

# COMMISSIONER MANUAL

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<b>Related ACAHM Policies and Documents:</b>	<a href="#">Accreditation Procedures</a> ; <a href="#">Site Visitor Policy</a> ; <a href="#">On-Site Observer Policy</a> ; <a href="#">Conflict of Interest and Disclosure Policy</a> ; <a href="#">Confidentiality and Non-Disclosure Agreement</a> ; <a href="#">Code of Conduct and Professional Ethics Guide</a> ; <a href="#">Comprehensive Standards and Criteria</a> ; <a href="#">ACAHM Glossary</a> ; <a href="#">Legal and Regulatory Checklist</a>
<b>References:</b>	34 CFR §600.2; 20 U.S.C. 1099b;
<b>Responsible Official:</b>	ACAHM Director of Regulatory Affairs

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# 1. THE COMMISSION

## A. Commission Composition

The Commission membership is comprised of a diverse range of individuals as defined in the *ACAHM Bylaws*, including those who serve in: academic leadership roles; college administrative roles; as faculty of health sciences programs including acupuncture and herbal medicine (AHM) programs; employers associated with an AHM-related business; AHM practitioners; and qualified public members.

1. Academic and administrative members are directly engaged in a significant manner in postsecondary program or institutional administration currently or within the previous three (3) years.
2. Academic, educator and/or employer members are directly engaged in a significant manner in postsecondary education, teaching, research, and/or AHM-related business currently or within the previous three (3) years.
3. A practitioner member, which may include an AHM-related business employer, is a person whose principal source of income is derived from an AHM-related business or as an AHM practitioner. Practitioner members should be actively involved in the development of the profession.
4. A public member, which may be a student, is a person who is not: a) an employee, member of the governing board, owner, or shareholder of, or consultant to, an institution or program that either has achieved ACAHM accreditation or pre-accreditation status, or has applied for accreditation or pre-accreditation, b) a member of any trade association or membership organization related to, or affiliated or associated with ACAHM; or, c) a spouse, domestic partner, parent, child or sibling of an individual or individuals described in a) or b) of this definition; or d) a practitioner as defined below.
5. Any individual may be elected as an “at large” member of the Commission.

## B. General Commissioner Characteristics

1. Qualified by academic training, professional experience, and knowledge of the accrediting process.
2. Sensitive to the uniqueness of individual programs.
3. Impartial, objective, and without conflict of interest.
4. Strong academic and professional backgrounds and experience appropriate to the review of acupuncture and Herbal medicine programs.
5. Responsible, ethical, and objective with a known history of fulfilling commitments on time.
6. Willing, capable of, and committed to attending two *Commission meetings* (one in the Summer and one in the Winter) per year, and *Commission Retreats* as may be determined by the Commission.
7. Willing and able to devote the time to perform detailed evaluations of program reports

between Commission meetings.

### **C. Commissioner Qualifications**

#### *Desired Specific Knowledge and Skills*

1. Good communication and organizational skills
2. Budget and finance experience
3. Knowledge and experience in higher education and program assessment
4. Governance experience
5. Writing and editing skills
6. Clinical and/or teaching experience

#### *Diversity and Balance Considerations*

1. Ethnicity
2. Gender
3. Geographic distribution
4. Professional and/or academic experience
5. Educational background
6. Variety of schools of thought within the profession

#### *General Responsibilities*

1. Monitor accreditation functions.
2. Establish policies and procedures.
3. Monitor administrative functioning.
4. Establish standards.
5. Monitor fiscal affairs.
6. Accredite programs.
7. Participate in ACAHM Committees.
8. Attend ACAHM meetings and fulfill all Commissioner roles and responsibilities.

### **D. Commissioner Training and Support**

ACAHM-specific accreditation training is provided to newly appointed Commissioners using a variety of methods which begins with an initial telephone/online orientation by the Executive Director (ED) reviewing their responsibilities prior to the start of their first Commission meeting.

Each Commissioner is provided with the Commissioner Manual and participates in an orientation session for new Commissioners to ensure that appropriate training on accreditation standards, policies and procedures is provided. For their first evaluation meeting, new Commissioners are placed on an existing review committee for all school/program reviews, to receive direct hands-on training on the review process from experienced peers. Beginning with their second evaluation meeting new Commissioners are assigned to review committees. All Commissioners may directly contact ACAHM's Chair, the ED, or other staff at any time with questions related to the accreditation review process. The orientation session includes review of the following:

1. Introduction

2. ACAHM Commissioner Manual
3. ACAHM Code of Conduct and Professional Ethics Guide
4. ACAHM Certification Form
5. ACAHM Conflict of Interest and Disclosure Policy
6. ACAHM Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form
7. Commission Assignments Table
  - a. Review Upcoming Committee Assignments
  - b. Review Process
  - c. Review Recusals
8. ACAHM Policies
  - a. Comprehensive Standards and Criteria for Accreditation
  - b. Accreditation Procedures Policy
  - c. Commission Actions Policy
  - d. Notification of Change Policy
9. Commission Committee Roster
10. ACAHM Website Review
11. Operational logistics

## **2. COMMISSION RESPONSIBILITIES EXPLAINED**

### **A. Monitor Accreditation Functions**

The Commission serves as ACAHM's Board of Directors. All Commissioners have a fiduciary responsibility to monitor the affairs of ACAHM and to use the care that an ordinarily prudent person would exercise in a like position and under similar circumstances. It is the responsibility of Commissioners to ensure that ACAHM's mission as an accrediting agency is being achieved and that ACAHM is performing its accreditation functions in an efficient and effective manner. This includes monitoring the effectiveness of ACAHM *Standards and Criteria for Accreditation*, policies, procedures, their application, and how they might be improved.

ACAHM staff is responsible for developing proposed standards and criteria for accreditation consistent with 34 CFR §602, policies, procedures, and ensuring that each Commissioner receives the necessary information to effectively monitor ACAHM functions. For this purpose, agendas are prepared by staff for each Commission meeting, in consultation with the ACAHM Executive Committee, composed of the ACAHM Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and Executive Director. In addition, Commissioners may, on occasion, receive special communications, which provide information relevant to their roles and responsibilities. The Commission may also conduct conference calls to deliberate on relevant matters. Although Commissioners will be provided such information and documentation as may be necessary to conduct ACAHM business, it is the responsibility of each Commissioner to carefully review such documentation prior to Commission deliberations, and to contribute actively to the achievement of ACAHM's mission. Commissioners who have specific administrative issues or needs other than those directly germane to issues that have been directly delegated to them should contact the ACAHM Chair, who will discuss the

matter with the Executive Director.

## **B. Establish Policies and Procedures**

The Commission publishes ACAHM standards and criteria for accreditation, and policies and procedures that govern the accreditation process on the Commission website. All programs and institutions in the accreditation process are provided access to *ACAHM Standards and Criteria for Accreditation*, policies, and procedures, and are expected to fully comply with them. Similarly, the Commission itself is legally required to adhere to its published policies and procedures in conducting program/institution Pre-accreditation (Candidacy) and Accreditation reviews.

Periodically, Commissioners may be required to approve new policies and procedures or consider amending existing policies and procedures. Under ACAHM protocols, proposals for adopting new or amended policies and procedures are prepared by ACAHM staff for consideration by a relevant committee(s) prior to Commission consideration and adoption at its scheduled meetings. “New” policies, standards, and criteria for accreditation typically receive two readings by the full Commission, and opportunity for public comment prior to final adoption. The Commission may also consider or adopt proposed policies or procedures virtually (i.e., by mail/FAX/e-mail ballot or by conference call).

The Commission is responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of ACAHM’s policies and procedures. If individual Commissioners have suggestions for improving ACAHM’s policies or procedures, such suggestions should be shared with the Executive Director, or Chair, or addressed during Commission policy deliberations.

## **C. Monitoring Administrative Functioning**

The Commission is responsible for establishing ACAHM policies, while ACAHM staff is responsible for implementing the policies and procedures adopted by the Commission. ACAHM staff conduct all the administrative affairs of the Commission, including but not limited to, implementing the accreditation process; conducting day-to-day financial management; and engaging in communications with programs and institutions, state and federal regulatory authorities, and the general public.

Since the fulfillment of ACAHM’s mission depends in substantial part on the effectiveness of ACAHM administrative operations, the Commission’s Executive Committee monitors administrative effectiveness through evaluation of the ACAHM Executive Director. Direct and primary oversight of office administrative functioning is the responsibility of the Executive Director, who conducts regular conference calls with the Commission’s Chair and Executive Committee to keep the Committee apprised of ACAHM administrative and other issues. The Executive Committee meeting minutes and decisions made between meetings are included in the Commission agenda for each Commission meeting. The Commission is also responsible for approving policies and procedures governing staff, including those contained in the *ACAHM Employee Manual*.

## D. Establishing Standards

A critical Commission function is adopting comprehensive standards and criteria and eligibility requirements for accreditation with which all programs/institutions in the accreditation process must comply. ACAHM's [Comprehensive Standards and Criteria](#) are available on the Commission web site. ACAHM's Standards and Criteria Committee, composed of Commissioners appointed by the Chair, is responsible for recommending amendments to ACAHM standards and criteria for the Commission's consideration and adoption. As with the establishment of Commission policies and procedures, standards and criteria proposals are typically developed by ACAHM staff for consideration by the Standards and Criteria Committee prior to Commission consideration and adoption at its scheduled meetings. Significant amendments to ACAHM standards and criteria, or the drafting of new standards and criteria, are sometimes prepared by a Standards Task Force or Working Group composed of the communities of interest prior to Standards Committee, and after Commission review and consideration. "New" standards and criteria proposals typically receive two readings by the full Commission, and opportunity for public comment, prior to adoption. In addition, the Commission, acting as a committee of the whole, may amend or develop new standards and criteria. This process may occur during regularly scheduled Commission meetings or special Commission Retreats.

As an accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education, ACAHM is required to implement a systematic program for review and revision of its eligibility requirements, standards, and criteria for accreditation. Pursuant to ACAHM's [Standards Review Policy](#), ACAHM employs a comprehensive, systematic on-going program review to assess whether its eligibility requirements and its standards and criteria for accreditation are adequate to evaluate the education and training provided by the institutions and programs it accredits and relevant to the education or training needs of students. The Standards and Criteria Committee and the Commission are responsible for reviewing ACAHM's standards and criteria consistent with this policy.

## E. Monitoring Fiscal Affairs

The Commission is responsible for monitoring ACAHM's financial affairs to ensure that ACAHM remains financially stable and has, and will have, the necessary fiscal resources to meet the Commission's short- and long-term objectives.

The Executive Director, in consultation with the Commission Treasurer and ACAHM's external accounting and separate auditing firm, prepares financial reports and budgets for review by the ACAHM Audit & Finance Committee. Materials include:

- Year-End Financial Report for the preceding year
- Proposed budget for the next fiscal year with any changes to employee compensation and benefits
  
- Year-To-Date Financial Report for the current year
- CPA-prepared audited financial statements or financial reviews

The Audit & Finance Committee submits its recommendations to the full Commission for

consideration. Commissioners are expected to fully review ACAHM financial reports and budgets to ensure that ACAHM has, and will have, the necessary fiscal resources to support adequately its mission, goals, and objectives. The Commission is responsible for annually approving financial statements.

## **F. Accrediting Programs**

The Commission's role in reviewing institutions and programs for Accreditation and Pre-accreditation (Candidacy) status is at the heart of ACAHM's mission. Commissioners should be fully familiar with ACAHM's [Accreditation Procedures Policy](#), and related policies found on the [Commission's website](#). Commissioners play a critical role in this process, as further described below.

## **G. Review Committees and Process**

The Commission utilizes Review Committees to recommend actions to the full Commission on comprehensive institutional/programmatic reviews for pre-accreditation or accreditation, monitoring actions, sanctions and substantive change requests.

Each institution will have a minimum of two Commissioner reviewers (Review Committee). Reviewers are required to review the reports for their assigned institutions and programs relative to compliance with Commission policies, standards, and criteria for accreditation. Programs and institutions seeking Pre-Accreditation (Candidacy), Initial Accreditation, or Continuing Accreditation, undergo comprehensive reviews and must:

- Submit a Self-Study Report
- Host a site visit
- Submit a Formal Institutional Response to the site visit report

A program/institution's Self-Study Report, along with the Site Visit Report, the program/institution's Formal Institutional Response to that report, and any Third-Party comments received, constitutes *the Accreditation Record* for purposes of rendering a Pre-accreditation, Initial Accreditation or Continuing Accreditation decision. Review Committees receive the *Accreditation Record* prior to full Commission consideration and are expected to complete a "review table" documenting the Committee's suggested revisions/findings. This same documentation is provided as part of the Commission meeting agenda materials for action at a Commission meeting. Review Committee Members are expected to assume a primary role in facilitating the Commission program review process for their assigned programs and institutions during Commission meetings.

When reviewing institutions or programs for consideration of pre-accreditation (candidacy), the Commission's role is to assess whether programs and institutions have met all accreditation criteria further classified as eligibility requirements and sufficiently meet the standards and criteria for initial award of ACAHM status.

Programs/institutions that have been granted Pre-accreditation may be required to submit interim reports documenting progress in strengthening compliance with ACAHM standards and

criteria.

Accredited or pre-accredited programs with identified deficiencies relative to compliance with one or more ACAHM standard and/or criteria are subject to a monitoring action (i.e., interim site visit, interim report, monitoring/progress report or supplemental information report – See ACAHM [Commission Actions Policy](#)) documenting progress in strengthening compliance with the standards and criteria.

Each pre-accredited and accredited program must also submit an annual report. ACAHM staff review annual reports, and any identified concerns are forwarded to the appropriate review committee for consideration.

When reviewing first annual, monitoring, or interim reports, the Commission's role is to assess whether programs and institutions have corrected previous Commission findings of non-compliance and, if addressed in the program or institutions submission, strengthened Areas Requiring Further Development. Review Committees may also be required to review programs'/institutions' Substantive Change Requests to assess whether the proposed substantive change(s) will adversely impact the quality of the ACAHM pre-accredited or accredited programs and compliance with Commission *Standards and Criteria for Accreditation*.

## H. Site Visits

Although Commissioners and staff are not expected to conduct site visits, on rare occasions a Commissioner or staff member may be invited to participate on a site visit team. Site visits may include pre-accreditation, accreditation and/or continuing accreditation visits, interim site visits, fact finding visits, or focused site visits for certain categories of substantive changes.

ACAHM's Site Visit Manual found on the [Commission's website](#) sets forth the roles and responsibilities of site visitors, standards of conduct, as well as information and instructions for conducting the visit.

## I. Commission Decision-Making

Certain categories of Commission decisions may be delegated to a Commission Review Committee or handled by the full Commission, either virtually (by email ballot) or during ACAHM's bi-annual meetings. The following presents the types of Commission program decisions and the entity responsible.

### **Pre-accreditation, Accreditation and Continuing Accreditation Decisions**

Full Commission at ACAHM's bi-annual meetings

### **Interim, Monitoring, and Supplemental Information Reports**

Typically, the assigned Review Committee reviews and takes action on such reports. In instances where reports raise significant issues relative to compliance with Commission Standards and Criteria for Accreditation, the Review Committee may require the institution/program to host an interim site visit for full Commission consideration.

### **Annual Reports**

Annual Reports are reviewed by ACAHM staff. Reports that fail to meet ACAHM's standards and criteria thresholds, or raise issues of concern, are timely forwarded to Review Committee members for the respective program/institution and may be placed before the full Commission for its review and action.

### **Substantive Change Reports/Site Visits**

Typically, the assigned Review Committee makes decisions on behalf of the Commission to approve applications for substantive changes. Certain types of substantive changes, particularly those that require a site visit, may require full Commission approval.

### **Formal Complaints**

Complaints against pre-accredited or accredited programs and institutions that fall within ACAHM's [Policy Governing Complaints](#) may either be handled by staff, the Commission's Accreditation Process Committee, a Review Committee, or by the full Commission depending on the nature of the complaint.

### **Additional Comments**

Commissioners with a conflict of interest with a program/institution reviewed by the Commission do not receive the record for the program in question and cannot participate in the Commission deliberations or vote on that program/institution.

Commissioners without a conflict of interest for the program/institution being reviewed are expected to:

- Read the entire record contained in the Commission meeting agenda materials for each program prior to Commission meeting deliberation on the program;
- Provide complete and timely documentation and comments on school reviews to staff reviewers, where applicable;
- Fully participate in Commission hearings on program reviews; and,
- Fully participate in program deliberations, whether at the Review Committee level or during the Executive Session of Commission decision meetings.

## **3. SERVING ON COMMISSION COMMITTEES**

Commissioners may be assigned to serve on one or more Commission Committees or Task Forces. Such Committees deliberate either in person or by conference calls, mailings, or e-mail . Each committee is chaired by a Commissioner appointed by the ACAHM Chair. Committee Chairs are required to coordinate the committee review of matters within the committee's charter or charge, including the coordination with staff of committee agendas and conference calls.

All Commission Committees and Task Forces, except the ACAHM Executive Committee and Program/Institution Review Committees, are appointed by the Commission Chair. Program/Institution Review Committees are appointed by ACAHM Executive Director.

## **A. Executive Committee**

This Committee, required under ACAHM Bylaws, is composed of the officers of the Commission (Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer). The Executive Director also serves on the Committee as an ex officio member. The Executive Committee has the authority to act on urgent items between Commission meetings, the urgency of the items to be determined by the Commission Chair. The Committee also conducts regular conference calls to discuss other issues and matters relevant to the administration of ACAHM affairs. The Committee is required to report its actions to the Commission for consideration and ratification. The Executive Committee typically conducts conference calls on a quarterly and/or as needed basis.

## **B. Accreditation Process Committee**

The Accreditation Process Committee, which is composed of Commissioners, assesses the effectiveness of ACAHM accreditation processes, policies, procedures, and protocols to consider and recommend for Commission action on proposed changes to those processes, procedures, and protocols. The Committee reviews and acts on appropriately submitted complaints, as outlined in the [Policy Governing Complaints](#). The Committee typically conducts conference calls on a bi-annual and as needed basis.

## **C. Audit & Finance Committee**

The Audit & Finance Committee is a standing ACAHM Committee that reviews staff and independent external auditor-prepared financial reports, reviews and statements, budget proposals, and considers ACAHM's investment strategies prior to consideration and action by the Commission. The Committee typically conducts conference calls on a quarterly basis and is chaired by the Treasurer.

## **D. Nominations Committee**

This Committee, required under ACAHM Bylaws, is composed of up to three Commissioners appointed by the Chair. The Committee's role is to solicit and screen nominees for election as Commissioners. The Committee prepares a slate of nominees for each anticipated vacancy on the Commission. The report is then placed on the Commission meeting agenda for consideration and action. The Nominations Committee typically conducts conference calls on a quarterly basis.

## **E. Distance Education Committee**

The Distance Education Committee assists the Commission in developing and reviewing distance education policies, procedures, rules, standards and/or Criteria; and providing recommendation regarding pilot programs and other novel approaches to distance education.

## **F. Standards and Criteria Committee**

The Standards and Criteria Committee, which is composed of Commissioners, reviews, and recommends proposed changes to Commission Standards and Criteria for Commission action. The

Standards and Criteria Committee typically conducts conference calls on a quarterly basis.

## **G. Other Committees and Task Forces**

In addition to standing committees and committees mandated in the ACAHM Bylaws, the Commission may establish various Ad Hoc Committees and Task Forces to study and provide recommendations to the Commission on issues set forth in the charter, or charges established for such committees or Task Forces. Examples of ad hoc committees and Task Forces include the ACAHM Ad Hoc Distance Education Committee, Doctoral Task Force, and Reconceptualized Masters Standards Committee.

All Commissioners who are assigned to serve on a Commission Committee or Task Force are expected to read all relevant documentation and participate fully in the committee/task force deliberation process.

## **4. ATTENDANCE RESPONSIBILITIES**

Commissioners are expected to attend all Commission meetings and fulfill all assigned Commission responsibilities in a timely and competent manner. Failure to attend meetings and/or to adequately fulfill Commissioners' responsibilities undermines ACAHM's effectiveness and places an undue burden on Commission resources. Competent and timely review of school reports and meeting attendance, as well as thorough preparation for Commission meetings are particularly critical to ACAHM operations.

Commissioners who do not believe that they can adequately fulfill their roles and responsibilities should contact the Executive Director or Commission Chair to discuss whether it might be better for the Commissioner to resign from his or her position. Commissioners who have demonstrated difficulty in performing critical Commissioner roles and responsibilities will be contacted by the Commission Chair.

## **5. COMMISSIONER CONDUCT EXPECTATIONS**

### **A. Commissioner Code of Conduct**

Commissioners must strictly comply with the Commission's [Code of Conduct and Professional Ethics Guide](#) (Code) and [Confidentiality and Non-Disclosure Agreement](#). Upon appointment all Commissioners must demonstrate their commitment to comply with the Code by signing an acknowledgement statement that they understand the principles and standards in the Code and agree to comply with them. Additionally, Commissioners are under a continuing obligation to timely disclose actual or possible conflicts of interest (See [ACAHM Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form](#)).

### **B. Program Review Hearings**

Commissioners are expected to be sensitive and tactful during school review hearings. Unduly hostile questioning of program/institution representatives must be avoided. Commissioners should also attempt to avoid questions which place program/institution representatives in an

embarrassing position regardless of how the questions are answered. For example, questions along the following lines should be avoided (e.g., Have you ceased the practice of providing misleading advertising to prospective students?).

In this regard, Commissioners should acknowledge that certain issues may be particularly sensitive for programs/institutions to address, such as difficult personnel or financial matters, and particularly on matters where a Commissioner suspects that the program has not acted with honesty and integrity (e.g., providing untruthful or misleading information to the Commission or students). If an individual Commissioner, from his or her review of the accreditation record in question, anticipates asking questions which could be deemed sensitive or embarrassing for the program/institution, the Commissioner should contact staff or the Commission Chair before the hearing to discuss ways in which the necessary information can be sought in a dignified and appropriate manner.

## REVISION HISTORY

Date Revised	Summary of Revisions	Approved By
20 Oct 2018	Significant revisions in structure and content from 2015 edition	ACAHM Executive Director
1 Feb 2019	Audit and Finance Committee Charter Updated	Full Commission
19 Nov 2019	Addition of Accreditation Process and Distance Education Committee Charters	ACAHM Executive Director
25 Nov 2019	Non-substantive revisions (i.e., addition of a footer, etc.)	ACAHM Executive Director
11 Aug 2020	Non-substantive revisions (corrections of formatting, table of contents, etc.)	ACAHM Executive Director
18 Nov 2020	New Commissioner training	ACAHM Executive Director
7 Feb 2022	Audit and Finance Committee Charter revised	ACAHM Executive Director
240220	Adjusted terminology throughout for ACAHM name change and removal of "Oriental" term. Removed #6. Committee Charters	ACAHM Executive Director
240424	Revisions to Standards Review Process and Accreditation Process committee review of complaints. Removal of references to biannual progress reporting. Minor grammatical edits	ACAHM Executive Director