



## **ATHEA PRIVACY POLICY**

### **Overview**

When an institution becomes a member of ATHEA, it agrees to the disclosure of its accreditation status, including disclosure of the extent to which the institution is in compliance with the THEA Accreditation Standards and Expectations. The disclosure of this information assists external stakeholders, such as students, parents, and the general public, in making appropriate educational decisions.

Other information provided to ATHEA during the accreditation process is confidential, and ATHEA makes every reasonable effort to protect that confidentiality. Such information will be disclosed to outside parties only when disclosure is required by policy.

Only site visit team members, staff, and commissioners of ATHEA may review confidential institutional information. ATHEA requires these individuals to abide by this confidentiality requirement.

ATHEA makes every reasonable effort to avoid conflicts of interest. Site visit team members are excluded from involvement in the accreditation process for academic business units in which they have had, or might foresee having, a professional or personal conflict of interest. Members of the ATHEA Board of Directors and the THEA Board of Commissioners are required to recuse themselves from discussions, deliberations, or decisions about their own institutions where a conflict of interest might exist.

Site visit team members understand their ethical responsibilities pertaining to conduct before, during, and after accreditation site visits. Matters pertaining to an accreditation site visit are not discussed in public and are treated confidentially.

ATHEA policy requires that each site visit team member maintain the confidentiality of all THEA accreditation materials (e.g., self-evaluation, site visit reports, etc.). While such materials can be disseminated throughout the institution, as appropriate, they should not be shared with outside parties without the approval of the THEA Board of Commissioners.

### **Defining and Establishing Ownership of THEA Board of Commissioners' Information**

The THEA Board of Commissioners shall have ownership of the following information:

1. Information created for the THEA Board of Commissioners by one of its consultants, evaluators, staff or other party in furtherance of a THEA Board of Commissioners process or review;
2. Information created for the THEA Board of Commissioners by institutions or submitted to the THEA Board of Commissioners by institutions in support of an application for new or continuing status, approval of substantive change or other THEA Board of Commissioners process or request for information;
3. Information collected or received by the THEA Board of Commissioners from other sources including peer reviewers; and
4. Any other information known by the THEA Board of Commissioners or otherwise collected or received in support of its mission and purposes.

Information referenced under this policy may exist in electronic, written, or other format.

### **THEA Board of Commissioners Retention and Management of Information**

The THEA Board of Commissioners shall have the right to retain and manage such information as appropriate to fulfill its mission and purposes. Such management will include organizing, digitizing, displaying and storing such information. The THEA Board of Commissioners shall adopt appropriate procedures governing the retention and management of information. These policies shall be applicable to the THEA Board of Commissioners and its staff as well as to any individual acting as a reviewer or decision-maker for the THEA Board of Commissioners. The THEA Board of Commissioners shall work with third-party agents or contractors to ensure that information retention and management is handled in observance of such procedures to the fullest extent possible within the terms of that relationship.

### **THEA Board of Commissioners Information on the ATHEA Website**

The THEA Board of Commissioners will provide information available to public on the ATHEA website about the following: the Eligibility Requirements, Criteria for Accreditation, Assumed Practices, and Obligations of Affiliation; accreditation and candidacy status and related policies and procedures for achieving and maintaining such status; policies and procedures related to sanctions and withdrawal or denial of status; a directory of institutions that are affiliated with ATHEA and the date of the next comprehensive evaluation and information related to THEA Board of Commissioners monitoring; where necessary, information correcting inaccurate claims made by affiliated, accredited or other institutions regarding their accreditation status with the THEA Board of Commissioners or results of a recent evaluation visit or accrediting action taken by the THEA Board of Commissioners; and information about the members of the THEA Board

of Commissioners' decision-making bodies, institutional liaisons and other principal THEA Board of Commissioners staff.

### **THEA Board of Commissioners Correction of Institutional Information**

If an institution accredited by, in candidacy status with, or applying for such status with the THEA Board of Commissioners inaccurately discloses its accreditation status, an action by the THEA Board of Commissioners, or the contents of a THEA Board of Commissioners evaluation report, the THEA Board of Commissioners will provide for public correction of that information. It will provide this correction through its website or through release of a public statement or Public Disclosure Notice. It will also act through appropriate policies to enforce its Obligations of Affiliation with any accredited or affiliated institution, if any Obligation has been violated by this inaccurate disclosure.

### **THEA Board of Commissioners Release of Information**

The THEA Board of Commissioners shall release THEA Board of Commissioners information in compliance with the following policies:

**Institutional File Information.** The THEA Board of Commissioners shall release information about an institution in response to a request by the following:

1. the President or Chief Executive Officer of that institution officially designated as such in the THEA Board of Commissioners's records;
2. an individual designated by the President or Chief Executive Officer to receive such information; or
3. a resolution from that institution's governing board signed by the current Chair of that board.

The THEA Board of Commissioners shall release information to any other individual or to a consultant or attorney representing the institution only when the THEA Board of Commissioners has received a written request from the President or CEO of the institution.

### **Peer Review Information**

In preparation for THEA Board of Commissioners review the THEA Board of Commissioners may release information to institutions about peer reviewers including contact information, credentials and other information for the purpose of assuring that THEA Board of Commissioners processes are free of conflict of interest.

The THEA Board of Commissioners may provide oral or written comments or explanation in conjunction with the release of the above information and non-particularized information about THEA Board of Commissioners precedent.

### **Processes or to External Agents of the THEA Board of Commissioners**

The THEA Board of Commissioners may provide information as identified in this policy under Defining and Establishing the Ownership of THEA Board of Commissioners Information, to individuals acting as reviewers and decision-makers for the THEA Board of Commissioners within its processes. The THEA Board of Commissioners also may provide such information to THEA Board of Commissioners consultants or other individuals or entities retained by the THEA Board of Commissioners to provide assistance, expertise or other function in support of THEA Board of Commissioners processes. As a condition of a relationship with the THEA Board of Commissioners, all reviewers, decision-makers, and consultants shall agree in writing to maintain the confidentiality of such information.

### **Researchers**

The THEA Board of Commissioners may provide its information to a researcher(s) who, in the sole discretion of the THEA Board of Commissioners, has appropriate academic credentials and who outlines an appropriate research project related to the work of the THEA Board of Commissioners. As a condition of any relationship with the THEA Board of Commissioners, all researchers must agree in writing to maintain the confidentiality of the information and to other terms as outlined in an appropriate agreement or contract.

### **Third Parties**

The THEA Board of Commissioners shall release information about an institution or peer reviewer(s) or about THEA Board of Commissioners policies, procedures, or activities in furtherance of its processes to, or in response to a written request form, the following entities:

1. A governmental agency with appropriate jurisdiction to request the information;
2. A validly-issued subpoena from a court of law with appropriate jurisdiction; and
3. Another recognized accrediting agency with which the institution(s) may have an affiliation or status or be seeking such affiliation or status;

### **Public**

The THEA Board of Commissioners shall release the following information to the public and any other interested parties by means of its website, fax, or other disclosure:

1. the name and contact information for any institution that holds, or has held, status with the THEA Board of Commissioners along with information about its campuses, additional locations, and educational programs as well as any other data it regularly collects through its Institutional Update process;
2. the name and contact information of any institution scheduled for an evaluation for initial status;
3. the Statement of Accreditation Status for member institutions;
4. Public Disclosure Notices and, when appropriate, certain other public statements made by the THEA Board of Commissioners;
5. action letters related to the granting, reaffirmation or withdrawal of candidate for accreditation or accreditation status; to the imposition or removal of a sanction or show-cause order; and to the outcome of an advisory visit.
6. summary of all THEA Board of Commissioners actions posted within 30 days of taking such action, including voluntary withdrawals and other information within 30 days of the THEA Board of Commissioners receiving such information;
7. the list of institutions being evaluated by the THEA Board of Commissioners for initial status, reaffirmation of accreditation, probation or show-cause in the upcoming academic year and the invitation for third-party comment about appropriate institutions;
8. the policies and procedures of the THEA Board of Commissioners and related information;
9. the results of aggregate data analyses and other information the THEA Board of Commissioners staff determine to be appropriate for public release;
10. the names of all active peer reviewers and other information including title and contact information in their organization; and
11. the names, internal contact and areas of responsibility for all staff members.

The THEA Board of Commissioners may provide oral or written comments or explanation of such information to the public.

### **Mailing or Address Lists for Marketing Purposes**

The THEA Board of Commissioners shall not give or sell mailing lists of institutions or peer reviewers or similar information to any company, organization, institution, or individual for use

in marketing or solicitation. However, the THEA Board of Commissioners may provide information about individuals who attend a conference or workshop to appropriate business partners. All such business partners must agree to provide appropriate mechanisms by which a recipient may decline to receive additional promotional material.

### **Other THEA Board of Commissioners Release of Information**

The THEA Board of Commissioners may include THEA Board of Commissioners information in any submission it shall make on behalf of the THEA Board of Commissioners. Such submissions shall include, but are not limited to, THEA Board of Commissioners petitions for recognition or THEA Board of Commissioners petition or response in any lawsuit or action it initiates or which has been initiated by another party.

The THEA Board of Commissioners may release the team report or other documents to third parties or the public if the institution or one of its agents has released information or excerpts from documents created by or for the THEA Board of Commissioners in such a way that information from those documents, or information with regard to THEA Board of Commissioners status or findings, has been misrepresented.

The THEA Board of Commissioners may, at its sole discretion, release information about an institution publicly or to another entity if requested by that institution.