the event the school/school system elects not to send representatives to the appeals hearing, then AdvancED shall likewise not send representatives to the hearing, and the Appeals Panel will be authorized to decide the appeal based solely on the written submissions of the parties.
 - iii. If the institution or system has good cause to believe that any member of the Commission's standing appeals body should not hear the institution's or system's appeal, it shall notify the Chief Accreditation Officer in writing of the basis for its objection at the time it submits its written appeal. See Policy 7.04(e).
 - iv. Objections to the composition of the Panel shall be heard and ruled upon by the Chair of the AdvancED Global Commission in consultation with the Chief Accreditation Officer.
- f. Within thirty (30) calendar days following receipt of the written appeal, AdvancED shall submit its written response to the Chief Accreditation Officer with a copy to the institution or system.
- g. A Panel of three impartial evaluators shall be selected by the AdvancED Chief Accreditation Officer, and confirmed by the AdvancED Global Commission, to hear the institution's or system's appeal. The Panel shall be selected from a standing appeals

body appointed by the AdvancED Global Commission to serve for staggered three-year terms.

- i. The standing appeals body shall be comprised of educators who are knowledgeable about accreditation and certification requirements but do not hold any other appointed, paid, or elected position with AdvancED.

The Chief Accreditation Officer will promptly notify the institution or system of the names of the members of the Appeals Panel and the date and place of the hearing.

The Chief Accreditation Officer will transmit a copy of the institution's or system's appeal documents and AdvancED's written response to each member of the Appeals Panel in advance of the hearing.

- h. Within sixty (60) calendar days of receipt of the institution's or system's written appeal, the Appeals Panel will hold the hearing.
 - i. The institution or system shall not have the right to cross-examine individual agents of AdvancED staff. Additionally, AdvancED staff shall not have the right to cross-examine representatives of the institution or system. The appeals hearing is not a court proceeding and is not intended to be adversarial. It is the role of the Appeals Panel to consider the merits of each party's arguments along with supporting evidence when making its determination.
 - ii. AdvancED may request that its legal counsel be present to advise the panel members on matters relating to the Policy.
 - iii. The institution or system may request that the appeal hearing be transcribed. No audio-taping or video-taping of the appeal is permitted.
 - iv. Evidence in support of the appeal shall be limited to that evidence presented to AdvancED prior to making its adverse accrediting action except as hereinafter provided. The Appeals Panel shall consider evidence bearing only upon the grounds specified for the appeal. Additional written materials or evidence not presented to AdvancED at the time of its original decision as a part of its review (or of its decision following a remand as provided in 7.04(l)ii. may not be presented to the Appeals Panel.
 - v. Other than at the appeals hearing, the Appeals Panel shall not meet with representatives of either the institution or system or AdvancED.
- i. The decision of the Appeals Panel shall be determined by majority vote. The Appeals Panel shall meet in executive session to reach its decision following the close of hearing. Appeals hearings shall not be conducted as a judicial proceeding. Rules of evidence, pre-hearing discovery, the right to subpoena witnesses, and the right to cross examine witnesses shall not be permitted, provided however, members of the Appeals Panel may ask questions of the institution or system and AdvancED's representatives present at a hearing.
- j. The institution or system appealing an adverse accrediting action shall bear the burden of proof and may be represented by legal counsel at the hearing to present or assist in the presentation of the institution's or system's appeal. AdvancED may elect to be represented by legal counsel at the hearing in the event the institution or system is represented by counsel.

- k. The chairperson of the Appeals Panel may limit the presentations of the institution or system and AdvancED to one half hour each, provided however, the time for presentations and questioning may be extended to either or both parties as determined in the sole discretion of the chairperson.
 - i. The order of presentation shall be first, the institution or system and second, AdvancED.
 - ii. Within the sole discretion of the chairperson as to time and scope, the Appeals Panel may permit the institution or system to present final comments and/or arguments following AdvancED's presentation.
 - iii. Nothing herein shall be deemed to require either the institution or system or AdvancED to make any oral presentation at the Appeals Panel hearing and the failure to do so shall have no bearing or relevance in reaching a decision by the Appeals Panel.

- l. The Appeals Panel decision shall include the Panel's ruling together with the reasons therefore as well as any additional information deemed pertinent by the Panel and shall be the only written decision of the Panel.
 - i. Within ten (10) calendar days of the close of the hearing, the Appeals Panel decision shall be filed by the Appeals Panel with the Chief Accreditation Officer.
 - ii. The Appeals Panel shall have the authority to affirm, reverse or remand the Adverse Action and will direct the Commission to implement the decision in a manner consistent with the Appeals Panel's decisions or instructions. In a decision to remand the adverse action to the Commission for further consideration, the Appeals Panel must identify specific issues that the Commission must address.
 - iii. Within seven (7) calendar days of filing its decision with the Chief Accreditation Officer, the Appeals Panel shall inform the institution or system and the AdvancED Global Commission of its decision.

- m. All expenses of the appeal, including all expenses of the members of the Appeals Panel, are to be borne fully by the institution or system submitting the appeal.

- n. The Appeals Panel can either, affirm, reverse or remand the decision to the AdvancED Global Commission for reconsideration. If the Appeals Panel,
 - i. Affirms the decision of the AdvancED Global Commission, the action is final.
 - ii. Reverses the decision of the AdvancED Global Commission, the action is final.
 - iii. Remands the decision to the AdvancED Global Commission for further consideration and the Commission adheres to its original decision, the matter shall be considered final.