

Whistleblower Policy

Evidence of NEASC Member Institutions Violating NEASC Accreditation Standards

Introduction

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) is committed to institutional integrity and performance consistent with Association Standards and Policies. While NEASC does not intervene in the internal procedures of institutions or act as a regulatory body, it addresses concerns that raise significant questions about whether member institutions substantially comply with NEASC Standards and Policies. This document outlines our Whistleblower Policy.

Purpose

This policy establishes a pathway for members of the public to notify NEASC if they have knowledge that a NEASC accredited institution is in substantial noncompliance with NEASC accreditation standards.

Submission of Evidence

A Notifying Party may submit documented evidence of a substantial violation of NEASC accreditation standards in writing. The Notifying Party must provide their full name and contact information. If a Notifying Party seeks confidentiality due to the sensitive nature of the information, NEASC may redact the name of the Notifying Party when communicating with the member institution but cannot guarantee confidentiality. Allegations must be supported by substantial, verifiable evidence that the institution is in violation of identified Standards and policies, stating relevant and provable facts. The information should demonstrate that a serious effort has been made to bring this to the attention of the institution's leader and pursue all review procedures provided by the institution.

Limited Scope of Whistleblower Notifications

NEASC does not consider allegations concerning the personal lives of individuals connected with its member institutions. NEASC does not resolve individual grievances or intervene in matters such as admissions, tuition, student behavior, or employment decisions, nor will it act as a review body in matters of admission, granting of credit, fees, student discipline, collective bargaining, promotion, tenure, dismissals, or similar matters.

Whistleblower Policy:

Evidence of NEASC Member Institutions Violating NEASC Accreditation Standards

Procedures for Initial NEASC Review

Upon receipt of a Whistleblower Notice, the information will be initially reviewed by the Director of the relevant Commission. A copy of every completed Whistleblower Notice will be sent to the subject institution by the Director. A response will not be required of the member institution unless the Director deems it necessary.

If the matter is the subject of active litigation, arbitration, mediation, or investigation and review by a government agency, NEASC may defer action on the information until such other process is concluded. Once concluded, NEASC may consider the findings and results of any third-party actions when determining its next steps.

NEASC Action

Outside of NEASC Scope of Authority

If the information provided is not within the scope of relevant Standards and policies or does not represent a substantial deviation from NEASC accreditation standards, the institution will be informed, and no further action will be taken.

Within NEASC Scope of Authority

If the information appears to be within the scope of relevant Standards and policies, is substantially documented and if true could represent a substantial deviation from NEASC accreditation standards; then the institution's chief executive officer will be asked to provide a written response to NEASC Director.

NEASC also reserves the right to require a written response for any matters involving student health or safety that raise serious concerns about status of student safety or well-being at the institution.

Institution Response

If the institution acknowledges the information as valid and a possible violation of NEASC Accreditation Standards, it will advise the Director in writing of actions taken to address the matter. The Director will determine if the actions taken are deemed sufficient to bring the institution in compliance with NEASC accreditation standards. If the Director is not satisfied with the actions taken, the Director may initiate fact-finding activities to compile sufficient information to determine next steps. Next steps may include closing the matter, issuing a warning, or making a recommendation for suspension or revocation of the accreditation status of the institution. The Director is empowered to issue formal warnings, while suspension or revocation of accreditation status is a matter requiring Commission action.

Whistleblower Policy:

Evidence of NEASC Member Institutions Violating NEASC Accreditation Standards

Institution Denial

If the institution denies that the information is valid or constitutes a significant deviation from NEASC accreditation standards, it will provide a response to the Director indicating its reasons, supported by documentation where appropriate. The Director may undertake additional fact-finding activities to properly evaluate the institution's response and formulate a recommendation to the Commission.

If no response is received from the institution, a second request will be forwarded. If no response to the second request is received, the Director will place the matter on the agenda of the next Commission meeting for determination of the future course of action.

Resolution

The Director will consider the institution's response along with any fact-finding results and recommend to the Commission whether the matter should be closed, investigated further, or referred for action at a regularly scheduled Commission meeting. The Commission Chair may call a special meeting to act on the information.

Commission Notification

The Director will provide the Commission with a report of any Whistleblower Notices received since the previous meeting and the action taken with respect to each.

Authority of the President/CEO of NEASC

Nothing contained in this policy shall preclude the NEASC President/CEO for initiating a review of the accreditation status of any member institution when information comes to his attention that the institution may be in violation of NEASC accreditation standards.

Obligations of the Institution

Each institution holding an accreditation status with NEASC is required to cooperate fully, truthfully, and promptly in any inquiry regarding its ongoing adherence to NEASC accreditation standards. Failure to cooperate fully, truthfully and promptly may result in a warning, suspension or termination of an institution's accreditation status.