

**MONTANA BOARD OF REGENTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION
Policy and Procedures Manual**

SUBJECT: ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

Policy 221320.1 – Accreditation Authorization to Operate Postsecondary Institution in the State of Montana

Adopted: May 17, 2001; Revised: March 4, 2011

Board Policy

- A. Pursuant to §20-25-107, MCA, no person, corporation, association or institution shall issue any degree or such similar literary honors as are usually granted by universities or colleges without the prior approval of the regents of the adequacy of the course of study. Neither the board of regents nor the office of the commissioner of higher education will independently evaluate a school for purposes of meeting the requirements of §20-25-107 MCA. Accreditation by one of the below noted agencies is the exclusive method of recognition by the board of regents for purposes of that statute.
- B. The phrase For purposes of this policy "degree or such similar literary honors as are usually granted by universities and colleges" as used in §20-25-107 MCA means, certificates of applied science, associate degrees, baccalaureate and bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, doctoral degrees and any degree which the grantor purports to be similar or equivalent regardless of how it is denominated, except that it does not apply to religious degrees or certificates that are offered by an institution that is owned, controlled, operated and maintained by a religious organization lawfully operating as a non-profit religious corporation that awards only religious degrees or certificates.
- C. For purposes of §20-25-107 MCA the board of regents recognizes the following accrediting agencies:
1. New England Association of Schools and Colleges
 2. Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools
 3. North Central Association of Colleges and Schools
 4. Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities
 5. Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
 6. Western Association of Schools and Colleges
 7. Any accrediting agency approved by the Council on Higher Education Accreditation.
 8. Any accrediting agency approved by the U.S. Department of Education.

The board of regents reserves the right to withdraw recognition of any of the above listed accrediting agencies at its discretion.

Schools formally accepted as candidates for accreditation by any of the above agencies shall be treated as accredited for as long as they remain in that status.

- D. A newly established institution actively seeking accreditation from one of the above listed agencies may operate in Montana provided it enters into a formal affiliation agreement with an institution ("affiliated institution") that is accredited by one of the above listed agencies. Such agreement must include, at a minimum, the following provisions:

- The affiliate institution is responsible for awarding credits and degrees; and
- The affiliate institution is responsible for maintaining transcripts.

Until such institution obtains its own independent accreditation by one of the above listed accrediting agencies, it must remain a party to a valid and binding agreement with an affiliated institution in order to be in compliance with § 20-25-107 and this policy.

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- E. This policy supplements, rather than displaces, board policy 320.3 ("Recognition; Canadian Public Institutions"). For campuses and programs of the Montana university system and the Montana community colleges, the provisions of board policy 320.2 ("Accreditation; Montana university system units and community colleges") are applicable.

History:

Item 110-105-R0301, Accreditation (New), approved by the Board of Regents on May 17, 2001 as revised by Item 118-104-R0103, approved by the Board of Regents on April 2, 2003; editorial change made April 8, 2004, to change the name "Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges" to "Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities." Item 150-104-R0311, revised March 4, 2011 for Policy Clarification.

Field Code Changed

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