

Code of Good Practice For a National Service/Oversight Organization

Adopted March 1995

ASPA: Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors

The National Service/Oversight Organization :

1. Pursues its mission, goals, and objectives, and conducts its operations in a trustworthy manner.

- Focuses primarily on assisting accrediting bodies in their efforts to assess and promote educational quality.
- Demonstrates respect for the complex interrelationships involved in the pursuit of excellence by individual accrediting bodies.
- Exhibits a system of checks and balances in its policy development, oversight, and recognition procedures.
- Maintains functional and operational autonomy.
- Avoids relationships and practices that would provoke questions about its overall objectivity and integrity.
- Analyzes criticism carefully and responds appropriately by explaining its policies and actions and/or making changes.

2. Maximizes service, productivity, and effectiveness in its relationship with accrediting bodies and the higher education community as a whole.

- Recognizes that providing effective accreditation that adds value to the work of institutions and programs, not recognition or membership status in the (ORG), are the primary purposes of accrediting bodies.
- Respects the expertise and aspirations for high achievement already present and functioning in accrediting bodies, institutions, and programs, and works to foster similar respect among the many publics of accreditation.
- Uses its understanding of the accreditation function and the presence of local expertise and aspirations as a basis for serving accrediting bodies and the higher education community effectively.
- Keeps any review processes as efficient and cost-effective as possible by minimizing the use of travel and reports, and by eliminating duplication of effort wherever possible.
- Provides the accreditation community with thoughtful, diagnostic analyses that assist accreditors, institutions, or programs in finding their own approaches and solutions, and that make a clear distinction between what is required for recognition or membership and what is recommended for improvement.

3. Respects and protects the autonomy of accrediting bodies and institutions.

- Works with issues of autonomy in light of the commitment to mutual accountability implied by participation in accreditation activities, while at the same time, respecting the diversity of effective approaches to common goals, issues, challenges, and opportunities exhibited by accrediting bodies, institutions, and programs.
- Applies its criteria and procedures with profound respect for the rights and responsibilities of accrediting bodies, institutions, and programs to identify, designate, and control (a)?their respective missions, goals, and objectives; (b)?educational and philosophical principles and methodologies used to pursue their various missions, goals, and objectives; (c)?specific choices and approaches to content; (d)?agendas and areas of

study pursued through scholarship, research, and policy development; (e) specific personnel choices, staffing configurations, administrative structures, and other operational decisions; and (f) content, methodologies, and timing of tests, evaluations, and assessments.

- Recognizes the ultimate authority of each accreditation and academic community for its own educational policies while maintaining fundamental criteria and fostering consideration of evolving needs and conditions in accreditation and in higher education.

4. Maintains a broad perspective as the basis for wise decision making.

- Gathers and analyzes information and ideas from multiple sources and viewpoints concerning issues important to accrediting bodies, institutions, programs, professions, publics, governments, and others concerned with the content, scope, and effectiveness of its work.
- Uses the results of these analyses in formulating policies and procedures that promote substantive, effective accreditation, that protect the autonomy of institutions, programs, and accrediting bodies, and that encourage trust and cooperation within and among various components of the larger higher education community.

5. Focuses its oversight and recognition efforts on the principal functions of accreditation.

- Concentrates on results in light of missions, goals, objectives, and contexts present in the work of specific accrediting bodies.
- Deals comprehensively with relationships and interdependencies among purposes, aspirations, operations, resources, and results.
- Considers techniques, methods, and resources primarily in light of results achieved and functions fulfilled rather than the reverse.
- Has criteria and review procedures that provide room for experimentation, encourage responsible innovation, and promote thoughtful evolution.

6. Exhibits integrity and professionalism in the conduct of its operations.

- Creates and documents its scope of authority, policies, and procedures to ensure governance and decision making under a framework of laws not persons.
- Exercises professional judgment in the context of its published criteria and procedures.
- Demonstrates continuing care with policies, procedures, and operations regarding due process, conflict of interest, confidentiality, and consistent application of policies.
- Presents its materials and conducts its business with accuracy, skill, and sophistication sufficient to produce credibility for its role as an evaluator and promoter of accreditation effectiveness.
- Is quick to admit errors in any part of its operation, and equally quick to rectify such errors.
- Maintains sufficient financial, personnel, and other resources to carry out its operations effectively.
- Provides accurate, clear, and timely information to accrediting bodies, to the higher education community, to the professions, and to the public concerning accreditation.
- Corrects inaccurate information about itself or its actions.

7. Has mechanisms to ensure that expertise and experience in the application of its criteria, policies, procedures, and values are present in members of its volunteer bodies and staff.

- Maintains a thorough and effective orientation, training, and professional development program for all personnel.
- Works with accrediting bodies to ensure that individuals involved in oversight or recognition functions represent a collection of appropriate expertise and experience.
- Conducts evaluations of personnel that involve responses from accrediting bodies that have experienced its review processes.
- Conducts evaluations of criteria and procedures that include responses from reviewers

and those reviewed.

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