

FINAL ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATION FOR TRACS

Meeting Date: 02/27/2024

Type of Submission:
Compliance Report

Criteria: 602.15(a)(2)

Description of Criteria

(2) Competent and knowledgeable individuals, qualified by education or experience in their own right and trained by the agency on their responsibilities, as appropriate for their roles, regarding the agency's standards, policies, and procedures, to conduct its on-site evaluations, apply or establish its policies, and make its accrediting and preaccrediting decisions, including, if applicable to the agency's scope, their responsibilities regarding distance education and correspondence courses;

Narrative:

Historically, TRACS has relied upon the minutes of Accreditation Commission and Commission affiliated committee meetings to validate that Commissioners receive the requisite training for newly elected Commissioners and the on-going training on a variety of topics for all Commissioners.

In an effort to more clearly document that Commissioners receive training concerning their responsibilities, as appropriate for their roles, regarding TRACS Standards, policies, and procedures, to apply or establish TRACS policies, and make accrediting decisions, including the responsibilities associated with Distance Education moving forward, TRACS has taken the following steps:

1. The *Accreditation Commission Handbook* has been revised to more clearly describe the comprehensive process for the training of newly elected Commissioners. This process prescribes (*New Commissioner Orientation and Training*, page 3) that upon the completion of New Commissioner training, the participating Commissioner will sign and submit to the TRACS office, the newly developed *Verification of New Commissioner Training Form*.
2. On July 29, 2021, New Commissioner training as described above was provided to the Commissioners elected in the previous election cycle (Dr. Martine Audéoud, Dr. Joseph Paturi, Mrs. Ann Rill, and Mr. Richard Yoon, Esq.) who were seated on July 1, 2021. After the training was completed, these

Commissioners each signed and submitted a verification form to validate the training (see *Verification of New Commissioner Training Forms - July 2021*).

3. As a reminder of their responsibilities and Commissioner expectations, all Commissioners were given the training which is provided to newly elected Commissioners at the April 2022 Commission meeting. This training ensured that all Commissioners are trained on their responsibilities, as appropriate for their roles, regarding the agency's standards, policies, and procedures, to apply or establish its policies, and make its accrediting decisions, including their responsibilities regarding Distance Education and covered such topics as general Commissioner duties and responsibilities, Commissioner qualifications, the requisite number of Commissioners and their terms of service, the Commissioner election process, Commissioner training requirements and processes, meeting details, committees, conflicts of interest, responsibilities specific to Distance Education, and other relevant information. Each Commissioner then signed and submitted the *Verification of New Commissioner Training Forms - April 2022* specific to that training. The *New Commissioner Training PowerPoint* was utilized for this training. This training session was also recorded and is available on the password protected Commissioner page on the TRACS website ([Commission Training - TRACS](#)) as a reminder to currently serving Commissioners and for use in the training of new Commissioners moving forward. Additionally, the *Verification of New Commissioner Training Form* is available for completion and submission on the page. The password for accessing this Commissioner page is AccCom15935*
4. Finally, in July 2022, the New Commissioner training recording was utilized via the password protected Commissioner page on the TRACS website ([Commission Training - TRACS](#)) to orient the Commissioners elected in the previous election cycle (Mr. Mac Heavener, Jr., and Dr. David Nicholas) who were seated on July 1, 2022. After the training was completed, these Commissioners each signed and submitted *Verification of New Commissioner Training Forms - July 2022* confirming this fact.

An *Accreditation Commission Roster* listing currently serving Commissioners which notes the role in which they serve (public representative, faculty representative, administrative (referenced as “institutional” representatives in the *Accreditation Commission Handbook*), and Distance Education expert representatives) is included with this report.

Regarding Appeal Committees, to ensure that members are qualified for their designated roles according to their education and experience as prescribed in *TRACS Policy BP219 – Appeals*, Section C, TRACS has taken the following steps:

1. *TRACS Policy BP219 – Appeals*, was revised to describe the process more clearly for verifying the qualifications of potential Appeal Committee members

before these individuals serve on an Appeal Committee. This process is described in BP219, Section D.1 – *Process for the Selection of Appeal Committee Members*.

2. The process for verifying the qualifications of potential Appeal Committee members utilizes the newly developed *Review Worksheet for the Selection of Potential Appeal Committee Members* and requires each potential Appeal Committee member to have a current Resume / CV available for review with TRACS.
3. To ensure that members of previously utilized Appeal Committees (Apex School of Theology and Yuin University) each met the qualifications to serve in their designated role on their respective Appeal Committees, the members of these Appeal Committees were retroactively evaluated using the *Review Worksheet for the Selection of Potential Appeal Committee Members - ASOT and YU*. Additionally, resumes for each individual who served on either the Appeal Committee for Apex School of Theology or Yuin University were collected. (*Resumes - ASOT and YU*) This retroactive review determined that each member of these previously utilized Appeal Committees possessed the requisite qualifications to serve in their assigned role.

To ensure that all Appeal Committee members are trained on their roles and responsibilities as required by TRACS Policy BP219 – Appeals, TRACS has taken the following steps:

1. *TRACS Policy BP219 – Appeals*, was revised to describe the process more clearly for training Appeal Committee members before these individuals serve on an Appeal Committee. This process is described in TRACS Policy BP219, Section D, Subsection 4.
2. The process for the training of Appeal Committee members utilizes the revised *Appeal Committee Training Manual* and includes information regarding the TRACS appeals policy, appeal procedures, TRACS Accreditation Standards, conflicts of interest, confidentiality, and the role of Appeal Committee members.
3. All members of an Appeal Committee sign and submit the newly developed *Appeal Committee Member Verification Form* after the training is complete and before hearing the appeal. This form is used to verify that the Appeal Committee member participated in the training, that he / she agrees to serve on the Appeal Committee, that he / she is doing so without a conflict of interest, and that he / she will abide by confidentiality expectations, and that the Appeal Committee is composed of members serving in the requisite roles.
4. To document that the members of previously utilized Appeal Committees (Apex School of Theology and Yuin University) each received appropriate training before serving on their respective Appeal Committee, each Appeal Committee member signed and submitted the previously utilized *Appeal Committee Verification of Training Form - ASOT and YU*.

Document(s) for this Section

Exhibit Title	File Name	Analyst Comments	Agency's Exhibit Comments
Accreditation Commission Handbook	Accreditation Commission Handbook2.pdf	-	-
Verification of New Commissioner Training Form	Verification of New Commissioner Training For	-	-
Verification of New Commissioner Training Forms - July 2021	Verification of New Commissioner Training For	-	-
Verification of New Commissioner Training Forms - April 2022	Verification of New Commissioner Training For	-	-
New Commissioner Training PowerPoint	New Commissioner Training PowerPoint.pdf	-	-
Verification of New Commissioner Training Forms - July 2022	Verification of New Commissioner Training For	-	-
Accreditation Commission Roster	Accreditation Commission Roster.xlsx	-	-
TRACS Policy BP219 – Appeals	TRACS Policy BP219 Appeals.pdf	-	-
Review Worksheet for the Selection of Potential Appeal Committee Members	Review Worksheet for the Selection of Potenti	-	-
Review Worksheet for the Selection of Potential Appeal Committee Members - ASOT and YU	Review Worksheet for the Selection of Potenti	-	-
Resumes - ASOT and YU	Resumes - ASOT and YU.pdf	-	-
Appeal Committee Training Manual	Appeal Committee Training Manual.pdf	-	-
Appeal Committee Member Verification Form	Appeal Committee Member Verification Form.pdf	-	-
Appeal Committee Verification of Training Form - ASOT and YU	Appeal Committee Verification of Training For	-	-

Analyst Worksheet- Narrative

Analyst Review Status:

Meets the requirements of this section

Analyst Remarks to Narrative:

At the July 2021 NACIQI meeting, Department staff found and NACIQI agreed that the agency must demonstrate all Commissioners are trained on their responsibilities, as appropriate for their roles, regarding the agency's standards, policies, and procedures, to apply or establish its policies, and make its accrediting decisions, including their responsibilities regarding distance education. Further, the agency must demonstrate that all Appeal Committee members are qualified for their roles according to their education and experience in accordance with section C of its appeals policy, BP219, by submitting resumes, CVs or applications. Lastly, the agency must demonstrate that all Appeal Committee members are trained on their roles and responsibilities as required by section C.3 of BP219 by submitting attendance records from one or more of the training programs provided for the Appeal Committees listed in exhibits F and G of the agency's 2021 petition. The Senior Department Official (SDO) concurred with Department staff and NACIQI and required TRACS to come into compliance with this criterion within 12 months of his October 27, 2021 decision letter, and submit a compliance report due 30 days thereafter that demonstrates the agency's compliance with this criterion. The agency timely submitted this compliance report on November 17, 2022.

As part of its compliance report, TRACS submitted additional information and supporting documentation that addresses the concerns raised in the SDO's decision letter. Specifically, the agency submitted the roster of its current Commissioners, which includes those Commissioners appointed since 2021. Furthermore, the agency provided documentation to demonstrate that all its current Commissioners received the "New Commissioner Training" described in its narrative and page three of its handbook [Accreditation Commission Handbook]. The agency states it now requires all new Commissioners to sign a "Verification of New Commissioner Training Form" upon completion of the "New Commissioner Training." The agency provided signed verification forms for each current Commissioner [Verification of New Commissioner Training Forms - July 2021; April 2022; July 2022].

The agency addressed the previous concerns regarding qualifications and training of its Appeal Committee members. The agency now requires that it keeps on file for each Appeal Committee candidate a current resume and the newly developed "*Review Worksheet for the Selection of Potential Appeal Committee Members*," which is completed by TRACS staff. The agency retroactively completed this worksheet for Appeal Committee members for the two appeals submitted in the 2021 petition to demonstrate each were qualified for their role. The agency also included the resumes for the Appeal Committee members missing from the 2021 petition and Department

staff confirmed each were qualified for their role.

Lastly, the agency described in more detail its training process for Appeal Committee members. The agency trains Appeal Committee member using its “*Appeal Committee Training Manual*” and records the training via its “*Appeal Committee Member Verification Form*.” The agency provided copies of the training manual and verification form as well as signed copies of the verification form for each of the appeal committee members who served on the two Appeal Committees submitted as part of the 2021 petition.

List of Document(s) Uploaded by Analyst - Narrative

No files uploaded

Analyst Worksheet - Response

Analyst Review Status:

Not Reviewed

Criteria: 602.15(a)(3)

Description of Criteria

(3) Academic and administrative personnel on its evaluation, policy, and decision-making bodies, if the agency accredits institutions;

Narrative:

To ensure that members of Appeal Committees are qualified for their roles according to their education and experience as prescribed in section C of TRACS Policy BP219 – Appeals, and to ensure that the Appeal Committees are composed of individuals serving in the required roles (at least one representative of the public, faculty member, and administrative) TRACS has taken the following steps:

1. *TRACS Policy BP219 – Appeals*, was revised to describe the process more clearly for verifying the qualifications of potential Appeal Committee members before these individuals serve on an Appeal Committee. This process is described in BP219 D.1.
2. The process for verifying the qualifications of potential Appeal Committee members utilizes the newly developed *Review Worksheet for the Selection of*

Potential Appeal Committee Members and requires each potential Appeal Committee member to have a current Resume / CV available for review with TRACS. These resumes are attached (*Resumes - ASOT and YU*). The specific role (representative of the public, faculty member, or administrative) to be filled by each Appeal Committee member is noted on the *Review Worksheet for the Selection of Potential Appeal Committee Members - ASOT and YU*.

3. To ensure that members of previously utilized Appeal Committees (Apex School of Theology and Yuin University) each met the qualifications to serve on their respective Appeal Committees, and to ensure that these Appeal Committees were composed of members serving in the required roles (at least one representative of the public, faculty member, and administrative) the members of these Appeal Committees were retroactively evaluated using the *Review Worksheet for the Selection of Potential Appeal Committee Members - ASOT and YU*. Additionally, the resumes for each Appeal Committee member (*Resumes - ASOT and YU*) were analyzed. This retroactive review determined that the previously utilized Appeals Committees contained at least one public representative, one faculty member, and one administrator, and that each member of these previously utilized Appeal Committees possessed the requisite qualifications to serve in their assigned role.
4. To validate proper composition of any future Appeal Committees, each member will complete the *Appeal Committee Member Verification Form* identifying her/his role after the Committee is formed and prior to hearing the appeal.

Document(s) for this Section

Exhibit Title	File Name	Analyst Comments	Agency's Exhibit Comments
TRACS Policy BP219 – Appeals	TRACS Policy BP219 Appeals.pdf	-	-
Review Worksheet for the Selection of Potential Appeal Committee Members	Review Worksheet for the Selection of Potenti	-	-
Review Worksheet for the Selection of Potential Appeal Committee Members - ASOT and YU	Review Worksheet for the Selection of Potenti	-	-
Resumes - ASOT and YU	Resumes - ASOT and YU.pdf	-	-
Appeal Committee Member Verification Form	Appeal Committee Member Verification Form.pdf	-	-

Analyst Worksheet- Narrative

Analyst Review Status:

Meets the requirements of this section

Analyst Remarks to Narrative:

At the July 2021 NACIQI meeting, Department staff found and NACIQI agreed the agency must demonstrate that all Appeal Committee members are qualified for their roles according to their education and experience in accordance with section C of its appeals policy, BP219, by submitting resumes, CVs, or applications. In addition, a member of an Appeal Committee may be qualified to serve in multiple roles; however, for the purposes of determining whether an Appeal Committee is of the proper composition, the role each member is performing should be identified on all decision-making bodies. The Senior Department Official (SDO) concurred with Department staff and NACIQI and required TRACS to come into compliance with this criterion within 12 months of his October 27, 2021 decision letter, and submit a compliance report due 30 days thereafter that demonstrates the agency's compliance with this criterion. The agency timely submitted this compliance report on November 17, 2022.

As part of its compliance report, TRACS submitted additional information and supporting documentation that addresses the concerns raised in the SDO's decision letter. The agency revised its Policy BP219 to more clearly explain the composition and qualifications of its Appeal Committee. Section C of the policy states an Appeal Committee shall "consist of five members, with at least one member of the Committee from each of the following categories: (1) a representative of the public, (2) a faculty member from either a member or non-member institution, and (3) an administrator from either a member or non-member institution." Further, the agency now requires that it keeps on file for each Appeal Committee candidate a current resume and the newly developed "*Review Worksheet for the Selection of Potential Appeal Committee Members*," which is completed by TRACS staff. The agency retroactively completed this worksheet for Appeal Committee members for the two appeals submitted in the 2021 petition to demonstrate all Appeal Committees contained at least one public representative, one faculty member, and one administrator, and that each member was qualified for their assigned role. The agency also included the missing resumes for the Appeal Committee members from the 2021 petition and Department staff confirmed each were qualified for their role.

List of Document(s) Uploaded by Analyst - Narrative

No files uploaded

Analyst Worksheet - Response

Analyst Review Status:

Not Reviewed

Criteria: 602.15(a)(5)

Description of Criteria

(5) Representatives of the public, which may include students, on all decision-making bodies; and

Narrative:

The *Accreditation Commission Handbook* (page 2) defines a Commission public representative as someone who must not be:

1. An employee, member of the governing board, owner, or shareholder of, or consultant to, an institution or program that either is accredited or pre-accredited by the agency or has applied for accreditation or pre-accreditation;
2. A member of any trade association or membership organization related to, affiliated with, or associated with the agency; or
3. A spouse, parent, child, or sibling of an individual identified in paragraph (1) or (2) of this definition.

To ensure that members of the TRACS Accreditation Commission who serve as public representatives meet this definition, TRACS has taken the following steps:

1. In connection with the April 2022 meeting of the TRACS Accreditation Commission, the Nominating Committee of the Accreditation Commission utilized the newly developed *Nominating Committee Candidate Review Worksheet* to vet each Commissioner nomination submitted for service as a Commissioner in the term starting July 1, 2022. This worksheet lists the requirements for service as a public representative member as found in the *Accreditation Commission Handbook* and guides the Nominating Committee in the vetting process to ensure that individuals who seek to serve as a public representative meet the definition. The Nominating Committee's completed *Nominating Committee Candidate Review Worksheet - April 2022* for each Commission nominee reflects this vetting process. Only individuals who met the TRACS definition of a public representative were placed on the ballot for possible selection as a public representative Commissioner.
2. Utilizing the *Nominating Committee Candidate Review Worksheet*, the current

public representative members of the Accreditation Commission (Dr. Constance Pearson, Dr. Jeff Froehle, and Dr. Joseph Paturi) were retroactively vetted to ensure that he/she met the TRACS definition of a public representative. It was determined that the currently serving public representative members of the Accreditation Commission meet the TRACS definition as noted on the *Nominating Committee Candidate Review Worksheet - Retroactive Review*.

TRACS Policy BP219 – Appeals, Section C, paragraph 2, defines an Appeal Committee public representative as an individual who is not:

1. an employee, member of the governing board, owner, or shareholder of, or consultant to an institution or program that either is accredited or pre-accredited by TRACS or has applied for accreditation or pre-accreditation with TRACS,
2. a member of any trade association or membership organization related to, affiliated with, or associated with TRACS; or
3. a spouse, parent, child, or sibling of an individual identified in section 1 or 2 of this definition.

To ensure that members of Appeal Committees who serve as public representatives meet this definition, TRACS has taken the following steps:

1. *TRACS Policy BP219 - Appeals*, was revised to describe the process more clearly for verifying the qualifications of potential Appeal Committee members before these individuals serve on an Appeal Committee. This process is described in section D of BP219.
2. The process for verifying the qualifications of potential Appeal Committee members utilizes the newly developed *Review Worksheet for the Selection of Potential Appeal Committee Members* and requires each potential Appeal Committee member to have a current Resume / CV available for review with TRACS. The specific role of public representative is noted and clearly defined on this form.
3. Mrs. Fannie Thompson served as the public representative on the Appeal Committees for both Apex School of Theology and Yuin University. To ensure that this public representative member met the TRACS definition of a public representative, the member was retroactively evaluated using the *Review Worksheet for the Selection of Potential Appeal Committee Members - ASOT and YU*. A current resume for this individual is on file with TRACS. *Resumes - ASOT and YU*. This retroactive review determined that the public representative member who served on the previously utilized Appeal Committees met the definition of a public representative and that she served appropriately.

To validate proper composition of any future Appeal Committees and to ensure that any member designated as a public representative member meets the definition, each

member will complete the *Appeal Committee Member Verification Form* identifying her/his role.

Document(s) for this Section

Exhibit Title	File Name	Analyst Comments	Agency's Exhibit Comments
Accreditation Commission Handbook	Accreditation Commission Handbook2.pdf	-	-
TRACS Policy BP219 – Appeals	TRACS Policy BP219 Appeals.pdf	-	-
Review Worksheet for the Selection of Potential Appeal Committee Members	Review Worksheet for the Selection of Potenti	-	-
Review Worksheet for the Selection of Potential Appeal Committee Members - ASOT and YU	Review Worksheet for the Selection of Potenti	-	-
Resumes - ASOT and YU	Resumes - ASOT and YU.pdf	-	-
Appeal Committee Member Verification Form	Appeal Committee Member Verification Form.pdf	-	-
Nominating Committee Candidate Review Worksheet	Nominating Committee Candidate Review Workshe	-	-
Nominating Committee Candidate Review Worksheet - April 2022	Nominating Committee Candidate Review Workshe	-	-
Nominating Committee Candidate Review Worksheet - Retroactive Review	Nominating Committee Candidate Review Workshe	-	-

Analyst Worksheet- Narrative

Analyst Review Status:

Meets the requirements of this section

Analyst Remarks to Narrative:

At the July 2021 NACIQI meeting, Department staff found and NACIQI agreed the agency must provide evidence it confirmed the individuals serving as representatives of the public on its Commission and Appeal Committees meet the definition of public

representative. It was determined the agency must provide documentation it vetted each public member serving on its Commission and Appeals Committees, according to the agency's policy. The Senior Department Official (SDO) concurred with Department staff and NACIQI and required TRACS to come into compliance with this criterion within 12 months of his October 27, 2021 decision letter, and submit a compliance report due 30 days thereafter that demonstrates the agency's compliance with this criterion. The agency timely submitted this compliance report on November 17, 2022.

As part of its compliance report, TRACS submitted additional information and documentation to address the concerns raised in the SDO's decision letter. The agency's Accreditation Commission Handbook and Policy BP219 - Appeals define representative of the public in accordance with the Department's definition found at 34 CFR 602.3. In addition, the agency created a "Nominating Committee Review Worksheet for Accreditation Commission Nominees" as well as the previously discussed "Appeal Committee Member Verification Form." In addition to providing blank copies of these forms, the agency provided completed copies for the current public members of its Commission as well as past two Appeal Committees. Each public member affirms on the forms that they meet the definition for public representative and TRACS vets each member as indicated by the signatures of the vetting nominating committee member and chair and signature of TRACS staff person, respectively.

List of Document(s) Uploaded by Analyst - Narrative

No files uploaded

Analyst Worksheet - Response

Analyst Review Status:

Not Reviewed

Criteria: 602.15(a)(6)

Description of Criteria

(6) Clear and effective controls, including guidelines, to prevent or resolve conflicts of interest, or the appearance of conflicts of interest, by the agency's—

(i) Board members;

- (ii) Commissioners;
- (iii) Evaluation team members;
- (iv) Consultants;
- (v) Administrative staff; and
- (vi) Other agency representatives; and

Narrative:

TRACS Policy BP113 – Conflicts of Interest, defines what constitutes a conflict of interest for Accreditation Commissioners (Section A), Appeal Committee Members (Section B), Peer Evaluators (Section C), TRACS Staff and Other TRACS Representatives (Section D), and Institutions (Section E).

Historically, TRACS has relied upon the minutes of Accreditation Commission meetings to validate that Commissioners receive the requisite training regarding conflicts of interest, either as newly elected Commissioners who receive conflict of interest training as a part of the New Commissioner training process or the on-going conflict of interest training given to all Commissioners.

Regarding Commissioner training, to ensure that members of the Accreditation Commission receive training regarding conflicts of interest, TRACS has taken the following steps:

1. The *Accreditation Commission Handbook* has been revised to describe the process more clearly for the training of newly elected Commissioners. This process includes training concerning conflicts of interest and prescribes that upon the completion of New Commissioner training, the participating Commissioner will sign and submit to the TRACS office, the newly developed *Verification of New Commissioner Training Form*.
2. As a reminder of their responsibilities and Commissioner expectations, all Commissioners were given the training which is provided to newly elected Commissioners at the April 2022 Commission meeting. This training covered a variety of topics including conflicts of interest. Each Commissioner then signed and submitted the *Verification of New Commissioner Training Forms - April 2022* specific to that training. The *New Commissioner Training PowerPoint* was utilized for this training. This training session was also recorded and is available on the password protected Commissioner page on the TRACS website ([Commission Training - TRACS](#)) as a reminder to currently serving Commissioners and for use in the training of new Commissioners moving

forward. The password for accessing this Commissioner page is AccCom15935*

Regarding the training of peer evaluators concerning conflicts of interest, after individuals participate in an initial peer evaluator training session, which includes training on conflicts of interest, and before they are included in the pool of potential peer evaluators, each individual who has participated in the training is directed to complete and submit an on-line *Potential Peer Evaluator Information Form* and are required to submit a current resume when submitting the form. Completion and submission of this form serves as a verification of training. A list of those who have submitted the *Potential Peer Evaluator Information Form* from 2018-2022 is maintained as *Peer Evaluator Training Verification List* .

To ensure that peer evaluators receive appropriate training regarding conflicts of interest, TRACS has taken the following steps:

1. The *Peer Evaluator Training PowerPoint* that is utilized in the training of potential peer evaluators was revised to include additional information concerning conflicts of interest (slides 40-44).
2. The *Evaluation Team Orientation PowerPoint* was revised to include additional information concerning conflicts of interest (slides 3-7).

Regarding Appeal Committees, to ensure that Appeal Committee members receive training regarding conflicts of interest, TRACS has taken the following steps:

1. The *Appeal Committee Training Manual* was reviewed and edited to ensure that it clearly presents information regarding conflicts of interest. This publication is used for training Appeal Committee members prior to their service on an Appeal Committee.
2. Following the training, Appeal Committee members sign and submit an *Appeal Committee Member Verification Form* to verify they received the required conflicts of interest training.
3. To ensure that members of previously utilized Appeal Committees (Apex School of Theology and Yuin University) each received appropriate guidance regarding conflicts of interest before serving on their respective Appeal Committee, the signed Conflict of Interest Forms that were utilized at the time these appeals took place (*Conflict of Interest Forms - ASOT and YU*) were compiled.

Rosters for the Appeal Committees which served on the appeals for Apex School of Theology and Yuin University are attached. (*ASOT and YU Appeal Committee Rosters*)

Document(s) for this Section

Exhibit Title	File Name	Analyst Comments	Agency's Exhibit Comments
Accreditation Commission Handbook	Accreditation Commission Handbook2.pdf	-	-
Verification of New Commissioner Training Form	Verification of New Commissioner Training For	-	-
Verification of New Commissioner Training Forms - April 2022	Verification of New Commissioner Training For	-	-
New Commissioner Training PowerPoint	New Commissioner Training PowerPoint.pdf	-	-
Appeal Committee Training Manual	Appeal Committee Training Manual.pdf	-	-
Appeal Committee Member Verification Form	Appeal Committee Member Verification Form.pdf	-	-
TRACS Policy BP113 – Conflicts of Interest	TRACS Policy BP113 - Conflicts of Interest.pd	-	-
Potential Peer Evaluator Information Form	Potential Peer Evaluator Information Form.pdf	-	-
Peer Evaluator Training Verification List	Peer Evaluator Training Verification List.xls	-	-
Peer Evaluator Training PowerPoint	Peer Evaluator Training Powerpoint.pdf	-	-
Evaluation Team Orientation PowerPoint	Evaluation Team Orientation PowerPoint.pdf	-	-
Conflict of Interest Forms - ASOT and YU	Conflict of Interest Forms - ASOT and YU.pdf	-	-
ASOT and YU Appeal Committee Rosters	ASOT and YU Appeal Committee Rosters.pdf	-	-
Sample Conflict of Interest Training Materials	Sample Conflict of Interest Training Material	-	-
TRACS Staff Conflict of Interest Training - 2023	TRACS Staff Conflict of Interest Training - 2	-	-
TRACS Staff Verification of Conflict of	TRACS Staff Verification of	-	-

Exhibit Title	File Name	Analyst Comments	Agency's Exhibit Comments
Interest Training	Conflict of Inter		
2022-23 TRACS Staff Annual Conflict of Interest Forms	2022-23 TRACS Staff Annual Conflict of Intere	-	-

Analyst Worksheet- Narrative

Analyst Review Status:

Does not meet the requirements of this section

Staff Determination:

The agency must provide evidence verifying the delivery and attendance at trainings on conflicts of interest for its staff.

Analyst Remarks to Narrative:

At the July 2021 NACIQI meeting, Department staff found and NACIQI agreed the agency must provide evidence verifying the delivery and attendance at trainings on conflicts of interest for its Commissioners, Peer Evaluators and agency staff. The Senior Department Official (SDO) concurred with Department staff and NACIQI and required TRACS to come into compliance with this criterion within 12 months of his October 27, 2021 decision letter, and submit a compliance report due 30 days thereafter that demonstrates the agency’s compliance with this criterion. The agency timely submitted this compliance report on November 17, 2022.

As part of its compliance report, TRACS submitted additional information and documentation that partially addresses the concerns raised in the SDO's decision letter. The agency provided documentation to demonstrate that all its current Commissioners received the “New Commissioner Training” described in its narrative and page three of its handbook [Accreditation Commission Handbook]. The agency states it now requires all new Commissioners to sign a *Verification of New Commissioner Training Form* upon completion of the “New Commissioner Training.” The agency provided signed verification forms for each current Commissioner [Verification of New Commissioner Training Forms - July 2021; April 2022; July 2022 provided in this section as well as 602.15(a)(2)]. The forms state, in part, that the Commissioner received training on TRACS' conflict of interest policy and expectations. Department staff also confirmed the “New Commissioner Training” contains slides specific to the agency's conflict of interest policy.

In addition, the agency revised its training material for Peer Evaluators. The *Peer Evaluator Training PowerPoint* and *Evaluation Team Orientation PowerPoint* now contain slides covering the agency's conflict of interest policy and expectations. The agency utilizes its *Potential Peer Evaluator Information Form*, which requires peer evaluators to submit a current resume. Completion and submission of this form serves as a verification of training. TRACS provided a list of those who have submitted the *Potential Peer Evaluator Information Form* from 2018-2022 [*Peer Evaluator Training Verification List*].

The agency did not provide any information or supporting documentation that addresses evidence verifying the delivery and attendance at trainings on conflicts of interest for TRACS staff.

Finally, the agency submitted additional information and supporting documentation that discusses training on its conflict of interest policy for Appeal Committee members; however, the SDO's decision letter did not request information regarding evidence of training for Appeal Committee members because the agency submitted that information as part of its 2021 petition.

List of Document(s) Uploaded by Analyst - Narrative

No files uploaded

Response:

Section C of TRACS Policy BP113 - Conflicts of Interest (provided as an exhibit in our previous response) defines what constitutes a conflict of interest for TRACS staff and other TRACS representatives.

TRACS staff members are committed to full disclosure and restraint in any institutional considerations involving a conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest. Staff members will not accept assignments to institutions and will recuse themselves from deliberations on decisions regarding institutions when they have a conflict of interest or when the appearance of a conflict of interest warrants such non-acceptance or recusal. Current staff members may not participate in private consultation or engage in any other employment arrangement with any institution that maintains or is seeking candidate, accredited, or reaffirmation status from the Accreditation Commission.

TRACS staff members receive continual guidance in matters concerning conflicts of interest as a part of their review of federal regulations, TRACS Accreditation Standards, TRACS Policies and Procedures and in providing conflict of interest training to peer evaluators. A sample of the various materials utilized by TRACS staff

in training peer evaluators regarding conflicts of interest is attached. (Sample Conflict of Interest Training Materials)

Additionally, to ensure compliance with 602.15(a)(6)(v), on September 12, 2023, TRACS staff received specific Conflict of Interest Training, which was facilitated by the President of TRACS. This training covered conflicts of interest issues specific to TRACS staff and included examples of how the TRACS conflict of interest policy applies in specific situations. A copy of the PowerPoint presentation that was utilized for this training session is attached. (TRACS Staff Conflict of Interest Training - 2023) This training session was recorded for documentation purposes and will serve

(b)(6) staff. The recorded training session may be <https://tracs.org/conflict-of-interest-training/>. The Following the training, each staff member signed and submitted a verification of training form. (TRACS Staff Verification of Conflict of Interest Training) These forms confirm that each TRACS staff member participated in the September 12, 2023, conflict of interest training specific to TRACS staff.

When a new TRACS staff member is hired, the President of TRACS will provide initial conflict of interest training as a part of the onboarding process. New staff hires will be required to sign a conflict of interest form at the time of employment.

Finally, TRACS staff sign a “TRACS Staff Annual Conflict of Interest Form” annually. The signed forms for each TRACS staff member for the years 2022 and 2023 are attached. (2022-23 TRACS Staff Annual Conflict of Interest Forms) The TRACS Staff Annual Conflict of Interest Form may be found at the following link: <https://tracs.wufoo.com/forms/z1pabgoy1tuaofr/> This form requires staff to disclose any known conflicts of interest.

Analyst Worksheet - Response

Analyst Review Status:

Meets the requirements of this section

Analyst Remarks to Response

In response to the draft analysis, the agency provided additional information and documentation that addresses conflict-of-interest training for agency staff. The agency reiterates that Section C of TRACS Policy BP113 - Conflict of interest applies to TRACS staff. The agency states staff receive continual guidance concerning conflicts of interest as a part of their review of federal regulations, TRACS Accreditation Standards, TRACS Policies and Procedures and in providing conflict of interest training to peer evaluators. Specific to the concerns raised in the draft

analysis, the agency implemented a formal training program for staff on conflicts-of-interest as well as an annual conflicts-of-interest attestation form signed by staff indicating staff have read, understood and will abide by the agency's conflict-of-interest policy [Exhibit 4]. In addition, the agency delivered a conflict-of-interest specific training to staff on September 12, 2023 and submitted attendance verification forms [Exhibits 2 and 3]. Lastly, the agency states in its narrative that any future new hires will receive conflict-of-interest training and sign a conflict-of-interest attestation form.

List of Document(s) Uploaded by Analyst - Response

No file uploaded

Criteria: 602.16(b-c)

Description of Criteria

(b) Agencies are not required to apply the standards described in paragraph (a)(1)(x) of this section to institutions that do not participate in title IV, HEA programs. Under such circumstance, the agency's grant of accreditation or preaccreditation must specify that the grant, by request of the institution, does not include participation by the institution in title IV, HEA programs.

(c) If the agency only accredits programs and does not serve as an institutional accrediting agency for any of those programs, its accreditation standards must address the areas in paragraph (a)(1) of this section in terms of the type and level of the program rather than in terms of the institution.

Narrative:

The US Department of Education Staff report identified 602.16(b-c) as an item requiring response. However, the standard should have identified 602.16 (d). Please see 602.16(d) for TRACS response.

Document(s) for this Section

No files uploaded

Analyst Worksheet- Narrative

Analyst Review Status:

List of Document(s) Uploaded by Analyst - Narrative

No files uploaded

Analyst Worksheet - Response

Analyst Review Status:

Not Reviewed

Criteria: 602.16(d)

Description of Criteria

(d)

(1) If the agency has or seeks to include within its scope of recognition the evaluation of the quality of institutions or programs offering distance education, correspondence courses, or direct assessment education, the agency's standards must effectively address the quality of an institution's distance education, correspondence courses, or direct assessment education in the areas identified in paragraph (a)(1) of this section.

(2) The agency is not required to have separate standards, procedures, or policies for the evaluation of distance education or correspondence courses.

Narrative:

To ensure that TRACS systematically and consistently documents the application of the TRACS Accreditation Standards related to its review of institutions that offer Distance Education, TRACS has taken the following steps:

1. At the January 29, 2021, meeting of the Accreditation Commission, Standard 5.2, which is specific to Distance Education authorization, was adopted and added to the TRACS *Accreditation Manual* (Page 11). Standard 5.2 reads as follows:

5.2 If the institution offers courses and/or programs via Distance Education, the institution has legal authorization to offer such courses and/or programs in the locations wherever the Distance Education student declares his/her residency. Further, the institution's Distance Education offerings meet all applicable TRACS Accreditation and Federal Requirements.

1. The *Evaluation Team Report Template* was revised to demonstrate the specific review of Distance Education in the following TRACS Standards and Federal Requirements:

- Operational Authority
- Organizational Structure
- Publications and Policies
- Educational Programs
- Faculty
- Student Services
- Financial Operations
- Institutional Assessment
- Strategic Planning
- Library and Learning Resources
- Facilities and Equipment
- Federal Requirements (as applicable)

Highlighted areas within the *Evaluation Team Report for Boston Baptist College* and the *Evaluation Team Report for Messenger College* serve as examples of how this new template is utilized, reflecting the review of Distance Education in these areas. These areas of review are also noted in the *Focus Team Report for Paine College* regarding the institution's substantive change proposal to add Distance Education to its scope of recognition with TRACS.

1. Beginning with the follow-up to the April 2022 Commission meeting, Commission Action Letters reflected the review and approval of Distance Education and note the areas specified above. These are the letters that are sent (1) to institutions currently offering Distance Education that are granted a specified accreditation status with TRACS at a particular meeting and (2) to institutions that have a proposed institutional change for the addition of Distance Education to their scope of recognition approved at a particular Commission meeting. Examples of this action are highlighted within the *April 2022 Commission Action Letters* and the *Paine College Distance Education Approval Letter* that was sent to Paine College after the institution was approved to offer its courses / programs via distance Education.
2. The *Evaluation Team Orientation PowerPoint* (Slides 15-21) was revised to reflect the review of Distance Education criteria for institutions that offer Distance Education with a reminder for peer evaluators to reference the best practices in Distance Education noted in the *Demonstrating Compliance - Evaluative Criteria and Typical Documentation* document and *CRAC Guidelines*.
3. The *Distance Education Peer Evaluator Training Manual* was revised to ensure Distance Education evaluators were educated regarding specific areas of focus as required by *TRACS Policy BP306 - Peer Evaluators*.

As a reminder of their responsibilities and Commissioner expectations, all Commissioners at the April 2022 Commission meeting were given the training provided to newly elected Commissioners. This training ensured that all Commissioners are trained on their responsibilities, as appropriate for their roles, regarding the agency's standards, policies, and procedures, to apply or establish its policies, and make its accrediting decisions, including their responsibilities regarding Distance Education

Document(s) for this Section

Exhibit Title	File Name	Analyst Comments	Agency's Exhibit Comments
Accreditation Manual	Accreditation Manual.pdf	-	-
Evaluation Team Report Template	Evaluation Team Report Template.pdf	-	-
Evaluation Team Report for Boston Baptist College	Evaluation Team Report for Boston Baptist Col	-	-
Evaluation Team Report for Messenger College	Evaluation Team Report for Messenger College1	-	-
Focus Team Report for Paine College	Focus Team Report for Paine College.pdf	-	-
April 2022 Commission Action Letters	April 2022 Commission Action Letters.pdf	-	-
Paine College Distance Education Approval Letter	Paine College Distance Education Approval Let	-	-
Demonstrating Compliance - Evaluative Criteria and Typical Documentation	Demonstrating Compliance - Evaluative Criteri	-	-
CRAC Guidelines	CRAC Guidelines.pdf	-	-
Distance Education Peer Evaluator Training Manual	Distance Education Peer Evaluator Training Ma	-	-
TRACS Policy BP306 - Peer Evaluators	TRACS Policy BP306 - Peer Evaluators.pdf	-	-

Analyst Worksheet- Narrative

Analyst Review Status:

Meets the requirements of this section

Analyst Remarks to Narrative:

At the July 2021 NACIQI meeting, Department staff found and NACIQI agreed the agency must provide documentation it systematically and consistently applies its accreditation standards related to reviews of institutions that offer distance education. The Senior Department Official (SDO) concurred with Department staff and NACIQI and required TRACS to come into compliance with this criterion within 12 months of his October 27, 2021 decision letter, and submit a compliance report due 30 days thereafter that demonstrates the agency's compliance with this criterion. It should be noted that the findings related to distance education were listed under section 602.16(c)(d) of the 2021 petition. That same section is now 602.16(d). The agency timely submitted this compliance report on November 17, 2022.

As part of its compliance report, TRACS submitted additional information and supporting documentation that addresses the concerns raised in the SDO's decision letter. Specifically, the agency added a new standard, 5.2, to its Handbook that states "*If the institution offers courses and/or programs via Distance Education, the institution has legal authorization to offer such courses and/or programs in the locations wherever the Distance Education student declares his/her residency. Further, the institution's Distance Education offerings meet all applicable TRACS Accreditation and Federal Requirements.*" Although the agency does not have separate standards related to distance education it is important to note this standard clarifies an institution's distance education courses must meet all TRACS accreditation standards and federal requirements.

The agency provided additional information and documentation that describe changes to its policies and procedures to ensure its reviews of institutions offering distance education are consistent and systematic. The agency updated its *Evaluation Team Report Template* to highlight how its review of distance education effectively addresses the quality of an institution's distance education in the areas identified in paragraph (a)(1) of this section. The agency also added language to its Commission Action letters that states the Commission's decision reflects a review of distance education in all applicable areas of its standards. Further, the agency updated its *Evaluation Team Orientation PowerPoint* and *Distance Education Peer Evaluator Training Manual* to reflect the review of distance education, including specific focus areas. The agency's *Demonstrating Compliance - Evaluative Criteria and Typical Documentation* and *CRAC Guidelines* offers in-depth examples of evidence regarding how distance education should meet each of the agency's standards.

Lastly, the agency provided examples of reviews for three institutions conducted since July 2021: Paine College, Boston Baptist College, and Messenger College. Department staff confirmed that the reviews include the changes discussed in this

compliance report and reflect a systematic and consistent application of TRACS' accreditation standards related to reviews of institutions that offer distance education.

List of Document(s) Uploaded by Analyst - Narrative

No files uploaded

Analyst Worksheet - Response

Analyst Review Status:

Not Reviewed

3rd Party Written Comments

Document Title	File Name	Pro/Con
-	-	CON

Staff Analysis of 3rd Party Written Comments

The Department received one written comment regarding Transnational Association Of Christian Colleges and Schools (TRACS), but most of it is unrelated to the agency's compliance with the recognition regulations. The comment stated that the Department's solicitation of written third-party comments occurred without access to the agency's compliance report or related materials. The Department's solicitation of written third-party comments sought comment on the agency's compliance with the regulations in question pursuant to 34 C.F.R. §§ 602.32(c) and (l), not on the agency's compliance report or related materials. The purpose of the call for written third-party comment is to allow anyone who has any knowledge of an agency undergoing a recognition review by the Department and the agency's compliance or non-compliance with Departmental regulations to provide that information and/or documentation so that Department staff can utilize it in the comprehensive analysis of the agency. The comment also stated that complaint processes used by accrediting agencies should be more accessible to complainants. The Department's recognition review process assesses whether or not an accrediting agency meets the Secretary's Criteria for Recognition (Criteria) at 34 C.F.R. Part 602. The Criteria include a requirement that an agency must review in a timely, fair, and equitable manner any complaint it receives against an accredited institution or program or itself, per 34 C.F.R. § 602.23(c)(1-3). The scope of this review is to assess the agency in the specific areas of noncompliance noted in the senior Department official's decision on recognition dated October 27, 2021. Therefore, only information and documentation concerning actions or examples in 34 C.F.R. § (§) 602.15(a)(2), 602.15(a)(3), 602.15(a)(5), and 602.16(d) of the Criteria would be applicable to this analysis. No matter, the agency may wish to respond to the comment in its response to the draft staff analysis. The comment noted the Sweet v. Cardona case and settlement and stated that NACIQI should review accrediting agencies and their actions related to individual institutions included in the case. The Criteria include a requirement that an agency must submit to the Department any institution or program it accredits that it has reason to believe is failing to meet its title IV, HEA program responsibilities, per 34 C.F.R. § 602.27(a)(5). Department staff use information and documentation related to individual institutions and programs to ensure that an accrediting agency acts in accordance with both its own policies and procedures and with the Criteria. The recognition review process is not intended to review individual institutions or programs that are accredited by the agency, but the agency itself. As noted above, the scope of this review is to assess the agency in 34 C.F.R. § (§) 602.15(a)(2), 602.15(a)(3), 602.15(a)(5), and 602.16(d) of the Criteria. The agency may still wish to respond to the comment in its response to the draft staff analysis.

Response to 3rd Party Comments

No response to 3rd Party Written Comments

Document(s) Uploaded in response to 3rd Party Comments

No files were uploaded in response to 3rd Party Comments.

3rd Party Request for Oral Presentation

There are no oral comments uploaded for this Agency.
