

**ALA EXECUTIVE BOARD  
FALL MEETING**

**TOPIC:** COA/SCOE Working Group

**ACTION:** Discussion and action

**DRAFT MOTION:** *Based on the attached message from the ALA Committee on Accreditation, the ALA Executive Board approves appointment of a COA/SCOE Working Group charged to make recommendations to the ALA Executive Board on the issues raised in the attached memo. The chair of SCOE, the chair of the COA, and the Executive Director will work with the ALA President to recommend working group composition and report to the ALA Executive Board prior to the 2020 Midwinter Meeting. The COA/SCOE Working Group will make an interim report at the Spring 2020 meeting of the Board.*

**REQUESTED BY:** Lessa Kanani'opua Pelayo-Lozada, Chair, Steering Committee on Organizational Effectiveness  
Loretta Parham, Chair, ALA Committee on Accreditation

**DATE:** 10 October 2019

**BACKGROUND:**

The attached draft recommendations from COA were developed in the context of the SCOE recommendation that the ALA Committee on Accreditation become an Accreditation Commission, distinguishing it structural from the Advisory Committees recommended by SCOE. Both groups need to engage in development of a more detailed recommendation.

The recommendations in the attached report also connect to earlier work. There is a rich file of work related to Accreditation and the role of COA, which should be examined by the Working Group.

- [http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/governance/officers/eb\\_documents/2017\\_2018ebdocuments/ebd12\\_28\\_Context%20for%20Future%20Accreditation.pdf](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/governance/officers/eb_documents/2017_2018ebdocuments/ebd12_28_Context%20for%20Future%20Accreditation.pdf)
- [http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/governance/officers/eb\\_documents/2017\\_2018ebdocuments/ebd5\\_3\\_COA\\_responses.pdf](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/governance/officers/eb_documents/2017_2018ebdocuments/ebd5_3_COA_responses.pdf)
- [http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/governance/ebd5\\_9\\_TFonFutureContextofAccred.pdf](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/governance/ebd5_9_TFonFutureContextofAccred.pdf)
- [http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/governance/ebd5\\_9\\_TFonFutureContextofAccred.pdf](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/governance/ebd5_9_TFonFutureContextofAccred.pdf)
- [http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/governance/officers/eb\\_documents/2016\\_2017ebdocuments/ebd5\\_2\\_1\\_accred\\_tf\\_recommendations.pdf](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/governance/officers/eb_documents/2016_2017ebdocuments/ebd5_2_1_accred_tf_recommendations.pdf)

**From: Committee on Accreditation (COA)**

**To: The Steering Committee on Organizational Effectiveness (SCOE)**

**Re: SCOE Draft recommendations to the ALA Executive Board**

The ALA Committee on Accreditation welcomes SCOE consideration of the work the Committee does to fulfill its charge "to be responsible for the execution of the accreditation program of the ALA, and to develop and formulate standards of education for library and information studies for the approval of Council." (*ALA Handbook of Organization*). Its work is administered through the ALA Office for Accreditation which provides planning, leadership, and an administrative function in implementing the ALA accreditation process.

**Background**

Instructive context for the relationship of ALA and COA is provided in the [Memorandum of Understanding](#) (MoU) executed by the ALA Executive Director and the Director of the Office for Accreditation, representative each of ALA and the Committee on Accreditation, respectively. The MoU formally acknowledges the central role of accreditation to the ALA mission and its responsibility for sustaining relationships with critical stakeholders such as the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) that monitors the quality of the ALA accreditation effort. CHEA requires that an agreement such as the MoU exist to clarify the relationships and the independent nature of the decisions that COA is entrusted to make in the public interest.

COA undergoes a periodic comprehensive review for CHEA recognition, the last conducted in 2013 with Recognition continued [through December 2023](#) (PDF <http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/accreditation/prp/CHEA%20response%20to%206th-Year%20Report%20June%202019%20FINAL.pdf>).

COA is recognized to accredit master's programs in library and information studies offered under the degree granting authority of institutions in North America: the US, Puerto Rico, and Canada. An expansion of scope to include the UK is now under consideration by CHEA as COA has reviewed a Candidacy application from a program at University College London.

It is also worth noting that the ALA Office for Accreditation is a participating member of the Association for Specialized and Professional Accreditors (ASPA) and follows its [Code of Good Practice](#), conducting its practice according to the ALA [Accreditation Process, Policies, and Procedures \(AP3\) Fourth Edition](#).

In its responsibility for developing the [Standards for Accreditation of Master's Programs in Library and Information Studies](#), COA conducts standards development work at its regularly scheduled meetings and periodically appoints standards review subcommittees to determine when revisions are necessary. The standards describe the essential features of programs of education that prepare library and information professionals and identify the minimum levels for program achievement. The Standards are adopted by the approval of Council. The historical chronology for approval of the Standards is 1925, 1933, 1951, 1972, 1992, 2008, and 2015.

The COA is 12 members appointed by the ALA president-elect. Ten members are personal members of ALA, one of which is Canadian; five are practitioners and five are faculty. Two members of the COA must be appointed from the public at large to represent public interest. The COA chair is appointed by the ALA president-elect for a one year term and may be reappointed once

Members of COA, with the exception of public members, are appointed for four-year staggered terms and may not be reappointed. Public members are appointed for two-year terms and may be reappointed once. Public members cannot be librarians or information professionals in practice, education, or through membership affiliation with ALA or other library associations. Public members cannot be employed by an institution of higher education that has a program accredited by ALA or with ALA-accredited Precandidacy or Candidacy status.

### **COA particular circumstances for consideration**

The commitment of time and effort by members of the COA is considerable. It has been estimated to take no less than 84 hours (not counting travel time) of meetings and individual review on an annual basis for a member to effectively participate (four meetings annually @ 60 hours + 24 hours for individual reading). This effort centers around accreditation processes related to program review. The additional time necessary to address planning, advocacy, policy discussions, standards revisions, and ongoing informational communications to the membership and to programs must be scheduled within that 84 hours or be set aside. The expenses incurred by individuals and/or their organizations in attending both the ALA Midwinter and Annual meetings is becoming a challenge as travel dollars become harder to access. There is considerable reliance and dependence upon the Office for Accreditation for support of all these activities.

Vital principles and responsibilities are outlined in the MoU. Relationships with critical stakeholders such as CHEA (see <https://www.chea.org/programmatic-accrediting-organizations#library>) and the *Canadian Federation of Library Associations/Fédération Canadienne des Associations de Bibliothèques* must be sustained.

The presented questions are a sampling of the issues that abound as the organization considers COA. These questions are numbered for reference and do not indicate priorities.

1. What is the benefit to the public and the profession of COA remaining a committee or becoming a commission or a council?
2. What should be the relationship between the ALA and a Commission or Council on Accreditation?
3. COA roster:
  - a. Should the committee be enlarged?
  - b. Should the committee and its chair be nominated by and representative of the affiliated ALA associations and divisions versus a Committee on Appointments/President Elect?
  - c. Should criteria for membership carry additional requirements beyond ALA membership?
  - d. Are current term limits adequate for the role and responsibilities of accreditation?
  - e. Should the onboarding process be defined, extended or influence the terms of appointment?
  - f. Should retired professionals and practitioners have limits or distinctive criteria for membership?
4. Should the Committee adopt a statement and processes to evidence support of the

ALA statement/policy on [equity, diversity, and inclusion](#)?

5. Is the current budget for accreditation adequate to adopt changes and improvements in operations, e.g. enhancements in technology, member expenses for execution of duties, Office staffing, etc.?
6. What new methods and means can be presented for the accreditation process itself, e.g. accreditation management systems, rules, procedures etc.?

The COA appreciates this opportunity to submit its thinking as of this time and asks that the ALA Executive Board identify/authorize a focused deliberation. An appointed working group could review and offer recommendations about the ALA COA structure, fiscal supports and the agenda of activities for accreditation of programs, and members could include ALA staff, past and present COA member(s), program educators, and representatives of the public interest sector.

The work of SCOE is timely for the long term success of the ALA. As well it is essential that the role of COA as an accrediting body is protected and able to continue to be supportive of the programs and their mission to deliver quality education for students of library and information studies and the institutions they will serve.

*Submitted on behalf of the Committee on Accreditation by Committee Chair - Loretta Parham.*