

Accreditation Commission Policy:

Examination of Facts

Approved December 8, 2006

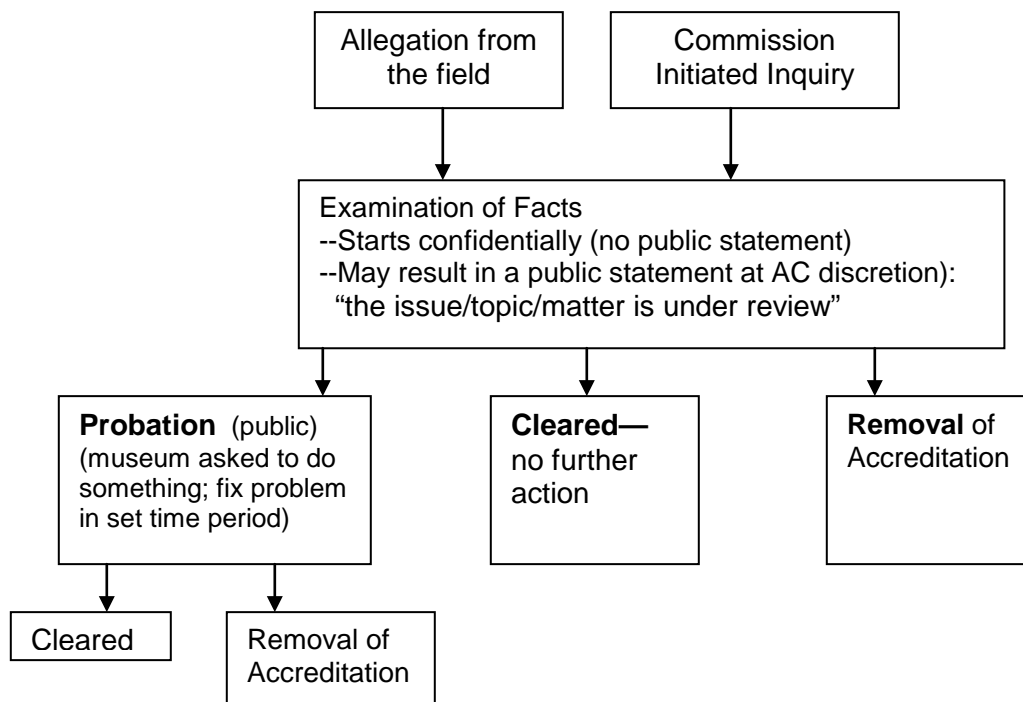
I. Summary

The Accreditation Commission may act on allegations of unprofessional practice brought to its attention by an outside party or initiate an inquiry on its own. In either case, the first step is a process called the Examination of Facts. This process enables the Commission to gather information and impartially review allegations in order to take appropriate and informed action.

The Examination starts confidentially, but in some situations, at the Commission's discretion, the Alliance may make a public statement that the museum is under review (providing no specifics). The Alliance staff would inform a museum's director before any public statement was made.

A museum's accredited status is not affected during the Examination of Facts; however, an outcome of the review may affect its accreditation. The Examination of Facts can result in the allegation or inquiry being found to be without merit and dismissed, the museum being put on probation and given the opportunity to fix the problem, or the removal of its accredited status. If probation is imposed, at the end of the probationary period the museum is cleared or has its accredited status removed.

An Examination of Facts is a separate from an institution's regularly scheduled accreditation review. However, if an institution is engaged in an accreditation review and an Examination of Facts is initiated, they may proceed on independent schedules. For example, the Commission may place the Examination on its agenda prior to its consideration of the museum's regularly scheduled review. The Commission might also decide conduct a accreditation review outside of the museum's regular schedule as a result of the Examination of Facts.



II. Process

- A. The Examination of Facts starts confidentially while the Commission gathers information from the museum and any other relevant sources.
- B. The Commission discusses the information and decides how to proceed.

Note: the process is not an exhaustive review. It is based on material provided by the museum and complainant, or other, readily accessible publicly available information.

C. Possible Outcomes

The Examination can have the following outcomes:

- Museum cleared and no further action is taken
- Museum put on probation, during which it has the opportunity to fix the problem
- Museum has its accredited status removed

These decisions cannot be appealed.

Details of Possible Outcomes:

1. Take No Further Action

The Commission decides to take no further action when: the museum's response and other facts demonstrate that an allegation is incorrect; or that the event was an isolated incident of misjudgment; or that the underlying issue has been corrected; or that the allegation/inquiry is without merit; or the Commission is satisfied by the museum's response and finds that although it may have weaknesses they are not sufficient to immediately affect its accredited status.

Even if a museum is cleared, the Commission may change the date of the museum's next regularly scheduled reaccreditation review and/or flag the issue for attention during that review.

Note on publicity: if during the course of a review the Alliance has made a public announcement, and if no further action is taken, the Alliance will also publicly announce this fact.

2. Impose Probation

If the Commission finds that an accredited museum fails to meet accreditation standards or eligibility requirements, but that this can be corrected relatively quickly, it can impose probation. Probation provides the opportunity for museums that are out of compliance with program standards or eligibility criteria come back into compliance within a fixed time period. While under probation the museum is still accredited.

See the separate policy on Probation for full details about this process.

Note on publicity: if during the course of a review the Alliance has made a public announcement, after probation is successfully completed the Alliance will also publicly announce that the museum is has addressed the issue and is again in good standing.

3. Withdraw Accreditation

This action is taken when the Commission decides the evidence brought forth in an allegation/inquiry is correct and the museum fails to take satisfactory corrective action in a timely manner. If the Commission makes this decision, the standard policies and procedures related to withdrawal are followed. This includes disclosing the fact that the

museum is no longer accredited if asked, as well as its past accreditation award dates; and not disclosing the reasons for the withdrawal or the date. See "Guidelines for the Institution: Following Withdrawal from the Program" for details.

III. Publicity

During the Examination of Facts the Commission may decide it is appropriate, in order to maintain the credibility of the program, to make a public announcement that the matter in question is under review. Such announcements do not indicate any findings or outcome, and do not include details. Most Examinations will remain confidential and will not result in a public announcement. Such statements are made by the Accreditation Commission Chair or the Alliance's CEO. While the statement may be delivered verbally, a written copy will always also be created and placed on file. The Alliance staff will inform a museum's director at least 24 hours before any public statement is released, review when and how the statement will be made, and provide a written copy of the statement.

Any museum under examination is strongly encouraged, though not required, to make a proactive public statement about the review and the actions it is taking in response to the allegation or inquiry.

If in the course of an Examination the Alliance makes a public announcement and the Commission decides to take no further action, AAM will make an announcement to this effect.

Any public statements made by the Alliance in the course of an Examination become a matter of permanent record, and copies of such statements will be archived and made available on request.

Copies of the following will be kept in the Alliance program files indefinitely; one in the museum's permanent file and another in a dedicated location.

- AAM press releases/statements announcing that the museum is undergoing an Examination of Facts or the outcome.
- Any letter issued by the Commission to the museum regarding the initiation of an Examination of Facts and the resolution.