

XIII. SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES

A substantive change is one that may significantly affect an institution's quality, mission, scope, or control. Substantive changes are reviewed to assure that changes in educational offerings, teaching modalities, locations, scope of offerings, and control of the institution are made in accordance with DEAC accreditation standards. The Commission's review of the application seeks to determine whether the substantive change adversely affects the capacity of the institution to continue to meet DEAC accreditation standards. Commission approval is required before a change in the institution's scope of accreditation is granted. The institution seeking a substantive change follows DEAC's process for approval. The following are substantive changes:

- Any change in the established mission or objectives of the institution;
- Any change in the institution's name;
- Any change in the institution's legal status, form of control, or ownership;
- Any change in the institution's location of the main facility or administrative site or any addition of a facility geographically apart from the main facility;
- Any addition of a new program in a related field of study consistent with the educational offerings reviewed when the institution was last evaluated;
- A change in method of delivery from when the institution was last evaluated;
- A contract with unaccredited organizations, **or organization not certified to participate in title IV HEA programs, to provide more than 25% of one or more of the institution's educational programs;**
- Any addition of a new program in an unrelated field of study not offered when the institution was last evaluated;
- Any addition of a program at a degree or credential level different from the educational offerings currently included in the institution's scope of accreditation;
- A substantial increase or decrease in the number of clock or credit hours awarded for successful completion of a program, including changing from clock hours to credit hours;
- Any addition of an in-residence program component;
- An institution seeking certification to participate in Federal Student Assistance (FSA) Title IV programs; and
- Engaging in international activities.

The Commission continually monitors changes that are proposed by institutions. When the Commission has ascertained that proposed changes, or an accumulation of changes that singly or in combination are seen to be so significant it results in transforming the institution, the Commission requires a comprehensive re-evaluation of the institution.

Proposed changes may be so substantial that the Commission considers that the institution it granted accreditation to have effectively closed and a new institution is proposed to open. After affording the institution the opportunity to provide information about the changes and whether sufficient continuity of the accredited institution is maintained, the Commission may

act to require a total re-evaluation of the institution or to withdraw the accreditation and require the institution to reapply for accreditation. The Commission allows for due process by providing reasonable time for an institution to comply with its request for information and documentation. In all cases, the Commission will allow the institution sufficient time to respond to any findings before making any final decision regarding the institution's accredited status.

A. CHANGE OF CORE MISSION **OR OBJECTIVES**

1. An institution seeking to substantively depart from its core mission requires prior approval because the institution's accreditation is predicated on its core mission.
2. A significant alteration in the institution's core mission **or objectives** signals a change throughout the institution

These are the steps in obtaining Commission approval for this substantive change:

- a. Submit a Change of Core Mission **or Objectives** Application Part 1, including required documentation, 30 days prior to implementation. The completed application and documentation are presented to the Commission for initial approval.
- b. Once the change of core mission is fully implemented, the institution submits a Change of Core Mission **or Objectives** Application Part 2, including required documentation.
- c. The institution receives an on-site visit six months after implementation of the revised core mission **or objectives** is complete. The institution receives a Chair's Report and has 30 days to respond with any additional information or documentation necessary to support the substantive change.
- d. The Commission reviews all documentation submitted to date and approves or denies the substantive change, in accordance with accreditation standards. DEAC notifies the institution in writing within 30 days of the Commission's action and notifies the U.S. Department of Education and other relevant constituencies in accordance with Section X, Notification and Information Sharing.

All applications are available on DEAC's website (www.deac.org).

B. CHANGE OF NAME

1. An institution seeking to change its name is required to obtain approval from the Commission before implementing the new name. The Commission

determines whether the proposed new name will have an adverse or misleading effect on public perception of the institution or the institution's capacity to meet DEAC accreditation standards. Institutions seeking a change Associate degrees are awarded in academic or professional subjects whether for terminal career or for technical programs. Institutions design and offer programs in a way that appropriately balances distinct types of education and training and includes a comprehensive curriculum with appropriate coursework to achieve the program outcomes. Associate degree programs consist of a minimum of 60 semester credit hours or 90 quarter credit hours. General education courses account for a minimum of 25 percent of the credits required for successful completion of an associate degree program.

5. BACHELOR'S DEGREE Bachelor's degree programs are designed and offered in a way that appropriately balances distinct types and levels of education and training and must include a comprehensive curriculum with appropriate coursework to achieve the program outcomes. Bachelor's degree programs consist of a minimum of 120 semester credit hours or 180 quarter credit hours. General education courses represent a minimum of 25 percent of the credits required for successful completion of a bachelor's degree program.

6. MASTER'S DEGREE Master's degree programs are designed and offered in a way that provides for a distinct level of education and fosters independent learning and an understanding of research methods appropriate to the academic discipline. Graduate-level courses are based on appropriate prerequisites, learning outcomes, and expectations. Institutions establish whether graduate courses are completed in a prescribed sequence to facilitate student achievement of program outcomes. Master's degree programs are a minimum of 36 semester credit hours or 54 quarter credit hours.

7. FIRST PROFESSIONAL DEGREE

First professional degree programs are designed to offer a required academic credential leading to entry into a specific profession. The graduate degree program identifies competencies required for successful practice in the discipline. First professional degree programs require prior undergraduate preparation appropriate to the degree offered. Graduates of the first professional degree program demonstrate competencies that enable them to evaluate theories and engage in research relevant to the field of study. Demonstrated learning outcomes are comparable to those achieved during a minimum of 50 semester credit hours, **75 quarter credit hours**, or their equivalent beyond the bachelor's degree.

8. PROFESSIONAL DOCTORAL DEGREE

Professional doctoral degree programs are designed to offer practice-oriented content leading to an advanced academic credential. Professional doctoral degree programs identify and teach competencies that support advancements

in the field of study. The professional doctoral degree program graduate demonstrates the ability to conduct, interpret, and apply the results of

appropriate research. Adequate oversight and advising are provided through all phases of the doctoral program, including clinical practice or fieldwork required by the field of study.

- a. The program of study requires 60 graduate-level semester credit hours, **90 graduate-level quarter credit hours**, or their equivalent beyond the master's degree with a maximum of 15 semester credit hours **or 22.5 quarter credit hours** for the dissertation or final research project. Professional doctoral degree programs are completed in no fewer than two years and no more than 10 years from the date of initial enrollment. A first professional degree in the same discipline may reduce the program requirements when the institution requires a minimum of 90 total graduate semester credit hours or **135 quarter credit hours** after the bachelor's degree.
- b. Professional doctoral degrees require dissertations or capstone projects involving original contributions to the field of study and applied research methods. An appropriately credentialed doctoral committee approves dissertation and capstone project topics. A dissertation or capstone project manual is provided that includes guidelines on identifying, researching, writing, and presenting the selected topic. Dissertations or capstone projects are appropriately defended by doctoral candidates before a doctoral committee via distance or in person. Professional doctoral degrees are awarded upon final approval by a majority of the doctoral committee.
- c. If the final research project or dissertation involves human research, the institution must require prior formal review and approval for all research involving human subjects through an institutional review board (IRB), which has been designated to approve, monitor, and review all research involving human subjects. The IRB should ensure that the subjects are not placed at undue risk, that they have voluntarily agreed to participate and that they have received appropriate informed consent. The IRB must meet all federal regulations and the institution must be able to demonstrate that it is in compliance, including providing evidence that all IRB members have had appropriate training. (Title 45 Code of Federal Regulations Part 46.)

E. CURRICULA DEVELOPMENT

Qualified persons competent in distance education instructional practices and experts in their subjects or fields develop the content of curricula and prepare instructional materials.