

U.S. Department of Education Staff Report

to the

Senior Department Official on Recognition Compliance Issues

Recommendation Page

1. **Agency:** Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (1952 / 2016)
(The dates provided are the date of initial listing as a recognized agency and the date of the agency's last grant of recognition.)
2. **Action Item:** Petition for Continued Recognition
3. **Current Scope of Recognition:** Accreditation of nursing education programs and schools, both postsecondary and higher degree, which offer a certificate, diploma, or a recognized professional degree including clinical doctorate, masters, baccalaureate, associate, diploma, and practical nursing programs in the United States and its territories, including those offered via distance education.
4. **Requested Scope of Recognition:** Same as above
5. **Date of Advisory Committee Meeting:** 02/07/2018
6. **Staff Recommendation:** Renew the agency's recognition for five years
7. **Issues or Problems:** None

Executive Summary

PART I: GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE AGENCY

The Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN) (formally the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission (NLNAC)) is a national programmatic accrediting agency for postsecondary and higher degree nursing education programs. Its current scope of recognition is the accreditation of nursing education programs and schools, both postsecondary and higher degree, which offer a certificate, diploma, or a recognized professional degree including clinical doctorate, masters, baccalaureate, associate, diploma, and practical nursing programs in the United States and its territories, including those offered via distance education

The agency's accreditation is a required element enabling some of its practical nursing and all of its hospital based programs to establish eligibility to participate in the Title IV, HEA programs.

Recognition History

The National League for Nursing, precursor to the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN) was first recognized as a national accrediting agency in 1952 for the accreditation of associate, baccalaureate, and higher degree nurse education programs. Its scope was later expanded to include diploma and practical nursing programs. Prior to the 1997 meeting, the accrediting functions of the National League for Nursing were formally transferred to the ACEN/NLNAC.

The agency was reviewed again by the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI) at its December 2006 meeting. The Secretary agreed with the NACIQI recommendation, and the agency was granted a five-year period of recognition. In June of 2008 the agency again appeared before the NACIQI for an expansion of scope to include distance education and was granted the request.

At the NACIQI Spring 2012 meeting the National Advisory Committee recommended to grant the agency's request to expand its scope to include the accreditation of clinical doctorate educational programs. It also recommended to continue the agency's recognition and require the agency to provide a compliance report at the NACIQI's Spring 2014 meeting.

At the NACIQI's June 2014 meeting, ACEN's report was incomplete. However, NACIQI granted an extension of its recognition, for good cause, for a period of six months and required the agency to submit a report demonstrating its compliance with the "separate and independent requirements, and to revise its bylaws to be compliant with the Secretary's "separate and independent" definition in. [602.14(b)].

The NACIQI reviewed ACEN's compliance report at it June 2015 meeting. ACEN compliance would have been achieved but for the nullification of the amendments to the certificate of incorporation and bylaws resulting from the agency's apparent violation of

New York law. In the absence of lawful revisions to the documents in question conforming them to the separate and independent requirements the Department could not find ACEN in compliance, and recommended to the NACIQI that the agency's recognition be terminated.

Based on the NACIQI's evaluation of the agency's issues and responses to the Department's concerns it recommended the adoption of the staff report recommendation that ACEN be found not to meet the requirements of recognition, specifically the requirements that it be "separate and independent" as required by 34 CFR Section 602.14(a) and (b). NACIQI's recommendation also included the suggestion that the record remain open for a period of three months to allow supplementation with new information.

At the NACIQI December 2015 meeting Department staff presented the review of the supplemental information that was requested by the Assistant Secretary of Postsecondary Education concerning its demonstration that it satisfies the "separate and independent" requirements of Sec 602.14(a) and (b). Based on that documentation, the staff concluded that ACEN was in compliance with 602.14(a) and (b). The staff and the NACIQI's recommendation to senior Department official for the agency was that she renew the agency's recognition for a period of one-and-one-half years.

The agency's application for its renewal of recognition is the subject of this report.

The Department received no complaints this recognition cycle regarding this agency's accreditation activities

PART II: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The agency meets the requirements of the Secretary's Criteria for Recognition.

PART III: THIRD PARTY COMMENTS

The Department did not receive any written third - party comments regarding this agency.