CISNA

COUNCIL OF ISLAMIC SCHOOLS IN NORTH AMERICA

CISNA Accreditation Policies and Procedures

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Policy I: Terms and Requirements of Accreditation

A. To earn and maintain CISNA Accreditation, a school must:

1. Meet CISNA Accreditation Standards, Policies, and Procedures
2. Host an External Review Team at least once every five years
3. Engage in continuous improvement as evidenced by annual submission of an update on Improvement Priorities from the most recent review report.
4. Submit all required reports
5. Pay all required accreditation fees in a timely manner

B. Substantive Change:

Schools must report substantive changes within ninety (90) days of occurrence of any substantive change. Substantive change areas include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Consolidation or reorganization of the school
2. Change in grade levels served by the school
3. Establishment of an additional campus or branch.
4. Change in legal status (e.g. from non-profit to for profit or vice-versa)
5. Change in Mission or Purpose of the institution
6. Change in governance structure of the school
7. Change in highest ranking school administrator (e.g. head of school, principal, etc.)

School failure to submit a substantive change may result in changes to the school's accreditation status and/or loss of accreditation.

Policy II: Accreditation Statuses

A. **Accredited:** Fully accredited without additional stipulations

B. **Accredited Under Review**: Accreditation with conditions that must be fulfilled as communicated through the school's accreditation report in order to maintain accreditation status

C. Non-Accredited:

1. **Applicant** – The school has applied for accreditation but does not yet have the capacity to meet the Standards required to earn accreditation. A school may remain an applicant for no more than two years. Permission to extend this time period may be granted by CISNA. If the school fails to achieve accredited status within the time period allotted, the school must reapply and begin the process anew.
2. **Candidate** – The school has submitted an application, and the CISNA Accreditation Committee finds that the school has the capacity to meet the Standards required to earn accreditation, but the school has not yet hosted an External Review Team.
    i. A school may remain in candidacy for no more than two years. This status may be extended upon approval by the CISNA Accreditation Committee.

ii. A school may also be considered as a candidate if after completing a review visit the team determines that the school has not adequately met the accreditation requirements. This may require further action before accreditation may be granted.

3. **Dropped** – The school:
   i. Finds it is no longer able to meet the CISNA Standards and/or Accreditation Policies and notifies CISNA that it wishes to have its accredited status dropped; or
   ii. Has been Accredited Under Review and fails to make substantial progress on the Improvement Priorities within the timeframe established by CISNA policies and procedures or review team recommendation; or
   iii. Has been found to no longer adhere to the Standards and accreditation requirements or procedures; or
   iv. Fails to cooperate with any request for information; or
   v. Fails to pay accreditation fees.

The dropped status is effective on the date set by CISNA. A school that has been dropped from accreditation must remove all references to its accredited status from school diplomas, certificates, websites, social media, buildings, literature, etc.

Policy III: Procedures for Initial Accreditation

A. Schools seeking initial accreditation must demonstrate

1. that they meet the CISNA Standards and Policies,
2. have the capacity to support school improvement, and
3. are committed to growth in student learning and organizational effectiveness.

B. **General Guidelines**. Following are general guidelines for all schools seeking initial accreditation:

1. A school must be in operation for at least one academic year with demonstrated financial stability before it may be accredited.
2. A school must certify that it possesses the appropriate licenses to operate if licensing is required by local or state statutes.
3. A school must host a review visit within two years after becoming a candidate or within the time period allotted by CISNA.

Policy IV: Ongoing Monitoring and Reinstatement

CISNA regularly monitors schools' accreditation status, which may change based on new information, complaints, or reviews. Dropped schools may reapply for accreditation.

Policy V: Complaints Against Accredited and Candidate Schools

A complaint is a formal notification alleging non-compliance with CISNA Standards, assurances, policies, or procedures.

Complaints may be submitted by school stakeholders and must be in writing.

Anonymous complaints will not be addressed. Issues that do not involve a violation of standards will be referred back to the school.

The findings from the review and evaluation of a complaint may result in changes to a school's accreditation status. Decisions of the CISNA Board are final.

A. Requirements for Submitting a written Complaint

1. The complainant's full name, phone number, email address, and physical residential or business address. A post office box alone does not satisfy this requirement. CISNA may request additional identifying information reasonably necessary to verify the complainant's identity, stakeholder status, and standing to file the complaint.
2. A description of the circumstances or events and any relevant documentation that support the complaint.
3. A statement of relationship with the individual involved, if the complainant is not the aggrieved individual. Complaints concerning individual students will only be reviewed or sent to the institution if the complaint is made or authorized by a student of majority age or by an individual that has the legal authority and right to represent the student.
4. The name, address, and other contact information for the individual at the school/school system that has been contacted by the complainant to resolve the problem or situation as CISNA requires that the school's own grievance policy is followed before CISNA becomes involved.
5. Permission for representatives of CISNA to access pertinent records concerning the complainant if such records are not available to the public.
6. A statement of first-hand knowledge of the substance of the complaint.

A complaint that does not include the required identifying information will be considered incomplete and will not proceed to review until the deficiency is corrected.

B. Limits on Complaints

CISNA does not mediate or adjudicate:

1. Individual grievances over admissions, grades, credits, fees, student discipline.
2. Employment disputes.
3. Personal matters unrelated to accreditation.
4. Cases under legal action or external investigation.
5. Religious content or programs.

C. Scope and Limitations

CISNA's role is limited to reviewing accreditation-related matters, including whether the school has responded appropriately to complaints, adhered to its established policies and procedures, and fulfilled any applicable safeguarding responsibilities.

CISNA does not serve as a reporting or investigative body for allegations of child abuse, neglect, sexual misconduct, or sexual harassment. Complaints of this nature may be referred to the school principal for review and appropriate action in accordance with applicable laws and school policies.

This policy does not exempt any individual or entity from their legal obligations as a mandated reporter under applicable law.

D. Complaint Review Process

1. CISNA will pursue complaints that are determined to sufficiently identify potential violations of CISNA Standards, policies, or Assurances.
2. CISNA will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 7 business days.
3. CISNA will request the school to respond in writing within 30 business days to CISNA explaining how the school handled the complaint.
4. If CISNA determines that the school's response to a complaint does not sufficiently address the complaint or if an institution or system fails to address the complaint in a timely manner, the school may result in a change in accreditation status.
5. CISNA will review the school's response and may:
    i. Dismiss the complaint if resolved
    ii. Require corrective action
    iii. Change accreditation status
6. The Complainant and school will be notified of the final decision within 30 business days from receiving all relevant information from the school and complainant.

Policy VI: Establishment of Extension or Separate Campus

Purpose. To define when a new location is treated as an **extension of the main campus** versus a **separate campus/branch**, and to set required notifications and evidence for accreditation alignment.

A. Definitions

1. **Extension (Annex) accredited with the Main Campus**

    a. A geographically separate site that:
    b. is under the **direct supervision** of the main campus principal/head of school;
    c. the on-site supervisor **reports directly** to that principal/head of school;
    d. serves students enrolled under the same application process as at the main campus;
    e. provides services that are **part of or similar to** the main campus program.

Sites meeting **all** criteria may be reviewed/accredited **as part of** the main campus.

Sites not meeting all the above criteria will be considered a separate campus/branch and will need to apply for a separate accreditation.

B. **Evidence the School Must Submit to CISNA**

1. Governing-body action; proof of same legal ownership and governance.
2. Organizational chart showing direct oversight by the main principal/head of school; campus leader's job description.
3. Program & services equivalence (curriculum, assessment, student services, policies, etc.).
4. Business/operations plan for the new site (budget, staffing, facilities, resources, etc.).

C. **CISNA Review & Status**

1. If the site meets **all five** "extension" criteria (see Policy VI A.1.), CISNA may review it with the main campus visit and may reflect it within the main campus' accredited scope.

2. Otherwise, CISNA will treat it as a **separate campus** requiring its own readiness review/evidence and review visit.

D. **Costs**
Branch campuses may incur additional dues and additional visit costs (depending on scope and distance).

E. **Marketing & Public Statements**
Schools must accurately state which campuses are accredited and avoid implying transfer of accreditation to sites or partners outside the scope of the accreditation review.

The CISNA Board of Directors has the authority to revise these policies as needed.