



ACCREDITING COUNCIL FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION & TRAINING
1722 N. Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036
Telephone : 202-955-1113 Fax: 202-955-1118
<http://www.accet.org>

May 4, 2016

VIA EMAIL
(cversari@sduis.edu)

Ms. Cristina Versari, Ph.D., President
USA English Language Center
at San Diego University for Integrative Studies
3900 Harney Street
San Diego, CA 92110

***Re: Interim Report Reviewed;
Follow-Up Visit Report Reviewed;
Institutional Show Cause Response Reviewed;
Institutional Show Cause Continued;
Complaints (#1341 and #1348) Closed With Merit;
Interim Report Required;
Staff Report Required
ACCET ID #1359***

Dear Dr. Versari:

At its April 2016 meeting, the Accrediting Commission of the Accrediting Council for Continuing Education & Training (ACCET) reviewed the institution's interim report (dated February 26, 2016) submitted in response to the December 16, 2015 Commission Action letter, resulting from its original review of the Quality Assurance Visit report/response at its August 2016 meeting. The Commission's December 2015 action letter directed the institution to submit an interim report to include a revised enrollment agreement, and a revised cancellation and refund policy. The letter further directed submission of documentation for five (5) sample refunds to students per the revised cancellation and refund policy. In addition, the Commission reviewed the report of the Follow-Up Visit directed at the December 2015 meeting (visit conducted February 5, 2016) and the institution's response to that report, dated March 18, 2016. Finally, the Commission reviewed the institution's response, dated March 25, 2016, to the Institutional Show Cause (ISC) directive issued on March 1, 2016. The ISC was issued as a result of the Follow-Up Visit report, per the guidelines of ACCET Document 11 – Policies and Practices of the Accrediting Commission, which allows the Commission to issue a show cause when it has "such serious concern that the institution must provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate that it does, in fact, comply with the ACCET standards, policies, and procedures such that its accreditation should not be withdrawn."

Upon its review of the institution's interim report, the follow-up visit report and response, and the institution's response to the ISC directive, the Commission voted to continue the Institutional Show Cause due to the ongoing concerns enumerated in further detail in this letter. Additionally, the Commission closed complaints #1341 and #1348 with merit, and directed the institution to submit an interim report to include the following specific items:

1. The follow-up report indicated under Standard II-A – Governance that the institution’s Form I-17 did not include its ESL programs; it only listed the bachelors, masters, and doctoral programs offered by the San Diego University for Integrative Studies, the parent organization of USA English Language Center (USAELC).

In addition, the follow-up visit report stated that the institution did not enroll transfer students into “the next available session,” noting that there were many transfer students with delayed start dates, up to 61 days after their last date of attendance (LDA) at the previous institution. There was no evidence that these students completed their programs and were thus allowed the 60-day period before starting at USAELC.

The institution stated in its response to the follow-up visit report that it believes it followed the directions provided by SEVP in a “broadcast message” dated May 27, 2010, as well as “A Guide to the Form I-17 Fact Sheet,” which was not dated but referenced in the March 10, 2016 email from an SEVP Field Representative. The May 27th message stated that an institution should list the degree programs offered, and USAELC noted that it followed the directions given. The Commission noted that the Guide indicates that institutions offering “English language training programs” should enter the hours per week and the total hours or weeks to complete the program. The institution stated that it would modify the I-17 but that it is in the recertification process and cannot make any changes until it is approved. It included three emails showing its recertification was in process, and the aforementioned email from a SEVP Field Representative stating that changes cannot be made while the institution is in recertification. However, the email sent by USAELC to the Field Representative was not included in the exhibits, and the Guide also indicates that any changes to the petition should be reported “immediately” to SEVP. In addition, the Commission noted that, per the www.studyinthestates.dhs.gov website, there is a method to update the recertification petition. It is further noted that the institution’s I-17 indicates ACCET as the accreditor for San Diego University for Integrative Studies, though it should be corrected on the record that ACCET accredits only the USA English Language Center, a separate division of SDUIS.

Relative to the issue of transfer students, the institution indicated in its response that it found “confusing and conflicting language” in the DSO manual relative to the use of “term” and “session,” noting that the terms are used interchangeably by SEVP. The response corrected the team report, which stated that USAELC enrolls in four-week sessions, noting that its sessions are twelve-weeks long. It included a brochure to demonstrate this, which states, “Level Classes are 12 Weeks to Complete,” but which also indicates that students can begin, “on any Monday.” The response continued that “the University” offers twelve week terms because it offers both degree programs and English language classes. It explained that it would enroll in an earlier start date if the next term were more than 60 days away, or in the next term if it were less than 60 days away. The institution also noted that SEVP permits a 60-day period “post program completion” for students transferring to another school, and only in 2015 did SEVP update that guidance to state students must start on the next available start date. The response also indicated that the institution “in good faith” believed it could tell if a student completed a program because they were in active status in SEVIS, which was the case for the four students cited in the report. The response stated

that the institution has revised its policies and procedures, which were provided as an exhibit, and will now enroll students into the next session start date. It also provided a list of starts to show that new transfers-in subsequent to the follow-up visit date are enrolled into the next available session rather than the next available term. The list included the student's name, the date the acceptance letter was sent, and the student's start date at USAELC, but did not include actual acceptance letters or proof of start date/attendance to support the list to demonstrate evidence of the systematic and effective implementation of the revised policy and procedures.

Therefore, the institution is directed to provide a narrative update on these issues, including all correspondence to and from SEVP regarding its attempts to update its I-17 to include its IEP program, to include clarifying language that ACCET accredits only the USA English Language Center at SDUIS and that the degree programs do not fall under ACCET accreditation, along with a copy of the communication that prompted the March 10, 2016 reply from the SEVP Field Representative regarding I-17 updates.

The institution is further directed to provide copies of the acceptance letter, signed application, and first week's attendance roster, for the first fifteen students on the list provided in the response (Exhibit 10) to the Follow-Up Visit report (students Azhar through Gomes Lima) to evidence the systematic and effective implementation of the revised policy on admitting transfer students. It must also provide the same supporting documentation for a sample of five new transfer-in students enrolled after March 11, 2016.

2. The follow-up visit team report indicated under Standard VIII-A – Student Progress that the team found several issues relative to the institution's policies and procedures. The team's review of student files showed that students do not always progress through proficiency levels in a sequential or timely manner. As an example, the report referenced a student, Y. Furusho, who went from the beginning to intermediate and back to beginning level. The report stated that some students remained in the same level for extended periods of time, citing one student (M. Iwahori) who was in the TOEFL level for 103 weeks while another (N. Thamcharoen) was in Intermediate Conversation for 109 weeks. The report stated that students repeat levels without a sound, documented rationale. The report noted that some students remained at the institution beyond the 36 months permitted by ACCET Document 18.IEP – Satisfactory Academic Progress, citing one student who was enrolled for 36 months and extended her I-17 for an additional twelve months, but cancelled her enrollment soon after extending in order to transfer to another institution, although that institution was noted as "unknown" on the transfer form. The report also cited six students who were allotted more than 36 months as their scheduled time of enrollment at the institution.

The team report further indicated that the institution's policies on student progress are inconsistent with those of ACCET. The USAELC policy states that a student who completes a twelve-week session in one level is encouraged to progress to the next level, but may remain in the same level by request, which is contrary to the requirement of linear progression stipulated in ACCET Document 18.IEP. The report cited one student (L. N. T. Vo) who was granted the request to repeat a course for the second time with no documented rationale. Student Y. Furusho was granted the request to move from beginning to intermediate after one year. The student said in

her request: *“Been in this class for 1 year, and I think I’m ready to move up. I’m getting A’s on all my tests.”* A year later she moved back to the beginning level. These two students were among the six cited above as having been enrolled for more than 36 months.

In its response, to the follow-up visit report, the institution addressed the case of Y. Furusho, it stating that her request to be moved down a level was initiated per policy by the institution’s Exceptions Review Committee as her new level was too difficult. However, the institution failed to clarify why it took a year to make that determination, especially after the student noted she was getting all A’s after a full year in the beginning level.

The institution provided its revised Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) policy in its response, which requires students to progress sequentially through proficiency levels. Students may not go down a level and no student may stay in a level for more than 36 weeks. No student may stay at the USAELC for more than 36 months, inclusive of LOA and vacation time. Students may retake a level if they get a C or D grade, but must have a sound rationale and an approved individualized learning plan. The response included a chart outlining actions taken relative to six students cited on the Document 18.IEP included in the follow-up team report, it provided a list of students who repeated a class and were required to submit an individualized learning plan. It provided copies of emails notifying students that they have been in a level for more than 36 weeks, as well as copies of individualized learning plans for those students repeating a level for the third time.

As for the students who were cited as having been enrolled for over 36 months, the response indicated that this occurred because the institution did not count vacation time towards the 36-month total, but has now revised its policy so that vacations and LOA’s count in the 36-month total allowed time at the institution. Further, in order to better communicate with students who are approaching the 36-month limit, the institution has implemented additional tracking spreadsheets and staff training, so that this can be addressed in a timely manner with the student. As for the six students cited as having stated enrollment periods over 36 months, the response noted that all the end dates for those students were “in the future.” It explained that the end dates cited in the report were those on the students’ I-20, while the actual end dates were in the student files. A chart was provided in the response showing the SEVIS and USAELC end dates. The response included a list of all active students and their enrollment period showing that none have exceeded the 36-month limit, and the database now provides a report of students who are within six months of that limit.

While the Commission is encouraged by the corrective actions taken by the institution to address the weaknesses cited in the follow-up visit report, it recognizes that these actions represent systemic changes to the overall satisfactory academic progress policy implemented by the institution and will take time to demonstrate compliance. The exhibits provided demonstrate the first steps in the implementation of these revised policies and procedures, but they are insufficient to assuage the Commission’s serious concerns relative to the areas of noncompliance cited in the team report. As a result, the Commission requires additional evidence of the systematic and effective implementation in practice over time of the institution’s revised policies and procedures.

Therefore, the institution must provide a narrative update on the status of the six students whose enrollment period extended beyond 36 months (Shino, Song, Sinnari, Tuong, Garcia Otegui, and Thamcharoen) along with copies of their transcripts. The institution must provide an up-to-date copy of the tracking list, through June 15, 2016, showing enrollment times for all students to evidence the ongoing monitoring of students nearing the 36-month limit, along with a copy of the reports generated by the database showing those students within six months of the 36-month limit. Copies of all warning emails and individualized learning plans generated since the submission of the response to the follow-up visit team report must also be submitted. In addition, the institution must provide copies of transcripts and updated SEVIS records for students E. Dubini and M. Kakihana, who are the final two active students on the list of those who were cited for having end dates beyond the 36-month limit.

Finally, the institution is directed to provide a chart showing all students who since the submission of the response, received a grade of C or D and requested to repeat the level with a narrative and appropriate supporting documentation.

3. The follow-up visit team report cited several issues with the institution's policies and practices relative to attendance, vacations, and leaves of absence. The team found that the institution grants excessive vacations. The report stated that the institution does not count excused absences into the cumulative attendance percentage, contrary to the requirements in ACCET Document 35 – Policy on Attendance Requirements. Further, the institution's make-up work policy did not require make-up work to include comparable time frames, content, and delivery of the classes missed. Further the institution was unable to provide cumulative attendance rates for the total period of study; rates were only provided for the last four-week period.

The team report stated that the institution's vacation policy was unclear and confusing. The policy states that a student is allowed two weeks of vacation for every twelve weeks of continuous enrollment, but also notes that there can be no more than four weeks in any one request. It also had different policies for F-1 and non F-1 students. For the latter group, the policy states that the vacation restrictions don't apply, "and vacations the institution will consider "around 4 weeks at a time" without the director's approval. The institution's policy also stated that, if a student is not eligible for a vacation, it is to be considered a leave of absence. This is contrary to SEVP policy, which stipulates that a leave of absence is for when the student needs to leave the country.

Further, the report stated that the institution did not consistently follow its vacation policy. And that the implementation of the policy was not in compliance with ACCET Document 36 – Leave of Absence Policy, which states that, "the length and frequency of vacations must not impede student progress and must be reasonable within the context of the institution's curriculum." Through a review of F-1 student files, the team found that multiple vacations were granted in a single month or multiple vacations were given in consecutive months. As examples of this, the report stated that Y. Furusho was given seven vacations in 2015, including five from July through September. K. Okino was given two vacations in December 2014, and was given a seven-month

leave in 2015, exceeding the five-month limit allowed by SEVP. L. N. T. Vo was granted a four-week vacation in 2014, and five vacations/LOA's in 2015, two in June and one in August.

The institution indicated in its response to the follow-up team report that it ceased allowing excused absences following its quality assurance visit (QAV) in June 2015, and speculated that the files reviewed by the team included records from before the QAV. It noted relative to make-up work that it has never allowed make-up work to count for missed time, and provided a copy of its policy. However, it did not include documentation to demonstrate the implementation of that policy in practice.

The institution's response also noted that it has always calculated cumulative attendance per its four-week cycles of payment, but understands the need to track cumulative attendance. It provided a list of students and their cumulative twelve-week attendance, sorted by percentage and noted those who have fallen below the required 80%. It stated that it needed to notify students of the change in policy before taking any actions relative to low attendance. The response included a copy of the revised policy and copies of meeting minutes to demonstrate that the policy was presented to staff and faculty, and referenced email notifications to students whose attendance was falling below 80%. However, the exhibited email notifications all referenced the 36-month limit and not the 80% attendance minimum. The response did not include any evidence that the institution is systematically and effectively tracking cumulative attendance and issuing warnings in practice per its policy.

In an effort to make its vacation policy clearer, the institution reviewed the policy and provided an updated version in its response. The revised policy allows two weeks of vacation per twelve weeks of class, and four weeks if the student had 24 or 36 weeks of class. It stated that its policy has been the same since it was accredited, and that it has received assistance from a SEVP Field Representative in creating it. The response included an email from the SEVP Representative that states that a 4:1 ratio of class to vacation is acceptable, and that USAELC has a 6:1 ratio. However, the institution acknowledged that a vacation policy must be implemented in an educationally sound manner, and has restricted vacations to one two-week vacation per each twelve-week session, rather than multiple short vacations as noted in the follow-up team report. The institution provided as an exhibit a list of students and their vacation dates, along with copies of these students' *Vacation – Leave of Absence Request Forms*. The response indicated that the institution has revised its forms so that vacations and LOA's have separate forms, given the policy differences between the two types of leave. However, the institution did not provide evidence of the systematic and effective implementation of its revised vacation/LOA policies and procedures in practice over time.

Therefore, the institution is directed to provide a narrative update on these issues, to include clarification of use of make-up work with a list of those students who completed make-up work, what work/assignments were missed, what was completed as make-up work, and the effect this make-up work had on each student's grade and/or attendance.

In addition, the response must include a copy of the list used to track cumulative attendance, for the period February 29, 2016 through June 17, 2016, noting those students' whose

attendance has fallen below 80%, along with copies of all email notifications and, if applicable, copies of any termination notices issued.

Finally, the institution must provide copies of all vacation and LOA request forms completed since March 16, 2016 through June 17, 2016, along with a list of those students showing each student's start date, weeks attended, and dates of any other vacations/LOA's previously taken.

A copy of this report, including the attached interim report cover sheet, must be emailed to **interimreports@accet.org** for receipt at the ACCET office no later than **June 24, 2016**

Additionally, the Commission directed the institution to provide a follow-up report for staff review, as follows:

1. The institution's refund calculation worksheets did not indicate the full enrollment period (start date and last date of attendance (LDA)), nor did they include the date of determination (DOD). Therefore, the institution is directed to update its refund calculation worksheet to include these elements, and to submit five copies of the completed revised worksheets.
2. Updated ledger cards showing all charges and a running balance for students N. Vu; A. Aljehani; A. Qaid; Duraid Thair Najeeb Al Banaa; and M. Mora, as the information previously submitted included only payments.

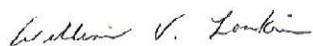
A copy of this report, including the attached staff report cover sheet, must be emailed to **staffreports@accet.org** for receipt at the ACCET office no later than **May 27, 2016**.

As a reminder, please be advised that late submission and receipt of documents and reports are subject to significant late fees in accordance with Commission policy. These fees are outlined in ACCET Document 10, which can be found at www.accet.org.

Further, while under a Show Cause directive, the institution is restricted from making any substantive changes including, but not limited to, new programs, major program revisions, new branch campuses or other new sites, or relocations out of the general market area.

Your demonstrated capabilities and commitment in support of the institution's accredited status are essential to a favorable outcome in this process. Should you have any questions or need further assistance regarding this letter, please contact the ACCET office at your earliest opportunity.

Sincerely,



William V. Larkin, Ed.D.
Executive Director

USA English Language Center
at San Diego University for Integrative Studies
May 4, 2016
Page 8 of 8

WVL/sef

Enclosures: Interim Report Cover Sheet
Staff Report Cover Sheet

cc. Mr. Herman Bounds, Chief, Accreditation Division, US ED (aslrecordsmanager@ed.gov)
Ms. Katherine H. Westerlund, Certification Chief, SEVP (katherine.h.westerlund@ice.dhs.gov)
Ms. Rachel Canty, Director of External Operations, SEVP (rachel.e.canty@ice.dhs.gov)
Ms. Joanne Wenzel, Bureau Chief, CA Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education,
(joanne_wenzel@dca.ca.gov)
Ms. Leeza Rifredi, CA Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education, (leeza.rifredi@dca.ca.gov)