

# Guide For Self-Evaluation

Introduction

DEAC’s Guide for Self-Evaluation is designed to provide guidelines, suggestions, and helpful hints as institutions seek accreditation and prepare their Self-Evaluation Report. Institutions should bear in mind that this is a guide and is not intended to measure the extent to which institutions meet or exceed the accreditation standards. Each institution is unique and therefore each Self-Evaluation Report is an individual representation of the institution and its mission. Institutions should focus on communicating how their processes and procedures meet the intent of the accreditation standards and emulate accepted best practices in education.

DEAC requires that one key individual from the applicant institution complete the *Preparing for DEAC Accreditation* tutorial prior to preparing the institution’s Self-Evaluation Report. Completion of the tutorial certifies the key individual as the compliance officer for the purposes of DEAC accreditation. While this is the minimum requirement, DEAC encourages institutions to have all key administrative staff and personnel complete the tutorial to familiarize themselves with DEAC’s accreditation standards. The process of self-evaluation should be an institution-wide effort of self-reflection and improvement.

DEAC publishes all accreditation standards, updates, and revisions regularly on its website. Institutions should regularly check the DEAC website to verify continued compliance.

The Importance of Self-Evaluation

The Distance Education Accrediting Commission requires all institutions to complete a Self-Evaluation Report when seeking accreditation. The process of self-evaluation serves two main purposes: (1) it provides the institution an opportunity to critically reflect on its operations, processes, and procedures at regular intervals for continued improvement and (2) it provides the on-site team with a comprehensive review of the institution, its mission, and its processes that are integral to delivering quality distance education.

The Self-Evaluation Report tells a story about the institution, beginning with its history and mission then focusing on its evolution and future goals. Institutions have the opportunity to present their passion for serving students and providing distance education options that will shape future generations. Institutions craft their story using the Self-Evaluation Report template as a guide while demonstrating how their policies and procedures meet DEAC accreditation standards.

Tips for Self-Evaluation

Institutions focus on telling their story while addressing each accreditation standard in a logical sequence. Below are some initial tips institutions can follow when developing a complete Self-Evaluation Report.

* Institutions should focus on clearly and succinctly connecting how their policies and procedures meet the intent of each accreditation standard, core component, and sub-component. The Self-Evaluation Report should be written in such a way that it avoids speculation or misinterpretation by the reader.
* Institutions should provide detailed information when describing processes or procedures. This is an opportunity for institutions to highlight their operational practices.
* Institutions should use the self-evaluation process as an additional opportunity to analyze their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Institutions should highlight strengths and opportunities while addressing initiatives to improve weaknesses and guard against threats.
* The purpose of accreditation is to provide a structured format for demonstrating educational quality. In a peer-review process, there is always room for improvement through evaluation. Institutions should strive to take advantage of external feedback and suggestions by being truthful, accurate, and transparent in all representations.

Preparing for Self-Evaluation

The process of seeking and maintaining accreditation is an institution-wide effort. Institution-wide participation should be encouraged throughout the self-evaluation process. Seeking accreditation involves a comprehensive look at institutional efforts to provide quality distance education opportunities focused on each institution’s mission and target student population. DEAC’s *Accreditation Handbook* provides the processes, procedures, and accreditation standards that institutions must meet in order to achieve or maintain accreditation.

Writing a Self-Evaluation Report

It is often easy to underestimate the effort required to write, edit, and format a comprehensive Self-Evaluation Report. Institutions should allow enough time to write a Self-Evaluation Report that best represents themselves and provides sufficient detail to demonstrate compliance with accreditation standards. Below are general guidelines institutions should follow to ensure that they produce a complete Self-Evaluation Report that meets DEAC’s submission requirements.

* Institutions must use the DEAC Self-Evaluation Report template. This template is available on DEAC’s website (www.deac.org). Institutions must also complete appropriate companion templates – Federal Financial Assistance Programs, if eligible, as well as In-Residence Program and International Activities, if applicable.
* Institutions must submit primary documents that provide supporting evidence of their compliance with accreditation standards.
* Institutions must follow DEAC’s *Guidelines for Electronic Submission*.
* Institutions should remember that the Self-Evaluation Report communicates a specific snapshot in time of their policies and processes. Institutions must focus on those efforts and processes currently in place when writing their Self-Evaluation Report. The on-site team will evaluate the institution against its current practices when determining whether it meets the intent of DEAC’s accreditation standards. Institutions should avoid describing future initiatives unless specifically requested by the Self-Evaluation Report template (e.g., Standard II: Institutional Effectiveness and Strategic Planning).

Self-Evaluation and Exhibits Submission Guidelines

Institutions submitting their Self-Evaluation Report and associated exhibits must follow the instructions below.

* The Self-Evaluation Report, exhibits, and any other supporting documentation should follow DEAC’s *Guidelines for Electronic Submission*.
* Report templates must not be altered in any way.
* Institutions must submit documents via email (under 2GB) or using a Dropbox link (over 2GB). All submissions must contain an email to appropriate staff that includes an explanation of the contents.
* Institutions must submit one Microsoft Word and one Portable Document File (PDF) version of their report or application. All exhibits must be submitted in PDF, Word, or Excel format.
* Institutions must use electronic bookmarks and hyperlinks placed within the PDF document. Bookmarking and hyperlinking should be completed in a manner that facilitates easy and intuitive navigation and review of the file.
* All exhibits must be submitted in PDF, Microsoft Word, or Microsoft Excel format. ***DEAC will not accept files submitted in Google Doc or Google Sheet format.*** ***Exhibits provided via web link will not be accepted.*** File names should be labeled according to examples provided at the end of this document.

Note: File names should use a maximum of 10‐15 characters. Dropbox enforces a total file path length of 250 characters for each file.

* Any security features in the PDF file must be disabled.
* Personal or confidential student or staff information (e.g., Social Security numbers or dates of birth) should be removed or redacted as appropriate.
* Incomplete submissions may be returned to the institution for correction and resubmission, which could delay the accreditation process.
* If a fee is required for processing the application, please mail a check directly to DEAC for processing and enclose a cover letter that includes the institution’s name, address, contact information, and an explanation of the submission. Please note that applications requiring a fee will not be processed until the corresponding payment is sent to the following:

Distance Education Accrediting Commission

1101 17th Street NW, Suite 808

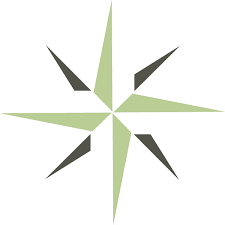
Washington, D.C. 20036

DEAC Helpful Hints

Throughout the Guide for Self-Evaluation, institutions will find “DEAC Helpful Hints” that provide clarification when writing their Self-Evaluation Report and preparing exhibits.

DEAC Helpful Guidance Documents

Following the Self-Evaluation Report template, institutions will find “DEAC Helpful Guidance Documents” that DEAC member institutions, external reviewers, and staff have compiled over the years. These are intended to be suggestions that institutions can use when developing documents or in meeting DEAC requirements. Institutions are encouraged to use these documents as samples when creating processes and procedures that meet each unique institution’s needs. Institutions are not required to follow these suggestions or formats, and the extent to which accreditation standards are met will not be based on these samples.



Self-Evaluation Report

*Adheres to the DEAC Accreditation Handbook: 31st Edition*

Institution Name: Insert Institution Name

Address: Insert Institution’s Primary Address

Telephone Number: Insert Institution’s Telephone Number

Website: Insert Institution’s Website

The information submitted is correct

to the best of my knowledge and belief.

I understand that electronically typing my name

in this document is considered to have the same

legally binding effect as signing my signature

using a pen and paper.

President/CEO Name: Insert President/CEO Name

Title: Insert Title

Date Report Submitted: Insert Date

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Note: When an exhibit and its associated question(s) request both “links and permanent files”, both exhibit forms must be provided, even if they are the same information. A URL link to the requested information serves as proof that the information is publicly available. A permanent file is required so it can be included in the Distance Education Accrediting Commission’s permanent record of the institution’s Self-Evaluation Report submission.

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Self-Evaluation Process – Institutional Assessment

1. Describe the institution’s self-evaluation process and how the owners, governing board members, officials, administrators, advisory councils, staff, faculty, students, and other relevant constituencies contribute to the self-evaluation process.
2. Describe how the institution’s self-evaluation process is meaningful, significant, and ongoing.

Institutional Profile

1. Describe the institution’s history from its founding date and why it was founded.
2. Describe the institution’s target student population, including information on when it first began enrolling students.
3. Describe and include the dates of significant events in the institution’s history (e.g., development of educational offerings, change of name, new divisions, in-residence training sites, or changes in ownership).
4. For renewal of accreditation, describe any major changes since the institution’s most recent accreditation review (e.g., student services, admissions, staff or faculty, enrollment, curriculum, or marketing).
5. For renewal of accreditation, provide a copy of the institution’s most recent DEAC annual report. [EXHIBIT 1: DEAC Annual Report] For initial accreditation, provide a completed student enrollment worksheet. [EXHIBIT 1: Student Enrollment Worksheet]

1. For renewal of accreditation, list any progress report or enhancement report findings in the institution’s most recent grant of accreditation letter and in any other Commission correspondence to the institution since its most recent accreditation cycle. Describe how the institution continues to address these areas.
2. If the institution participates in Federal Financial Aid programs, provide the date on which the institution initially signed a Program Participation Agreement and indicate the programs that are eligible for Title IV. Provide the institution’s Program Participation Agreement renewal date.

Institutional Organization

1. Describe the institution’s organizational structure. [EXHIBIT 2: Organizational Chart]
2. Describe any institutional affiliations, articulation agreements, or contracts for educational delivery.
3. List and describe and list any administrative sites or in-residence training locations, including what on-site learning activities occur at each.
4. List and describe any international activities. For physical presence, provide documentation showing that the institution is properly licensed for international activity as needed and that international contracts have been approved by DEAC.

Legal Form and Governance

1. Describe the institution’s legal status and ownership structure, including all subsidiary structures or entities and individuals within the chain of ownership up to and including the ultimate parent structure or entity.
2. Describe the role of the institution’s governing board or other similar leadership group, including responsibilities and duties.
3. Explain the authority of any agency, other than the governing board, that has power to initiate, review, or reverse actions of the institution’s leadership.
4. If the institution is a stock corporation, provide the list of individuals or organizations who own 10 percent or more of the voting stock.

State License/Authorization and Accreditations

1. List all states that license or authorize the institution to provide its distance education offerings. [EXHIBIT 3: DEAC State Authorization Form] For initial accreditation, describe how the institution has secured state license/authorization in states where it enrolls students.
2. List any other organizations that accredit the institution or its educational offerings (e.g., all other institutional or programmatic accrediting organizations). [EXHIBIT 3: State Licensure and Authorization and Other Accreditation Documents]
3. Disclose whether the institution has been denied accreditation by another accrediting organization (institutional or programmatic), including the date of the action and the reasons for the denial.

Access to the Online Learning Platform

1. Provide link to the online learning platform.

Insert Link to the Online Learning Platform

1. Provide username for the online learning platform.   
     
   Insert Usernames
2. Provide password for the online learning platform.   
     
   Insert Password
3. Provide navigation instructions for the online learning platform.  
     
   Insert Navigation Instructions
4. Provide a contact name, email, and telephone number of the individual who can provide assistance if the evaluator is unable to access the online learning platform using the link, username, or password provided.   
     
   Insert Contact Name
5. Provide the institution’s catalog for review. [EXHIBIT 4: Catalog]

***Note:*** *if appropriate, provide the access, navigation and catalog information for each division of study offered (e.g., high school, postsecondary) or program of study (e.g., nursing, law).*

Accreditation Standards

Standard I: Institutional Mission

Contact Person: Name and Title of Contact Person

1. **Description of the Mission:** The institution’s mission communicates its purpose and its commitment to providing quality distance educational offerings appropriate to the level of study offered. The mission establishes the institution’s identity within the educational community and guides the development of its educational offerings.
2. Present the institution’s mission statement.
3. Describe how the mission guides the development of educational offerings.
4. **Review and Publication of the Mission:** The institution’s leadership, faculty, staff, administrators, and other stakeholders regularly review the mission to assure continued institutional quality and viability. The published mission statement is readily accessible to students, faculty, staff, other stakeholders, and the public.
5. Describe the procedures followed by the leadership, faculty, staff, administrators and other stakeholders to regularly review the mission and the continued quality and viability of the institution.
6. Explain how often the mission is reviewed by leadership, faculty, staff, administrators, and other stakeholders. [EXHIBIT 5: Meeting Minutes (Leadership, Advisory Council, Faculty, and Staff)]
7. Identify who is responsible for ensuring that the mission is readily accessible to students, faculty, staff, other stakeholders, and the public.
8. Describe where the institution publishes its mission, and explain how the institution demonstrates that the mission is readily accessible to students, faculty, staff, other stakeholders, and the public.
9. **Information on Achievement of the Mission:** The institution identifies key indicators it uses to demonstrate that it is effectively carrying out its mission. The institution documents the achievement of its mission and shares appropriate information on this achievement with relevant groups (e.g., advisory councils, faculty, staff, students, and the public).
10. List the key indicators the institution uses to measure achievement of the mission.
11. Describe how the achievement of these key indicators demonstrates that the institution is effectively carrying out its mission.
12. Identify who is responsible for documenting the institution’s achievement of its mission.
13. Describe the process the institution uses to seek input from relevant groups regarding the extent to which it achieves its mission. Include the type of data the institution gathers to review relevant to the key indicators.
14. Describe how the institution shares information on the achievement of its mission with relevant groups and incorporates this information into planning for improvement.

Standard II: Institutional Effectiveness and Strategic Planning

Contact Person: Name and Title of Contact Person

1. **Institutional Effectiveness Planning:** The institution demonstrates a commitment to its educational offerings and administrative operations through processes that monitor and improve institutional effectiveness. The institution engages in sound research practices; collects and analyzes evidence about its effectiveness; and develops action plans that are used to improve operations, educational offerings, and services.
2. Describe the institution’s efforts to monitor institutional effectiveness. Provide examples of the data collected and analyzed when monitoring institutional effectiveness. [EXHIBIT 6: Institutional Effectiveness Data and Planning Document]
3. Describe the institution’s research practices and data collection and analysis processes.
4. Describe the key indicators the institution uses to measure its effectiveness and to determine if improvements are needed.
5. Describe and provide examples of how the institution improves its educational offerings based on the data collected and analyzed from its research studies.
6. Describe and provide examples of how the institution improves its student services based on the data collected and analyzed from its research studies.
7. Describe and provide examples of how the institution improves its administrative operations based on the data collected and analyzed from its research studies.
8. Describe how institutional effectiveness studies inform the ongoing development of the institution’s curricula and services.
9. Describe how often the institutional effectiveness programs and data are reviewed to determine achievement of initiatives.
10. Describe action plans undertaken by the institution during its most recent institutional effectiveness planning cycle and how these plans are incorporated into the overall strategic plan presented in Standard II.B. below.
11. **Strategic Planning:** The institution has a systematic process of planning for the achievement of goals that supports its mission. The institution’s planning process involves all areas of the institution’s operations (e.g., admissions, academics, technology, etc.) in identifying strategic initiatives and goals by evaluating external and internal trends as they affect the future. At a minimum, the strategic plan addresses finances, academics, technology, admissions, marketing, personnel, and institutional sustainability. The strategic plan is reviewed and updated annually using established metrics designed to measure achievement of strategic planning goals and objectives. The plan helps institutions set priorities, manage resources, and set goals for future performance.
12. Describe how the institution’s strategic planning efforts guide the pursuit of goal achievement in support of its mission. [EXHIBIT 6: Strategic Plan]
13. Describe how the institution seeks input from internal and external stakeholders as a means to enhance the strategic planning process.

1. Describe how the input received from internal and external stakeholders is used in the strategic planning process.
2. Describe the institution’s strategic planning process in terms of identifying areas for improvement, via a SWOT Analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) or other means.
3. Describe how the strategic plan identifies proactive initiatives to achieve sustainability and protect the institution against identified weaknesses and threats.
4. Describe how the institution aligns the resources needed with its identified strategic initiatives.
5. Describe how the institution’s strategic plan addresses:

* Financial stability.
* Development of educational offerings.
* Integration of technology to enhance its educational offerings.
* Admissions processes.
* Effective and accurate marketing campaigns to promote institutional sustainability.
* Professional development of leadership, faculty, and staff.

1. Describe the metrics the institution has identified that guide the achievement of its strategic planning goals and objectives.
2. Identify key achievements from the institution’s last strategic planning cycle that resulted in improvements to the educational offerings and administrative operations.

Standard III: Program Outcomes, Curricula, and Materials

Contact Person: Name and Title of Contact Person

1. **Description of Program Outcomes:** Program outcomes are clearly defined, simply stated, and indicate the benefits for students who are reasonably capable of completing the educational offering. Course learning outcomes are linked to program outcomes as identified by the institution and are consistent with the curricula offered.
2. Describe how the institution develops program outcomes. [EXHIBIT 7: Program Outcomes]
3. Describe how the institution verifies that all program outcomes are current and relevant based on research, comparison, subject matter experts, and advisory council input.
4. Describe how program outcomes guide the development of curricula content.
5. Describe how course outcomes are mapped to program outcomes. [EXHIBIT 7: Curriculum Maps]
6. Describe how the institution provides prospective students with information that helps them determine whether the program meets their educational goals based on stated program outcomes.

1. **Appropriate Program Outcomes:** The program outcomes are measurable and reasonably attainable through distance education. Appropriate program outcomes clearly communicate the knowledge, skills, and abilities students will obtain upon completion of the educational offering. Program outcomes reflect the level of student achievement expected that promotes critical thinking, ethical reasoning, social responsibility, global citizenship, civic engagement, or lifelong learning as applicable to the educational offerings.
2. Describe how the institution verifies that program outcomes are measurable and reasonably attainable through distance education.
3. Describe how the program outcomes communicate the expected knowledge, skills, or abilities students will gain upon completion of the educational offerings.
4. Describe how program outcomes are appropriate to the type and level of credential being awarded (e.g., non-degree, undergraduate degree, graduate degree, and/or doctoral degree).
5. Describe how the program outcomes promote the development of critical thinking, ethical reasoning, social responsibility, global citizenship, civic engagement, or lifelong learning as applicable to the educational offerings.
6. Describe how program outcomes are comparable to the program outcomes of similar programs offered at other appropriately accredited institutions. [EXHIBIT 7: Program Comparisons]  
   1. Degree Programs

All required academic or professional activities, such as program outcomes, course learning outcomes, research projects, supervised clinical practice, field work, applied research exercises, theses, and dissertations, are clearly stated.

* 1. Provide links to all required academic or professional activities, demonstrating that they are clearly stated.
  2. Capstone projects, if required, are consistent with academic and professional standards based on commonly accepted higher education practices and those of any applicable relevant professional organizations. Capstone project learning outcomes are clearly stated.

1. Describe requirements for capstone or similar culminating projects, if required.
2. Describe how the capstone or similar culminating projects are consistent with academic and professional standards based on commonly accepted higher education practices.
3. Provide a link to capstone or culminating project learning outcomes, demonstrating that they are clearly stated.

* 1. Doctoral Degrees

The outcomes of doctoral degree programs are advanced, focused, and scholarly, providing the breadth and depth of learning indicative of advanced degrees.

1. Describe how the institution verifies that doctoral degree program outcomes are advanced, focused, and scholarly.
2. Describe how doctoral degree program outcomes provide the breadth and depth of learning that is indicative of advanced degrees.   
     
     
   * 1. Professional doctoral degrees prepare scholars to become leaders in their field of study through the pursuit of and contribution to contemporary research that is applied, practical, or project-oriented and is focused on the application of knowledge to a profession.
3. Describe how the professional doctoral degree offered prepares scholars to become leaders in their field of study through applied, practical, or project-oriented research that is focused on the application of knowledge to a profession.   
     
     
   * 1. The learning activities of doctoral degree programs include, as appropriate, seminars, professional meetings, in-residence requirements, discussions with colleagues, participation in sustained synchronous or asynchronous online conferences at predetermined points throughout the program, access to library services, and access to online chat rooms with fellow students, faculty, and relevant professionals.
4. Describe how learning activities (e.g., practica, seminars, in-residence requirements, research activities, capstone or similar culminating experience, dissertation, etc.) are assimilated to support the program outcomes.
5. Explain how learning activity requirements are clearly disclosed to students. As needed to demonstrate compliance with Section III.B.1-3, expand the narrative to describe how:

* Capstone or similar culminating projects are consistent with commonly accepted higher education practices;
* Professional doctoral degrees include access to appropriate learning activities and research resources;
* Professional doctoral degrees include a dissertation/research project supervised by an appropriately qualified committee.

1. Describe how the institution determines the placement of required learning activities throughout the program.   
     
     
   * 1. The professional doctoral degree program requires students to work with a supervisory dissertation/research project committee that is knowledgeable in graduate-level study and research methods in the discipline. Doctoral degree program curricula include the history and development of the field of study and its foundational theoretical principles.
2. Describe how the professional doctoral degree program requires students to work with a supervisory dissertation/research project committee.
3. Describe how the supervisory dissertation/research project committee is comprised of individuals knowledgeable in graduate-level study and research methods in the discipline.
4. Describe how doctoral degree program curricula include the history and development of the field of study and its foundational theoretical principles.
5. **Curricula Delivery:** All curricula and instructional materials are appropriately designed and presented for distance education. Online materials sufficiently support the curriculum and are delivered using readily available, reliable technology.
6. Describe how all curricula and instructional materials are appropriately designed to promote effective distance education study.
7. Describe the technology implemented to effectively deliver all curricula and instructional materials.
8. Describe the institution’s process for maintaining up-to-date technology and ensuring its reliability.
9. **Comprehensive Curricula and Instructional Materials:** Curricula and instructional materials are sufficiently comprehensive for students to achieve the stated program outcomes. Their organization and content are supported by reliable research and practice. The organization and presentation of the curricula and instructional materials reflect sound principles of learning and are grounded in distance education instructional design principles. The curricula and instructional materials reflect current knowledge and practice. Curricula and instructional materials are kept up to date, and reviews are conducted and documented on a periodic basis. Instructions and suggestions on how to study and how to use the instructional materials are made available to assist students to learn effectively and efficiently.
10. Describe the institution’s principles of learning used throughout the curriculum development process.
11. Describe how the institution’s curriculum organization and content are grounded in distance education instructional design principles and supported by sound research.
12. Describe how the institution provides appropriate study instructions for students.
13. Describe how the institution provides appropriate instructions for accessing and using instructional materials.
14. Describe the process followed by the institution to verify that all curricula and instructional materials are up to date and reflect current knowledge and practice. [EXHIBIT 8: Sample Program Reviews]
15. Describe the institution’s curriculum review schedule.
16. Describe the process used to identify and correct any content errors in curricula and instructional materials between regularly scheduled program reviews.
17. For each level of credential awarded by the institution (i.e., non-degree, undergraduate degree, graduate degree and/or doctoral degree), describe how the institution determines the following:
    * + - The curricula and instructional materials are sufficiently comprehensive for students to achieve the stated program outcomes.
        - The curricula’s organization and content are supported by reliable research and practice.
        - The curriculum reflects current knowledge and industry practice.
18. **Degree Programs:** Describe how degree programs are recognized and generally accepted by higher education and/or relevant professional communities.  
      
      
    1. The institution maintains an advisory council for each major group of programs or major subject matter discipline it offers. The advisory council includes members not otherwise employed or contracted at the institution, consisting of practitioners and employers in the field for which the program prepares students. Advisory Councils
       1. meet at least annually;
       2. provide advice on the current level of skills, knowledge, and abilities individuals need for entry into the occupation; and
       3. provide the institution with recommendations on the adequacy of educational program outcomes, curricula, and course materials.
19. Describe how the institution utilizes an advisory council or other means to obtain external/industry feedback on the institution’s educational activities. [Exhibit 7: Advisory Council Rosters and Bios]
20. **Degree Programs:** Describe how the institution maintains an advisory council for each major group of degree programs or major subject matter disciplines it offers.  
      
    1. The institution determines whether courses in a program require any prerequisites. The institution also determines whether courses are offered in a prescribed sequence to maximize student achievement of program outcomes.
21. Describe how the institution determines whether courses in a program require prerequisites.
22. Describe how the institution determines whether courses are offered in a prescribed sequence to maximize student achievement of program outcomes.   
      
    1. General Education for Degree Granting

General education courses convey broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develop skills and attitudes that contribute to civic engagement, academic achievement, and professional attainment. General education courses address content not associated with a particular field of study. General education courses encompass written and oral communication; quantitative principles, natural and physical sciences; social and behavioral sciences; and humanities and fine arts and are designed to develop essential academic skills for enhanced and continued learning.

1. Describe how general education courses convey broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develop skills and attitudes that contribute to civic engagement, academic achievement, and professional attainment.
2. Describe how general education courses encompass written and oral communication; quantitative principles; natural and physical sciences; social and behavioral sciences; and humanities and fine arts.  
   1. Associate Degree

Associate degrees are awarded in academic or professional subjects for terminal career or 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 associate degree programs.

1. Describe how the institution’s associate degree programs are designed and offered in a way that balances distinct types of education and training.
2. Describe how the institution’s associate degree programs include comprehensive curricula with appropriate coursework to achieve the program outcomes.
3. Provide the number of semester credit hours or quarter credit hours required for the successful completion of the institution’s associate degree(s).
4. Provide the percentage of credits that make up the general education courses required for successful completion of the institution’s associate degree(s).   
   1. Bachelor’s Degree

Bachelor’s degree programs are designed and offered in a way that appropriately balances distinct types and levels of education 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.

1. Describe how the institution’s bachelor’s degree programs are designed and offered in a way that balances distinct types and levels of education.
2. Describe how the institution’s bachelor’s degree programs include comprehensive curricula with appropriate coursework to achieve the program outcomes. Explain how the bachelor’s degree programs prepare students for academic success through developing foundational knowledge and skills, developing connections between concepts within their field, and expanding on ideas central to the discipline.

1. Provide the number of semester credit hours or quarter credit hours required for the successful completion of the institution’s bachelor’s degree(s).
2. Provide the percentage of credits that make up the general education courses required for successful completion of the institution’s bachelor’s degree(s).   
     
   1. 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 assessments. 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 30 semester credit hours or 45 quarter credit hours.

1. Describe how the institution’s master’s degree programs are designed and offered in a way that provides a distinct level of academic rigor that is commensurate with graduate-level study and fosters independent learning.
2. Describe how the institution’s master’s degree programs provide students with an understanding of research methods appropriate to the academic discipline.
3. Describe how the curricula expose students to specialized concepts and techniques central to the academic discipline.
4. Describe how the institution’s graduate-level courses are based on appropriate prerequisites, learning outcomes, and assessments that require students to synthesize advanced knowledge and master skills in the academic discipline.

1. Describe whether the institution requires students to complete graduate courses in a prescribed sequence to facilitate student achievement of program outcomes.

1. Provide the number of semester credit hours or quarter credit hours required for the successful completion of the institution’s master’s degree(s).  
     
   1. 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.

1. Describe how the institution’s first professional degree program identifies and teaches competencies and establishes the academic rigor required for successful practice in the discipline.
2. Describe the prior undergraduate education that is required for admission to the first professional degree program.
3. Describe how the institution measures students’ achievement of competencies that enable them to synthesize advanced scholarly knowledge, evaluate theoretical concepts, and engage in research relevant to the field of study.
4. Provide the number of semester credit hours or quarter credit hours required for the successful completion of the institution’s first professional degree.

* 1. 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. Graduates of professional doctoral degree programs demonstrate 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.

1. Describe how the professional doctoral degree program identifies and teaches the competencies that support advancements in the field of study.
2. Explain how the professional doctoral degree program establishes a distinct level of academic rigor requiring students to engage, synthesize, and master advanced specialized knowledge and theoretical concepts.
3. Describe how the institution measures graduates’ ability to conduct, interpret, and apply the results of appropriate research.

1. Describe the oversight and advising provided through all phases of the professional doctoral program, including clinical practice or fieldwork required by the field of study.   
   * 1. Unless otherwise specified for a particular field of study (e.g. nursing, engineering), 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.
2. Provide the number of semester credit hours or quarter credit hours required beyond the master’s degree for the successful completion of the institution’s professional doctoral degree.
3. Provide the number of credit hours or quarter hours assigned to the dissertation or final research project.
4. Describe the minimum and maximum amount of time students have to complete the program from the date of initial enrollment.   
     
   * 1. Professional doctoral degrees require dissertations or capstone projects involving original contributions to the field of study using 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 on, 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.
5. Describe the professional doctoral degree program’s dissertation, capstone, or culminating project requirements.

1. Describe whether the dissertation or capstone/culminating project requires students to make original contributions to the field of study using applied research methods.
2. Describe the process followed by the doctoral committee when approving dissertation, capstone, or culminating project topics.
3. Describe the institution’s dissertation, capstone, or culminating project manual and how it guides students in identifying, researching, writing on, and presenting the selected topic.

1. Describe the process that doctoral candidates follow to defend their dissertations, capstone, or culminating project before a doctoral committee via distance or in person.

1. Describe the dissertation, capstone, or culminating project approval process.

1. **Curricula Development and Delivery:**
   1. Qualified persons competent in distance education instructional design practices work with experts in their subjects or fields to develop the content of all curricula and prepare instructional materials.
   2. The institution describes its model for distance education delivery, such as correspondence, online, or hybrid.
   3. Any contracting with a third party for educational delivery is conducted in accordance with DEAC Processes and Procedures, Part Two, Section XIX F.4 and F.5., Changes in Educational Offerings.
2. Provide the institution’s curriculum development manual. [EXHIBIT 9: Curriculum Development Manual]
3. Describe the institution’s qualifications for curriculum content developers (e.g., subject matter experts). [EXHIBIT 9: Curriculum Content Developers’ Qualifications]
4. Describe the institution’s qualifications for distance education instructional designers [EXHIBIT 9: Instruction Designers’ Qualifications]
5. Describe how the institution verifies that curriculum content developers are competent in distance education instructional practices, or describe how curriculum content developers work with qualified instructional designers.
6. Describe how curriculum content developers and the curriculum development process verifies that the curricula are aligned with stated program outcomes.
7. Describe how the institution defines its model for distance education delivery (e.g., correspondence, online, or hybrid – a combination of online learning with in-residence components).
8. List and describe any third-party educational delivery contracting the institution conducts, and list what percentage of the institution’s educational program(s) is delivered by third party [EXHIBIT 9: Contracts for Third-Party Educational Delivery]

1. **Academic Units of Measurement:** The institution documents policies and procedures used to define the chosen academic unit of measurement. Academic units are measured by either clock hours or credit hours.
   1. Clock Hours

The institution documents its implementation and application of policies and procedures for determining clock hours awarded for its courses and programs. A clock hour is one instructional hour. One instructional hour is defined as 50 minutes of instruction in a 60-minute period.

* 1. Credit Hours

The institution documents its implementation and application of policies and procedures for determining credit hours awarded for its courses and programs. The assignment of credit hours must conform to commonly accepted practices in higher education. A credit hour is defined as an amount of work represented by intended learning outcomes and verified through evidence of student achievement in academic activities.

* 1. Credit Hour Definition

Semester and quarter hours are equivalent to the commonly accepted and traditionally defined units of academic measurement. Academic degree or academic credit-bearing distance education courses are measured by the learning outcomes normally achieved through 45 hours of student work for one semester credit1 or 30 hours of student work for one quarter credit.2

1*One credit/semester hour is 15 hours of academic engagement and 30 hours of preparation.*

*2One quarter hour credit is 10 hours of academic engagement and 20 hours of preparation.*

1. Describe the institution’s policy for determining and assigning academic units of measurement [EXHIBIT 10: Clock/Credit Hour Policy]

* 1. Documenting Credit Hours

The institution demonstrates that each course and program requires the appropriate amount of work needed for students to achieve the level of competency defined by institutionally established course/program outcomes. The institution measures and documents the amount of time it takes the average student to achieve learning outcomes and specifies the academic engagement and preparation time.

All student work is documented in the curricula materials and syllabi, including a reasonable approximation of time required for students to complete the assignments. Evaluation of student work is identified as a grading criterion and weighted appropriately in the determination of a final course grade.

1. Describe the process the institution uses to measure and document the amount of time it takes the average student to achieve learning outcomes (as a means for assigning academic units of measurement).
2. Describe how the institution verifies and documents that appropriate academic units of measurement are assigned based on the level of educational offering [EXHIBIT 10: Clock/Credit Hour Evaluation Chart]
3. **Educational Media and Learning Resources:** Learning resources for faculty and students are available and appropriate to the level and scope of program offerings. Program designers, faculty, and instructors effectively use appropriate teaching aids and learning resources, including educational media and supplemental instructional aids, when creating programs and teaching students. The institution provides faculty and students with access to learning resources, libraries, or resource-related services that are appropriate for the achievement of program learning outcomes.
4. Describe the learning resources designed to support the educational offerings.
5. Describe how student learning resources are available and appropriate to the level and scope of educational offerings.
6. Describe how faculty learning resources are available and appropriate to the level and scope of educational offerings.
7. Describe how program designers, curriculum developers, and faculty integrate appropriate teaching aids, learning resources, educational media, and supplemental instructional aids when creating educational offerings.
8. Describe how learning resources support students’ achievement of program learning outcomes.

1. Describe how learning resources are regularly reviewed and updated to continue to meet student and faculty needs.
2. Describe how the qualifications of the institution’s librarian are appropriate to the level and scope of program offerings.

* 1. Undergraduate Degrees

Learning resources are systematically and regularly evaluated to assure that they meet student needs and support the institution’s programs and mission. A variety of educational materials are selected, acquired, organized, and maintained to fulfill the institution’s mission and support all educational offerings. Faculty are involved in the selection of learning resources.

* 1. Describe how often learning resources are evaluated and the process used to determine that resources continue to meet undergraduate student needs and support the institution’s programs and mission.
  2. Describe the process the institution follows when selecting, acquiring, organizing, and maintaining educational materials to support all undergraduate educational offerings.

* 1. Describe how faculty are involved in the process of evaluating and selecting undergraduate learning resources.

* 1. Graduate Degrees

In addition to the requirements for undergraduate degrees, graduate students are provided with access to library and other learning resources that are sufficient for research at the graduate level. The institution provides and encourages the use of library services and, if required, research and laboratory facilities at a distance or through arrangements with local institutions.

1. Describe how often learning resources are evaluated and the process used to determine that resources continue to meet graduate student needs and support the institution’s programs and mission.

1. Describe the process the institution follows when selecting, acquiring, organizing, and maintaining educational materials to support all graduate educational offerings.

1. Describe how faculty are involved in the process of evaluating and selecting graduate-level learning resources.

1. Describe how graduate students have access to library and other learning resources that are sufficient for graduate-level research.
2. Describe how the institution encourages the use of library services, and if required, research and laboratory facilities.
3. **Examinations and Other Assessments:** Examinations and other assessment techniques provide adequate evidence of the achievement of stated learning outcomes. The institution establishes and enforces grading criteria that it uses to evaluate and document student attainment of learning outcomes.
4. Describe the types of examinations and assessments used throughout the curricula and the frequency of the examination and assessment activities.
5. Describe how examinations and assessments are used to measure student achievement of stated program outcomes.   
   1. Undergraduate Degrees

The institution assesses student achievement through multiple means of evaluation (e.g., student presentations, group projects, essays, research papers, participation in threaded discussions, supervised practica, or externships).

* 1. Describe how the institution assesses and evaluates student achievement.
  2. Describe how examinations and assessments are designed to measure student mastery of identified knowledge, skills, and abilities applicable to the undergraduate degrees offered.
  3. Describe the institution’s procedures for verifying that degree candidates have met all graduation requirements.
  4. Master’s Degrees

The institution assesses student achievement through multiple means of evaluation, including a culminating experience required for program completion (e.g., capstone experience, comprehensive examination, research project, or master’s thesis).

1. Describe how the institution assesses and evaluates student achievement.
2. Describe the culminating experience required for successful completion of the master’s program(s).
3. Describe how examinations and assessments are designed to measure student mastery of advanced scholarship, theoretical concepts, and the skills and abilities applicable to the master’s degrees offered.
4. Describe the institution’s procedures for verifying that degree candidates have met all graduation requirements.   
     
   1. First Professional and Doctoral Degrees

The institution assesses student achievement through multiple means of evaluation that includes a doctoral dissertation or final research project as well as other forms of assessments such as qualifying examinations, comprehensive examinations, or other assessments that demonstrate student mastery of the stated program learning outcomes. The institution requires students to successfully complete all coursework and a doctoral dissertation or final research project to graduate from the program.

1. Describe the means of evaluation used to evaluate students’ mastery of advanced scholarly knowledge, key theoretical concepts, or specialized content areas specific to the discipline.
2. If applicable, describe the process that students follow for successfully completing qualifying examinations.
3. If applicable, describe the process students follow for successfully completing comprehensive examinations.
4. Describe the process students follow for completing a dissertation or final research project.
5. Describe the institution’s procedures for verifying that degree candidates have met all graduation requirements.
6. **Student Integrity and Academic Honesty:** The institution publishes clear, specific policies related to student integrity and academic honesty. The institution affirms that the student who takes an assessment is the same person who enrolled in the program and that the examination results will reflect the student’s own knowledge and competence in accordance with stated learning outcomes.
7. Describe how the institution applies its student integrity and academic honesty policies [EXHIBIT 11: Student Integrity and Academic Honesty Policies]

For this exhibit: Insert Links to Policies

1. Describe how the institution enforces these policies. Provide examples.

1. Describe the process followed by the institution for verifying student identity.  
     
   1. Non-Degree Programs

Institutions meet this requirement by using a secure login and passcode, administering proctored assessments, or by other means of secure technology.

1. Describe how the institution affirms that the student who takes the assessment is the same person who enrolled in the program and that the examination results will reflect the student’s own knowledge and competence in accordance with stated learning outcomes.   
   1. Degree Programs

In addition to the requirements for non-degree programs above, degree-granting institutions meet this requirement by administering proctored assessments at intervals throughout the program of study and provide a clear rationale for placement of the proctored assessments within the program. Proctors use valid government-issued photo identification or other means to confirm student identity.

1. Describe the process followed by the institution to administer proctored assessments to students enrolled in degree programs.
2. Describe how the institution determines the placement of proctored assessments at appropriate intervals within the program of study.
3. Describe how proctors confirm students’ identity.
4. **Institutional Review Board:** For any final research project, master’s thesis, or dissertation that involves human research, the institution must require prior formal review and approval for all such 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 given 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)
   1. Describe the institution’s policy and procedures that students follow if their final research project or dissertation involves human research.
   2. Describe the training that faculty and students receive prior to engaging in research projects involving human subjects.

Standard IV: Educational and Student Support Services

Contact Person: Name and Title of Contact Person

1. **Appropriate Technology:** The institution uses appropriate and readily accessible technology to optimize interaction between the institution and the student that effectively supports instructional and educational services. Students, faculty, and involved practitioners receive training and support for the technology used to deliver the educational offerings.
2. Describe how students are informed of the institution’s minimum technology requirements prior to admission[EXHIBIT 12: Technology Requirements]

For this exhibit: Insert Link to Requirements

1. Describe how the institution uses technology or other appropriate means (e.g., correspondence) to optimize interaction between the institution and students.
2. Describe how the institution’s use of technology effectively enhances and supports instructional and educational services.
3. Describe how the institution provides appropriate training and support for students and faculty in the use of the technology used to deliver its educational offerings.
4. Describe the institution’s plans for maintaining current technology and adopting new technology.
5. **Student Inquiries and Submissions:** The institution publishes all available methods students can use to submit inquiries and assignments. The institution responds promptly and thoroughly to all student inquiries, using all of these channels.
6. Describe the various ways that students can submit inquiries and assignments.
7. Describe how the institution responds to administrative inquiries (e.g., admissions, enrollment, transcript requests, technology, etc.) and the typical response time. [EXHIBIT 13: Sample Student Administrative Inquiries]

1. Describe how the institution responds to academic inquiries (e.g., assignment submission, assessment requirements, grades, etc.) and the typical response time. [EXHIBIT 13: Sample Student Academic Inquiries]

1. Describe the process followed by faculty/instructors for reviewing, evaluating, and grading examinations and assessments and the typical response time. [EXHIBIT 13: Sample Faculty/Instructor-Graded Examinations or Assessments]
2. **Individual Differences:** Academic advising and instructional support are provided to assist students in achieving institutional and program requirements, program outcomes, course learning outcomes, and educational goals consistent with best educational practices and as required by applicable federal and state laws.
3. Describe the academic advising and instructional support provided by the institution to assist students having difficulties in meeting program requirements.
4. Describe how the academic advising and instructional support encourage students to meet program requirements, achieve program and course outcomes, and attain educational goals.
5. Describe how the institution accommodates the needs of students as required by applicable federal and state laws.
6. Describe the institution’s process for ensuring students equal access to educational offerings.
7. **Encouragement of Students:** The institution’s policies and procedures optimize interaction between the institution and students. The interaction proactively promotes student completion and success.
8. Describe the institution’s policies, procedures, and time frames for monitoring and encouraging student progress. [EXHIBIT 14: Sample Motivational Comments]
9. Describe the types of contact used to encourage students to achieve stated program outcomes.
10. Describe how efforts to encourage students are separate from efforts to collect delinquent tuition.
11. **Satisfactory Academic Progress:** The institution implements and consistently applies a satisfactory academic progress policy and discloses this policy to students. Standards for measuring satisfactory academic progress include qualitative and quantitative standards used for evaluation of student progress. The institution takes appropriate action if students fail to meet the institution’s minimum standards of progress. Students are informed of their academic progress and standing in the program at regular intervals throughout their enrollment.
12. Describe the institution’s satisfactory academic progress policy. [EXHIBIT 15: Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy]

For this exhibit: Insert Link to Policy

1. Describe the qualitative and quantitative standards used for measuring student progress.

1. Describe the actions taken by the institution if a student is unable to meet minimum standards of progress.

1. Describe who is responsible for monitoring student progress.

1. Describe how frequently student progress is verified.
2. Describe how frequently students are informed of their academic progress and standing in the program.
3. **Grading Policies:** Student academic performance is measured using published grading policies that include prompt return of accurately, fairly, and consistently graded assessments that are supervised by a qualified instructor or faculty member. The institution publishes its assignment marking system, course extension policy, and information on issuance and completion of incomplete grades and applies them with fairness and consistency.
4. Describe the institution’s approach to grading. [EXHIBIT 16: Grading Policies and Other Related Academic Policies]

For this exhibit: Insert Links to Policies

1. Describe how faculty/instructors apply the grading policy with consistency and fairness.
2. Describe who is responsible for ensuring that all grading is conducted accurately, fairly, and consistently.
3. **Student Records:** Accurate student records are securely and confidentially maintained. Policies and procedures for keeping records on students’ academic progress are in accordance with applicable federal and state laws and professional requirements. Transcripts are readily accessible and are maintained permanently in either print or digital form.
4. Describe the institution’s formal academic records requirements.
5. Describe the documents maintained in students’ records. [EXHIBIT 17: Sample Student Records]
6. Describe the process for maintaining student academic records.
7. Explain how long the institution maintains student and alumni academic records.
8. Describe how the institution maintains records of students’ examinations and assessments.
9. Describe the security, maintenance, and protection of student records and how they are readily accessible to authorized staff and faculty.
10. Describe the institution’s transcript services. [EXHIBIT 17: Sample Transcript and Diplomas/Certificates]
11. **Confidentiality and Privacy:** The institution’s policies protect student confidentiality and privacy as required by applicable federal and state laws.
12. Describe the institution’s confidentiality and privacy policy. [EXHIBIT 18: Confidentiality and Privacy Policies]

For this exhibit: Insert Links to Policies

1. Describe how the institution protects student confidentiality and privacy as required by applicable federal and state laws.
2. **Student Support Services:** The institution provides support services designed for the students enrolled, such as financial aid guidance, advising services, employment assistance, and/or alumni services. Appropriate academic support services are readily available. Any career services and/or alumni services are offered as published in the institution’s materials.
3. Describe how the institution provides support services for students enrolled based the educational offerings.

1. Describe how these support services are readily available.

1. Describe any career and alumni services offered.
2. **Student Complaints:** The institution has policies and procedures for receiving, responding to, and addressing student complaints. The policies and procedures should embody the principles of fairness, responsiveness, respect, due process and proportionality.
   1. Institutional Complaints

DEAC requires institutions to have written complaint policies and procedures for the purposes of receiving, responding to, addressing, and resolving complaints made by students, faculty, administrators, or any party, including one who has good reason to believe that an institution is not in compliance with DEAC accreditation standards.

* 1. At a minimum, the institution’s policy instructs students how to file a complaint or grievance and the maximum time for resolution. The institution’s complaint policy and procedures are available to all students. The institution defines what it reasonably considers to be a student complaint.
  2. The institution reviews in a timely, fair, and equitable manner any complaint it receives from students. When the complaint concerns a faculty member or administrator, the institution may not complete its review and make a final decision regarding a complaint unless, and in accordance with its published procedures, it ensures that the faculty member or administrator has sufficient opportunity to provide a response to the complaint. The institution takes any follow-up action, including enforcement action if necessary, based on the results of its review.

1. Describe the institution’s policy and procedure for receiving, responding to, and addressing student complaints. [EXHIBIT 19: Complaint/Grievance Policy]

For this exhibit: Insert Link to Policy

* 1. The institution’s complaint policy states how complaints can be filed with state agencies and its accrediting organization, as appropriate.

1. Describe how the institution’s policy provides students with information on filing a complaint with the appropriate state licensing or authorizing authority and DEAC.
   1. The institution will retain the complete files for all complaints which may be filed against the institution, its faculty, staff, students or other associated parties for the longer of five years from the filing of the complaint or the completion of the institution’s next cycle of evaluation for reaccreditation.
2. Describe the procedures the institution follows for retaining complete files for all complaints filed against the institution, its faculty, staff, students, or other associated parties for the longer of five years from the filing of the complaint or the completion of the institution’s next cycle of evaluation for reaccreditation.
3. Provide a summary of the complaints received in the past five years and how they were resolved.

Standard V: Student Achievement and Satisfaction

Contact Person: Name and Title of Contact Person

1. **Student Achievement:** The institution evaluates student achievement using indicators that it determines are appropriate relative to its mission and educational offerings. The institution evaluates student achievement by collecting data from outcomes assessment activities using direct and indirect measures. The institution maintains systematic and ongoing processes for assessing student learning and achievement, analyzes data, and documents that the results meet both internal and external benchmarks, including those comparable to courses or programs offered at peer DEAC-accredited institutions. The institution demonstrates and documents how the evaluation of student achievement drives quality improvement of educational offerings and support services.
2. Provide the institution’s outcomes assessment plan. [EXHIBIT 20: Outcomes Assessment Plan]
3. Describe how the institution collects data as a part of its outcomes assessment plan.
4. Describe the direct measures (e.g., assignment, examination, or assessment) used by the institution to measure student achievement of program and course outcomes.
5. Describe the benchmarks or standards the institution uses to measure whether students are achieving the stated program and course outcomes.
6. Describe how the institution uses the data results of direct measures to improve and enhance its educational offerings and support services.
7. Provide evidence that the institution meets DEAC’s most recently published benchmark standards for graduation and completion rates.
8. Describe how the institution monitors student persistence and retention rates.
9. Describe how the institution monitors student graduation rates.
10. For programs that indicate a specific career or other benefit as an outcome or prepares students for state licensure/certification examination required for entering a profession, describe the process for collecting data on student achievement and/or licensure examination results. If stated program outcomes explicitly indicate job placement, include evidence of employer acceptance of graduates from these programs.
11. For programs that indicate a specific career or other benefit as an outcome, describe how the institution gathers and utilizes information from employers about future employment prospects for graduates of these programs.
12. Describe how the institution provides information to the public on the achievement of its students.
13. **Student Satisfaction:** The institution systematically seeks student and alumni opinions as one basis for evaluating and improving curricula, instructional materials, method of delivery, and student services. The institution regularly collects evidence that students are satisfied with the administrative, educational, and support services provided.
14. Describe how the institution systematically seeks student and alumni opinions as one basis for evaluating and improving curricula, instructional materials, method of delivery, and student services. [EXHIBIT 21: Sample Student/Alumni Surveys]
15. Describe other indirect measures the institution uses to measure student satisfaction.
16. Describe the benchmarks or standards the institution uses to measure student satisfaction.
17. Describe how the institution uses the data results of indirect measures to improve and enhance its educational offerings and support services.
18. **Performance Disclosures:** The institution routinely discloses on its website reliable, current, and accurate information on its performance, including student achievement, as determined by the institution.
19. Describe outcomes assessment performance measures the institution discloses on its website. [EXHIBIT 22: DEAC Student Achievement Disclosure for the Public Form]

For this exhibit: Insert Link to location of the information on the institution’s website

1. Describe how the institution routinely discloses on its website reliable, current, and accurate data on its student achievement.

Standard VI: Academic Leadership and Faculty Qualifications

Contact Person: Name and Title of Contact Person

1. **Academic Leadership:** The institution demonstrates appropriate academic leadership capacity and infrastructure to support the effective distance education delivery of educational offerings. Academic leaders possess the academic credentials, background, knowledge, ethics, and experience necessary to guide the instructional activities of the institution.
2. Describe how the institution’s academic leaders possess the knowledge and experience to support effective distance education delivery of educational offerings.
3. Describe how the institution’s academic infrastructure is adequate to provide effective distance education delivery of educational offerings.
4. Describe how the academic leaders possess the appropriate academic credentials, background, knowledge, ethics, and experience to guide the instructional activities of the institution. [EXHIBIT 23: Academic Leadership Résumés]
5. Describe the roles and responsibilities of the academic leadership.

1. **Chief Academic Officer (CAO) or Educational Director:** The institution designates a chief academic officer, educational director, or other similar oversight position. This individual is responsible for overall administration of the educational program(s); for the educational, editorial, and research activities within departmental subject fields; and for faculty/instructors. The individual also informs marketing decisions.

Within the context of the institution’s mission:

* 1. The CAO or education director has appropriate academic administrative experience and competence necessary to lead and manage educational offerings in a distance education environment.

1. List the CAO’s or education director’s appropriate academic administrative experience and competence to lead and manage educational offerings in a distance education environment.  
     
     
   1. The CAO or education director possesses academic credentials that are appropriate for the leadership, supervision, and oversight of faculty, curriculum design, and student achievement expectations.
2. Describe the role and administrative responsibilities of the Chief Academic Officer or Educational Director or other similar oversight position. [EXHIBIT 23: Chief Academic Officer or Educational Director Résumé]
3. Describe the Chief Academic Officer or Educational Director or other similar oversight position’s role in overseeing educational, editorial, and research activities for the educational offerings, and informs marketing decisions.
4. List the CAO’s or education director’s academic credentials that support the necessary qualifications for leadership, supervision, and oversight of faculty, curriculum design, and student achievement.  
     
   1. Doctoral Degrees

The institution appoints a director for doctoral degree programs. The director possesses previous higher education administrative capacity and distance learning knowledge to lead doctoral programs. The director possesses the appropriate terminal degree earned from an appropriately accredited institution in a subject area relevant to the degree program being offered.

1. Provide the name of the director appointed by the institution to oversee the doctoral degree programs.
2. Explain how the director possesses previous higher education administrative capacity and distance learning knowledge necessary to lead doctoral programs.
3. Provide a list of the director’s earned academic credentials and how this education is relevant to the degree program being offered.   
     
   1. Dissertation Supervisory Committee

A doctoral committee of at least three faculty members is assigned for each student. Doctoral committee members possess appropriate credentials, scholarship, experience, and practice in the field of study. At least one member of the doctoral committee is a member of the awarding institution’s faculty. At least two members of the doctoral committee have earned doctoral degrees from appropriately accredited institutions other than from the awarding institution. All committee members are qualified in the subject area of the dissertation or research project topic. The institution has final approval for students who nominate faculty to the doctoral committee.

1. Provide a link to the institution’s policy for selecting a doctoral committee.
2. Describe how the institution verifies that doctoral committee members possess the appropriate credentials, scholarship, experience, and practice in the field of study.
3. Describe the process students follow when nominating faculty to their doctoral committee.
4. **Instructors, Faculty, and Staff:** Faculty/instructors are qualified and appropriately credentialed to teach the subject at the assigned level. The institution employs a sufficient number of qualified faculty/instructors to provide individualized instructional service to each student. The institution maintains faculty/instructor résumés, official transcripts, and copies of applicable licenses or credentials on file. Faculty/instructors are carefully screened for appointment and are properly and continuously trained on institutional policies, learner needs, instructional approaches and techniques, and the use of instructional technology. The institution regularly evaluates faculty and administrator performance using clear, consistent procedures. The institution assures that faculty are appropriately involved and engaged in the curricular and instructional aspects of the educational offerings. Faculty are assigned responsibilities based on their degree qualifications and/or area(s) of expertise.
5. Describe the institution’s faculty/instructor qualifications in relation to the subject areas taught and the credential level of the programs offered. [EXHIBIT 24: Faculty Qualifications]
6. Describe how the institution employs or contracts with a sufficient number of qualified faculty/instructors to provide individualized instructional service to each student. [EXHIBIT 24: Faculty Teaching Responsibilities]
7. Describe what documents the institution requires and maintains on file to demonstrate that instructors/faculty are appropriately qualified. [EXHIBIT 24: Faculty/Instructors Résumés]
8. Describe how faculty/instructors are screened for appointment. [EXHIBIT 25: Faculty Handbook]
9. Describe how faculty/instructors are continuously trained in institutional policies, learner needs, instructional approaches and techniques, and the use of instructional technology.
10. Describe how faculty/instructors/staff performance is regularly evaluated. [EXHIBIT 25: Faculty/Instructors/Staff Evaluations]
11. Describe how faculty/instructors are appropriately involved and engaged in the curricular and instructional aspects of the educational offerings.
12. Describe how faculty are assigned responsibilities based on their degree qualifications and/or area(s) of expertise.
13. If the institution uses external faculty/instructors, technical advisors, researchers, or subject matter specialists, describe how they are hired and monitored throughout their engagement.
14. Describe the contractual arrangements with faculty/instructors/staff and any external individuals, including method of compensation. [EXHIBIT 25: Sample Faculty Contracts]
15. Provide data and reasons for any faculty turnover in the past five years.
16. Describe the institution’s procedures for publishing, as well as its policies for preventing and resolving, faculty conflicts of interest.   
      
    1. High School

The institution provides evidence that all faculty/instructors are qualified and appropriately credentialed to teach the subject and level within the high school program offered.

1. Describe the institution’s policy on qualifications for faculty teaching high school program courses.   
     
   1. Non-Degree

Instructors teaching technically- or practice-oriented courses have practical experience in the field and possess current licenses and/or certifications, as applicable.

1. Describe the institution’s policy on qualifications for faculty teaching non-degree courses.   
     
   1. Occupational/Technical Associate Degree

Faculty possess earned credentials awarded by appropriately accredited institutions and/or have practical experience in the field and possess current licenses and/or certifications if applicable. The institution must demonstrate the academic preparation and practical experience of each faculty member consistent with accepted postsecondary education practices.

1. Describe how the institution verifies that faculty possess earned credentials awarded by appropriately accredited institutions and/or practical experience in the field and possess current licenses and/or certifications if applicable.
2. Describe how the institution determines that academic preparation and practical experience requirements for faculty members are consistent with postsecondary education practices.   
     
   1. Undergraduate Degrees

Faculty teaching undergraduate degree program courses possess, at a minimum, a degree at least one level above that of the program they are teaching and demonstrate expertise in the subject field of the discipline. Faculty teaching general education courses at the undergraduate level, including occupational/technical associate degrees, must possess a master’s degree in the assigned general education subject field or have a master’s degree and 18 semester credit hours in the general education subject field.

1. Describe the institution’s policy on qualifications for faculty teaching undergraduate degree program courses.   
     
   1. Master’s Degrees

Faculty teaching graduate-level courses in a master’s degree program must possess, at a minimum, a doctoral/terminal degree earned at an appropriately accredited institution in the subject field of the discipline and demonstrate familiarity with practical applications of the field.

1. Describe the institution’s policy on qualifications for faculty teaching master’s degree program courses.   
     
   1. Faculty Qualification Equivalency

In limited and exceptional cases, institutions may demonstrate that faculty are qualified to teach at the undergraduate and master’s levels through faculty qualification equivalency. Such equivalency is demonstrated by evidence of substantial breadth and depth of experiences and knowledge that are relevant to the discipline in which the faculty member is teaching. An institution that intends to substitute faculty qualification equivalency for the degree qualifications set forth in Standards VI.C.4. and VI.C.5. must have:

* + 1. well-defined policies, procedures and documentation that demonstrate how experience and knowledge are sufficient to determine that the faculty member has the expertise necessary to teach students in that discipline; and
    2. procedures that ensure that adequate oversight of teaching and learning is provided by individuals who possess degree qualifications in accordance with Standards VI.C.4. and VI.C.5.
  1. Describe the institution’s policy for faculty qualification equivalency.
  2. Describe how the institution’s policy ensures that faculty qualification equivalency is only considered in limited and exceptional cases.
  3. Describe what documentation is required to determine that a faculty member has sufficient experience, knowledge, and expertise necessary to substitute faculty qualification equivalency for the degree qualifications set forth in Standards VI.C.4. and VI.C.5.
  4. Describe how the institution ensures that adequate oversight of teaching and learning is provided by individuals who possess the appropriate degree qualifications as set forth in Standards VI.C.4. and VI.C.5.
  5. First Professional Degrees

All teaching faculty and involved practitioners possess a first professional or higher degree earned at an appropriately accredited institution in a related subject field and possess specialized knowledge and skills in the subject area, consistent with educational practices of other similar programs.

1. Describe the institution’s policy on qualifications for faculty teaching first professional degree program courses.   
     
   1. Professional Doctoral Degrees

All teaching faculty possess terminal degrees (e.g., professional doctoral degree or Ph.D.) earned at an appropriately accredited institution in a related subject field. Prior to enrolling students, the institution has in place a dedicated dean, director, or other academic officer with credentials appropriate to the degree(s) being offered.

1. Describe the institution’s policy on qualifications for faculty teaching professional doctoral degree program courses.
2. Identify who the institution appointed as the dedicated dean, director, or other academic officer to oversee the professional doctoral degree offered.
3. **Professional Growth:** The institution demonstrates a commitment to faculty and staff professional development. The institution encourages faculty and staff to become members of professional organizations, to review and apply relevant research, to pursue continuing education or training in their respective fields, and to enhance their skills in developing and using electronically delivered, online, or other forms of distance study. The institution provides faculty and administrators with access to a collection of professional educational materials to keep abreast of current trends, developments, techniques, research, and experimentation.
4. Describe the institution’s professional development policy for faculty/instructors and staff.
5. Summarize the professional development activities of the faculty and staff in the past five years. [EXHIBIT 26: Professional Development Documents]
6. Describe how the institution provides faculty/instructors and staff with access to a collection of professional educational materials to keep informed of current trends, developments, techniques, research, and experimentation.
7. Describe any internal professional development opportunities offered by the institution.
8. Describe any external professional development opportunities offered by the institution.
9. Describe how faculty/instructor and staff professional development has informed and enhanced educational offerings and support services.

Standard VII: Advertising, Promotional Literature, and Recruitment Personnel

Contact Person: Name and Title of Contact Person

1. **Advertising and Promotion:** The institution conforms to ethical practices in all advertising and promotion to prospective students. All advertisements, website content, and promotional literature are truthful, accurate, clear, and readily accessible to the public; proactively states that programs are offered via distance education; and appropriately discloses occupational opportunities as applicable. Catalogs, enrollment agreements, manuals, and websites list the institution’s full name and physical address. At a minimum, all print advertisements and promotional literature include the institution’s city, state, and website home page URL where, in compliance with DEAC’s Website Disclosures Checklist, the institution’s physical address is provided. All web-based advertisements provide a link to the institution’s website home page URL. All institutional social media account profiles provide a link to the institution’s website home page URL. The institution complies with the DEAC’s Catalog Disclosures Checklist and DEAC’s Website Disclosures Checklist.
2. Describe the institution’s approach to advertising and promoting its programs. [EXHIBIT 27: Sample Advertising and Promotional Materials]
3. Identify who is responsible for the institution’s marketing and advertising decisions.
4. Certify that the institution is in compliance with the DEAC website disclosures checklist and provide the completed DEAC website disclosures checklist. [EXHIBIT 27: DEAC Website Disclosures Checklist]
5. Describe how the institution verifies that all advertisements, website, and promotional materials are truthful, accurate, clear, and readily accessible to the public; proactively state that programs are offered via distance education; and appropriately disclose occupational opportunities, as applicable.
6. Demonstrate that all catalogs, enrollment agreements, manuals, and websites list the institution’s full name and physical address by supplying links to sample documentation below.
7. Demonstrate that all print advertisements and promotional literature include the institution’s city, state, and website home page URL.
8. Demonstrate that all web-based advertisements and all institutional social media account profiles provide a link to the institution’s website home page URL.
9. Certify that the institution is in compliance with the DEAC catalog disclosures checklist and provide the completed DEAC catalog disclosures checklist. [EXHIBIT 28: DEAC Catalog Disclosures Checklist]   
     
   1. All advertisements and promotional materials accurately reflect the programs and services offered by the institution. The word “guarantee” is never used in advertisements. Under limited and exceptional circumstances, institutions may use the word “free” when it is appropriate to the mission and purpose of the institution.
10. Describe how all advertisements and promotional materials accurately reflect that educational offerings are delivered through distance education.
11. Describe how the institution ensures that the word “guarantee” is never used.
12. If the word “free” is used by the institution, provide supporting information and documentation that shows that the use of the word is appropriate to the mission and purpose of the institution.   
      
      
    * 1. **In-Residence Program Component:** All required in-residence components and additional associated costs are disclosed on the institution’s websites, advertisements, and promotional materials.
    1. If the institution conducts no in-residence program activities, state “Not Applicable.” If the institution conducts in-residence program activities, state “See In-Residence Program Companion Template.”
    2. The institution’s website testimonials and endorsements are truthful and less than four years old. The institution maintains signed student consent forms for each published testimonial. The institution’s website discloses all program requirements, course descriptions, tuition and related costs, program schedules, method of delivery, and its catalog prior to the collection of any personal student contact information. The institution does not use other institutions as triggers for its own sponsored links on Internet search engines.
13. Describe how the institution verifies that all testimonials and endorsements are truthful and less than four years old. [EXHIBIT 29: Sample Testimonials and Endorsements]
14. Describe the institution’s process for obtaining and maintaining signed student consent forms for each published testimonial. [EXHIBIT 29: Signed Student Consent Forms]
15. Certify that the institution does not use other institutions as triggers for its own sponsored links on Internet search engines.  
      
      
    1. The institution discloses in its catalog, website, and enrollment agreements that the acceptance of earned transfer credits is determined by the receiving institution.
16. Certify that the institution publishes appropriate transfer credit disclaimers in its catalog, website, and enrollment agreements.   
      
      
    1. The institution adheres to applicable catalog, website, and enrollment agreement disclosures checklists, based on educational offerings. The institution publishes student consumer information as required by federal and state statute and regulations.
17. Describe the information published for prospective students and the public on its Consumer Information Disclosure Form.   
      
      
    1. Any incentives offered to prospective and current students to enroll must be limited in nature to institution-branded items and in no event may such items exceed an aggregate value of $100 annually with respect to any individual.
18. Describe what, if any, incentives are offered to prospective and current students to enroll and their aggregate annual value.
19. Describe the procedures in place to ensure incentives are limited to institution-branded items that do not exceed an aggregate value of $100 with respect to any individual.   
      
      
    1. The institution permanently archives its catalogs.
20. Describe the procedures the institution follows for permanently archiving its catalogs.

1. **Institution and Course Accredited-Status Recognition:** The institution accurately reflects its accredited status and uses the official DEAC accreditation logo and/or statement of accreditation when publishing its accreditation status in advertisements and promotional materials on its website and in social media. DEAC’s name, address, telephone number, and web address are published in the institution’s catalog.

* 1. The institution publishes a statement of accreditation only as follows:
     + - Accredited by the Distance Education Accrediting Commission
       - DEAC Accredited
  2. The institution refers to DEAC’s recognition by the U.S. Department of Education only as follows: “The Distance Education Accrediting Commission is listed by the U.S. Department of Education as a recognized accrediting agency.”

1. Provide in the space below the statement below the institution uses when referencing its accredited status and DEAC’s recognition by the U.S. Department of Education. For applicants seeking initial accreditation, provide the statement below that the institution plans to use when referencing its accredited status and DEAC’s recognition by the U.S. Department of Education.  
     
   1. The institution refers to DEAC’s recognition by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) only as follows: “The Distance Education Accrediting Commission is recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).”
2. Provide in the space below the statement that the institution uses when referring to DEAC’s recognition by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). For applicants seeking initial accreditation, provide the statement below that the institution plans to use when referring to DEAC’s recognition by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).  
     
   1. The accredited institution publicly corrects any misleading or inaccurate information it releases on its accreditation status, contents of its on-site team reports from accreditation-related visits, and/or actions taken by the Distance Education Accrediting Commission with respect to the institution.
3. Describe the process the institution follows to publicly correct any misleading or inaccurate information it releases on its accreditation status, content of its onsite team reports, or actions taken by DEAC.
4. Describe the time frame the institution follows for correcting any misleading or inaccurate information.

* 1. All courses and programs are approved by DEAC before the institution advertises or enrolls students in them. The institution uses the term “College” or “University” in its name only if it offers academic degree programs.

1. Describe the process the institution follows to ensure that all courses and programs are approved by DEAC before it advertises or enrolls students in them.
2. List the degree level of the academic programs offered if the institution uses the words “College” or “University” in its name.
3. **Student Recruitment:** The institution demonstrates ethical processes and procedures are followed throughout the recruitment of prospective students by any individual who is authorized by the institution to participate in the enrollment process with prospective students. Minimum ethical practices and procedures are identified below.
4. Describe the process used at the institution to enroll prospective students.
5. Describe how the institution’s recruitment processes and procedures are ethical.
6. Describe the institution’s job description for any individuals authorized to participate in the student enrollment and any individual whose job responsibilities include regular participation in the student enrollment process. [EXHIBIT 30: Student Recruitment Personnel Job Description(s)]  
     
     
   1. The institution takes full responsibility for the actions, statements, and conduct of its authorized recruitment personnel. The institution maintains appropriate records, licensures, registrations, signed employment contract, and signed DEAC Code of Ethics, as applicable for all recruitment personnel. The institution demonstrates it adequately trains its recruitment personnel and provides them with accurate information concerning employment and remuneration. All authorized recruitment personnel are provided with appropriate materials covering applicable procedures, policies, and presentations. The institution demonstrates that it routinely monitors its recruitment personnel or independent organizations that provide prospective applicants names to assure they are in compliance with all state, federal, and DEAC recruitment practices.
7. Describe how the institution supervises and monitors student recruitment personnel.
8. Describe the institution’s hiring practices for student recruitment personnel.
9. Describe the institution’s training process for student recruitment personnel. [EXHIBIT 30: Student Recruitment Policies and Procedures]
10. Provide evidence that all student recruitment personnel sign the DEAC Code of Ethics. [EXHIBIT 30: Signed DEAC Code of Ethics]
11. Describe the institution’s professional development policy for student recruitment personnel.

1. Describe how often the institution updates its materials used to enroll prospective students.
2. Describe how the institution verifies that recruitment materials are in compliance with all state, federal, and DEAC recruitment practices.
3. Describe the process and criteria used to evaluate student recruitment personnel.

* 1. All personnel involved in student recruitment, including telemarketing staff, conform to applicable federal, state, and international laws. Personnel involved in student recruitment may not be given and may not use any title that indicates special qualifications for career guidance, advising, or registration, nor may they publish advertisements without written authorization from the institution.

1. Describe how the institution verifies that student recruitment personnel conform to applicable federal, state, and international laws.
2. Describe how student recruitment personnel identify themselves to prospective students.   
     
   1. If an institution offers students nominal gifts for referring prospective students to the institution who ultimately enroll in the institution, such gifts must be limited in nature to institution-branded items and in no event may exceed an aggregate value of $100 annually with respect to any individual.
3. Describe what, if any, gifts are offered for making referrals, including the value of the gifts.
4. Describe the procedures in place to ensure gifts for referring prospective students are limited to institution-branded items that do not exceed an aggregate value of $100 with respect to any individual.

### Standard VIII: Admission Practices and Enrollment Agreements

Contact Person: Name and Title of Contact Person

1. **Admissions Disclosures:** Admissions policies and procedures are designed to assure that the institution enrolls only those students who are reasonably capable of successfully completing and benefiting from the educational offerings.
2. Describe the institution’s admissions policy. [EXHIBIT 31: Admissions Policy and Criteria]

For this exhibit: Insert Links to Policy and Criteria

1. Describe how the institution determined its admissions criteria.
2. Describe how the institution’s admissions policy verifies that only students who are reasonably capable of completing and benefiting from the educational offerings are enrolled.  
     
   1. The institution informs each applicant, prior to admission, of the admissions criteria, the nature of the education provided, and the demands of the educational offerings. Prior to completing the enrollment process, the institution requires students to affirm access to the catalog and other institutional documents disclosing the rights, responsibilities, and obligations of both the student and the institution.
3. Describe how the institution informs each prospective student of the admissions criteria, the nature of the education offered, and the demands of the educational offerings.
4. Describe how the institution requires students to affirm receipt of the catalog and other institutional documents that disclose the rights, responsibilities, and obligations of both the student and institution prior to completing the enrollment process.
5. If the institution offers programs that prepare students for state licensing/certification examinations required for entering a profession, how does the institution inform each prospective student of licensing examination/certification requirements?
6. If the institution offers programs that prepare students for state licensing/certification examinations required for entering a profession, how does the institution inform each prospective student whether they meet state or federal examination eligibility requirements?  
     
   1. The institution admits students regardless of race, color, national origin, disability, sex, or age. Institutions reasonably accommodate applicants and students with disabilities to the extent required by applicable laws.
7. Describe the institution’s plan for providing reasonable accommodations to students who provide appropriate disability documentation.
8. Provide examples of accommodations made for students who provided appropriate disability documentation.  
     
   1. Official transcripts, if required for admission, are received within one enrollment period, not to exceed 12 semester credit hours, or the student is withdrawn from the program.
9. Describe the process followed to verify that official transcripts are received within one enrollment period, not to exceed 12 semester credit hours.
10. Describe the process followed when student official transcripts are not received within one enrollment period.
11. **Student Identity Verification:** Student identity verification is initiated during the admissions process to verify that the admitted student who participates in and completes coursework and assessments is the same student who is awarded credit.
12. Describe the institution’s student identity verification policy and practices. [EXHIBIT 32: Student Identity Verification Policy]

For this exhibit: Insert Link to Policy

1. Describe how the institution verifies that the admitted student is the same student who completes coursework and assessments and is awarded credit.
2. **Compulsory Age Students:** An institution enrolling students under the compulsory school age obtains permission from responsible parties to assure that the pursuit of the educational offerings is not detrimental to any compulsory schooling.
3. Describe how the institution obtains permission from responsible parties prior to enrolling compulsory school aged students.
4. Describe how the institution verifies and documents that the pursuit of educational offerings by a compulsory aged student is not detrimental to any compulsory schooling.
5. **Admissions Criteria:** The institution’s admissions criteria aligns with its mission and student population served. The institution establishes qualifications that an applicant possesses prior to enrollment in order to successfully complete the stated educational offerings. The institution consistently and fairly applies its admission requirements. If an institution enrolls a student who does not meet the admissions criteria, the institution documents the reason(s) for the exception to the admissions criteria.
6. Describe how the institution’s admissions criteria align with its mission and target student population served.
7. Describe the process followed to develop admissions criteria that verify and document that prospective students possess identified qualifications in order to complete the stated educational offerings.
8. Describe how the institution consistently and fairly applies its admission requirements.
9. Describe how the institution documents that students meet established admissions criteria.
10. If the institution enrolls students who do not meet its established admissions criteria, describe the institution’s policies and procedures for determining the basis for admittance, describe how it documents that students otherwise meet established admissions criteria, and describe how such admissions are made only under limited and exceptional circumstances. [EXHIBIT 32: Policies and Procedures for Exceptions to Admissions Criteria, Exhibit 32: List of Students Enrolled Under Exception to Admissions Criteria Policy]

1. Describe the institution’s reasonable measures for determining if prospective students’ physical limitations will prevent successful completion of the educational offerings.   
   1. Transcripts not in English are evaluated by an appropriate third party and translated into English or evaluated by a trained transcript evaluator fluent in the language of the transcript. Evaluators possess expertise in the educational practices of the country of origin and include an English translation of the review.
2. Describe the institution’s process for evaluating transcripts that are not in English.
3. Provide a link to the institution’s admissions requirements for foreign transcript evaluation.

For this response: Insert Link

1. Provide a list of appropriate third-party transcript evaluators approved by the institution.
2. Describe how transcript evaluators possess expertise in the educational practices of the country of origin.   
     
   1. The institution’s admissions criteria disclose procedures for verifying appropriate language proficiencies. The institution verifies English language proficiency for applicants whose native language is not English and who have not earned a degree from an appropriately accredited institution where English is the principal language of instruction. Verification procedures align with DEAC’s guidance on English Language Proficiency Assessment.
3. Describe the institution’s admissions procedures for verifying published language proficiency requirements.
4. Provide a link to the institution’s admissions policy for verifying English or other language proficiencies.  
     
   For this response: Insert Link
5. Describe how the institution’s foreign language verification procedures align with DEAC’s guidance on English Language Proficiency Assessment [DEAC Handbook, Part Four: Appendices: Standard IX]   
     
   1. Non-Degree Programs

As appropriate for the students served and educational programs offered, the institution obtains official documentation that applicants possess a high school diploma or its recognized equivalent at the time of admission (e.g., high school diploma, general educational development tests [GED], or self-certification statement).

Institutions that implement self-certification procedures must:

* + - * Obtain a signed statement from the applicant attesting to a high school diploma or recognized equivalent;
      * Require applicants to provide the institution name, city, state, and year of graduation on the self-certification statement;
      * Develop and follow procedures to evaluate the validity of high school completion, or its equivalent, if the institution has reason to believe that the documentation was not obtained from an entity that provides secondary school education (e.g., general educational development tests or GED); and
      * Document that such practices are necessary to be consistent with the institution’s mission.

1. Describe how the institution documents the basis for admissions decisions for non-degree programs.
2. If the institution allows self-certification, describe the policy and process followed for verification.
   1. Undergraduate Degrees

The institution obtains official documentation that applicants possess a high school diploma or its recognized equivalent at the time of admission (e.g., high school diploma or general educational development tests [GED]). Institutions may implement self-certification in accordance with VIII.D.3.

1. Describe how the institution documents the basis for admissions decisions for undergraduate degree programs.
2. If the institution allows self-certification, describe the policy and process followed for verification.   
     
     
   1. Master’s Degrees

At the time of admission, the institution obtains official documentation that applicants possess a bachelor’s degree earned from an appropriately accredited institution.

1. Describe how the institution documents the basis for admissions decisions for master’s degree programs.
   1. First Professional Degrees

At the time of admission, the institution obtains documentation that applicants possess a bachelor’s or master’s degree earned from an appropriately accredited institution.

1. Describe how the institution documents the basis for admissions decisions for first professional degree programs.  
     
   1. Professional Doctoral Degrees

At the time of admission, the institution obtains documentation that applicants possess a bachelor’s or master’s degree earned from an appropriately accredited institution and relevant academic experience. At a minimum, the institution verifies that applicants have completed 30 graduate-level credit hours prior to admission.

1. Describe how the institution documents the basis for admissions decisions for professional doctoral degree programs.
2. **Admission Acceptance and Denial:** The institution informs applicants that they have been accepted for admission. The institution communicates with the applicant and documents the basis for any denial of admission.
3. Describe the procedures followed to inform applicants they have been accepted for or denied admission.
4. List the reasons why an applicant may be denied admission.
5. **Transfer Credits and Experiential Learning:** The institution implements a fair and equitable transfer credit policy that is published in the catalog. The steps for requesting transfer credit are clear and disclose the documentation required for review. Students are able to appeal transfer credit decisions using published procedures. Transfer credit requests are not denied based solely on the source of accreditation of the credit-granting institution.

Credit awarded for experiential or equivalent learning, including challenge and test-out credits, cannot exceed 25 percent of the credits required for an undergraduate degree. Institutions maintain official documentation of the bases for decisions to award credit for experiential or equivalent learning.

An institution seeking to offer credit for prior learning assessment publishes evaluation standards consistent with CAEL’s Ten Standards for Assessing Learning. Prior learning assessment is performed by qualified individuals with experience in the evaluation of prior learning.

In instances where a student seeks to transfer more than the maximum allowable percentage of required credit hours specified in the relevant degree category listed in subsection F.2. through F.5. below, the institution must conduct a comprehensive assessment of the student’s credits earned and document how the credits align with its program outcomes. In such cases, transfer credit allowances may not exceed the lesser of any applicable state requirements or 90 percent of the credits required for undergraduate degrees, 75 percent of the credits required for master’s degrees or first professional degrees, or 40 percent of the credits required for professional doctoral degrees.

1. Describe how the institution’s transfer credit policy is fair and equitable.
2. Provide a link to the institution’s transfer credit policy.   
     
   For this response: Insert Link
3. Describe the steps followed by students when requesting transfer credit.
4. Describe the institution’s process for evaluating transfer credit.
5. Explain the type of documentation the institution requires to substantiate the award of transfer credits. [EXHIBIT 33: Sample Transfer Credit Evaluations]
6. For each program level offered, describe how transfer credit evaluation is performed by qualified individuals with experience in evaluating transcripts.
7. Describe how individuals responsible for evaluating transfer credit are trained.
8. Describe the institution’s processes for ensuring that transfer credit is awarded in adherence with published policies and procedures per Standard VIII.F.1-5.
9. Describe how the institution documents the award of transfer credit.
10. Describe the processes followed for awarding credit for experiential learning.
11. Describe the institution’s evaluation criteria for awarding credit for experiential or prior learning. [EXHIBIT 33: Sample Experiential or Prior Learning Assessment Credit Evaluations]
12. For each degree level offered, describe how prior learning assessment is performed by qualified individuals with experience in the evaluation of prior learning.  
      
    1. High School

The institution may award a maximum of 75 percent of the credits required for a high school program.

1. State the maximum percentage of credits that are accepted for transfer into the high school program.  
     
     
   1. Undergraduate Degrees

The institution may award a maximum of 75 percent of the credits required for a degree program or a combination of transfer credit and experiential or equivalent credit (including challenge/test-out credits). Courses accepted for transfer credit are relevant to the program of study and equivalent in both content and degree level. Credit awarded for experiential or equivalent learning cannot exceed 25 percent of the credits required for a degree.

1. State the maximum percentage of credits that are accepted for transfer into undergraduate degree programs.
2. State the maximum percentage of experiential or equivalent credits that are accepted into undergraduate degree programs.
3. If the institution allows students to seek to transfer more than the maximum allowable percentage of required credit, describe the comprehensive assessment of credits earned that the institution conducts and how it documents that credits align with its program outcomes.  
     
     
   1. Master’s Degrees

The institution may award a maximum of 50 percent of the credits required for a master’s degree program through transfer credit. Courses accepted for transfer credit are relevant to the program of study and equivalent in both content and degree level. Credit awarded for experiential or equivalent learning cannot exceed 25 percent of the credits required for a master’s degree.

1. State the maximum percentage of credits that are accepted for transfer into master’s degree programs.
2. State the maximum percentage of experiential or equivalent credits that are accepted into master’s degree programs.
3. If the institution allows students to seek to transfer more than the maximum allowable percentage of required credit, describe the comprehensive assessment of credits earned that the institution conducts and how it documents that credits align with its program outcomes.  
   1. First Professional Degrees

The institution may award a maximum of 50 percent of the credits required for a first professional degree program through transfer credit. Courses accepted for transfer credit are relevant to the program of study and equivalent in both content and degree level.

1. State the maximum percentage of credits that are accepted for transfer into first professional degree programs.
2. If the institution allows students to seek to transfer more than the maximum allowable percentage of required credit, describe the comprehensive assessment of credits earned that the institution conducts and how it documents that credits align with its program outcomes.  
     
     
   1. Professional Doctoral Degrees

The institution may award a maximum of 15 percent of the credits required for a professional doctoral degree program (or nine semester credit hours for a 60 semester credit hour degree program) through transfer credit. Courses accepted for transfer credit are relevant to the program of study and equivalent in both content and degree level.

1. State the maximum percentage of credits that are accepted for transfer into professional doctoral degree programs.
2. If the institution allows students to seek to transfer more than the maximum allowable percentage of required credit, describe the comprehensive assessment of credits earned that the institution conducts and how it documents that credits align with its program outcomes.
3. **Enrollment Agreements:** The institution’s enrollment agreements/documents clearly identify the educational offering and assure that each applicant is fully informed of the rights, responsibilities, and obligations of both the student and the institution prior to applicant signature. The institution complies with the DEAC Enrollment Agreements Disclosures Checklist.
4. Describe how the enrollment agreements or other similar contractual documents clearly identify the educational offerings. [EXHIBIT 34: Enrollment Agreement(s)].
5. Describe how the institution’s enrollment agreements or other similar contractual documents verify that each applicant is fully informed of the rights, responsibilities, and obligations of both the student and the institution prior to the applicant’s signature.
6. Certify that the institution complies with the DEAC enrollment agreement disclosures checklist. [EXHIBIT 34: DEAC Enrollment Agreement Disclosures Checklist]  
     
     
   1. The institution requires that, prior to accepting the enrollment agreement, students affirm and accept the tuition refund policy and the rights, responsibilities, and obligations of both the student and the institution. The terms of the tuition refund policy are published in the institution’s enrollment agreement, catalog, and website.
7. Describe how the institution requires students to affirm and accept the tuition refund policy prior to accepting the enrollment agreement.
8. Describe how the institution discloses the rights, responsibilities, and obligations of both the student and the institution prior to accepting the enrollment agreement.   
     
     
   1. An enrollment agreement is not binding until it has been submitted by the student and accepted by the institution. A copy of the accepted enrollment agreement is made available to the student within 10 days of acceptance and maintained as a part of the student’s record.
9. Describe the institution’s process for accepting and processing enrollment agreements.
10. Certify that the institution provides students with a copy of the accepted enrollment agreement within 10 days of acceptance.
11. Describe how the enrollment agreement is maintained as part of the student’s record.   
      
      
    1. The institution complies with the applicable Truth in Lending Act (TILA) requirements, including those under Regulation Z, and state requirements for retail installment agreements.
12. Describe how the institution complies with applicable Truth in Lending Act (TILA) requirements, including those under Regulation Z, and state requirements for retail installment agreements.
13. Identify the individual responsible for verifying compliance with all Truth in Lending (TILA) requirements.
14. Describe how the responsible individual remains up to date on Truth in Lending requirements.   
      
      
    1. All required state and Truth in Lending Act disclosures are included in the enrollment agreement. Requirements for type size, notice to buyer, and computation examples, as applicable, are observed.
15. Demonstrate that all required state and Truth in Lending Act disclosures are published on the enrollment agreement and provide the Truth in Lending disclosure language published on the enrollment agreement.
16. Describe how the publication of these disclosures meets requirements for type size, notice to buyer, and computation examples as applicable.

* 1. If there is a separate payment contract, the contract is incorporated in the enrollment agreement.

1. Describe how the institution ensures that any separate payment contract is incorporated in the enrollment agreement. [EXHIBIT 34: Payment Contracts or Documentation]

Standard IX: Financial Disclosures, Cancellations, and Refund Policies

Contact Person: Name and Title of Contact Person

1. **Financial Disclosures:** All costs relative to the education provided by the institution are disclosed to the prospective student [in an enrollment agreement or similar contractual document] before enrollment. Costs must include tuition, educational services, textbooks, and instructional materials; any specific fees associated with enrollment, such as application and registration fees; and fees for required services such as student authentication, proctoring, technology access, and library services.
2. Describe how the institution discloses to prospective students prior to enrollment all costs associated with the education provided.
3. Demonstrate that all costs associated with the education provided include tuition, educational services, textbooks, instructional materials, and application, registration, authentication, proctoring, technology access, and library services fees.   
     
   1. The costs for optional services, such as expedited shipment of materials, experiential portfolio assessment, or other special services, such as dissertation binding, are clearly disclosed to prospective students as not subject to refund after the five (5)-calendar- day student right to cancel enrollment.
4. Describe how costs for optional services, such as expedited shipment, experiential portfolio assessment, or other special services, are clearly disclosed to prospective students prior to enrollment.
5. Describe how the institution clearly discloses to prospective students that costs for optional services are not subject to refund after the five (5)-calendar-day student right to cancel enrollment.

* 1. The institution’s disclosure of its refund policy must include a sample refund calculation that describes the calculation methodology using clear and conspicuous language. Student acknowledgement of the refund policy is obtained and documented in the enrollment agreement or similar contractual document prior to enrollment.

1. Describe the institution’s refund policy and how the calculation methodology uses clear and conspicuous language.
2. Provide the published sample refund calculation.
3. Describe how the institution obtains applicants’ acknowledgement of the refund policy that is documented on the enrollment agreement or similar contractual document prior to enrollment.
4. **Cancellations** 
   1. Institutions must maintain, publish, and apply fair and equitable cancellation and withdrawal policies. A student’s notification of cancellation may be conveyed to the institution in any manner the institution deems appropriate so long as the method or methods chosen
      1. are in compliance with applicable federal and state requirements and
      2. do not create unreasonably difficult requirements for the student to satisfy.

Institutions must designate the manner in which students may submit cancellation or withdrawal notification and the individual, office, or offices to whom students may submit notice of official cancellation or withdrawal.

1. Describe the institution’s cancellation and withdrawal policies.
2. Describe how students are required to convey their cancellation or withdrawal to the institution, and identify the individual, office, or offices to whom students may submit their notification.
3. Describe how the institution’s required method of cancellation/withdrawal notification is in compliance with applicable federal and state requirements.
4. Describe how the institution’s required method of cancellation/withdrawal notification is not unreasonably difficult for students to satisfy.
   1. A student has five (5) calendar days after signing an enrollment agreement or similar contractual document to cancel enrollment and receive a full refund of all monies paid to the institution.
      1. Describe whether students have a minimum of five (5) calendar days after signing an enrollment agreement or similar contractual document to cancel enrollment and receive a full refund of all monies paid to the institution.
   2. A student requesting cancellation more than five calendar days after signing an enrollment agreement, but prior to beginning a course or program is entitled to a refund of all monies paid minus:   
      * + An application/transfer credit evaluation fee of up to $75 and
        + A one-time registration fee per program of no more than 20% of the tuition and not to exceed more than $200.
        + Library services fee, if provided by a third-party service (e.g., LIRN, Westlaw, ProQuest, EBSCO)
5. Certify that students who cancel more than five calendar days after signing an enrollment agreement, but prior to beginning a course or program are entitled to a refund of all monies paid minus an application fee, one-time registration fee, and third party library services fee.

* 1. Upon cancellation, a student whose costs for education are paid in full, but who is not eligible for a refund, is entitled to receive all materials, including kits and equipment.

1. Certify whether students who cancel after paying in full, but are not eligible for a refund, receive all materials, kits, and equipment, as applicable.   
     
     
   1. If promissory notes or enrollment agreements are sold to third parties, the institution ensures that it and any third parties comply with DEAC cancellation policies.
2. Describe how the institution ensures compliance with DEAC cancellation policies if promissory notes or enrollment agreements are sold to third parties.
3. **Refunds:** Each institution must have and implement a fair and equitable refund policy in compliance with state requirements or, in the absence of such requirements, in accordance with DEAC’s refund policy standards below and disclosed in the enrollment agreement or similar contractual document.

Any money due a student must be refunded within 30 days of a final determination of withdrawal, regardless of whether materials have been returned.

1. Describe how the institution implements a fair and equitable refund policy in compliance with state requirements or, in the absence of such requirements, in accordance with DEAC’s refund policy standards.

1. Provide a link to the institution’s refund policy.   
     
   For this response: Insert Link
2. Describe the process the institution follows for refunding students’ tuition after cancellation, withdrawal, or course drop requests are received.
3. Provide the following information for refunds made in the last 12 months. [EXHIBIT 34: Table of Refunds]

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Student Name | Program | Start Date | Withdrawal/Drop Date | Refund Amount | Date Paid |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |

* 1. **Flexible Time Schedule Refund Policy:** An institution that implements the flexible time schedule refund policy must clearly disclose the curriculum benchmarks in terms of assignments submitted for grading that indicate completion at 10 percent, 25 percent, and 50 percent intervals.

When a student cancels after completing at least one lesson assignment but less than 50 percent of the graded assignments, the institution may retain the application fee and one-time registration fee of no more than 20 percent of the tuition (not to exceed $200) and library service fees, plus a percentage of tuition paid by the student, in accordance with the published schedule.

1. If using a flexible time schedule refund policy, describe the curriculum benchmarks the institution uses to indicate completion at 10 percent, 25 percent and 50 percent intervals.
2. Provide an example of a refund calculation processed in the last calendar year based on the flexible time schedule refund policy.   
     
   1. **Time-Based Term Refund Policy:** A time-based term last no more than 16 weeks.

A time-based term refund policy may be applied to any course, program, or degree. Institutions that utilize the time-based term refund policy must refund 100 percent of the tuition for any course never started. Institutions that implement the time-based term refund policy must clearly disclose the time-based refund schedule on the enrollment agreement.

When enrolling students in an academic program of study comprised of two or more courses that award semester credit hours, institutions must treat each course separately for the purposes of calculating the appropriate amount of tuition refund owed to the student.

When a student cancels enrollment, the institution may retain the application fee and a one-time registration fee of no more than 20 percent of the tuition (not to exceed $200) and library service fees, plus a percentage of tuition paid by the student, in accordance with the published refund schedule.

1. Provide an example of a refund calculation processed in the last calendar year based on the time-based term refund policy.

* 1. **Refund Policy for In-Residence Courses/Programs:** For a course/program that includes mandatory in-residence training, the costs for the distance study portion and the costs for the in-residence portion must be separately stated in the enrollment agreement.

The distance study portion of the combination course/program must use the refund policy stated in Section IX(C)(1) or Section IX(C)(2). If the mandatory in-residence portion of the course/program is more than six weeks, the institution may use the time-based refund policy in Section IX(C)(2). If the in-residence portion is less than six weeks, the institution may use the flexible time schedule refund policy in IX(C)(1).

If a student requests cancellation after attending the first in-residence class session, the institution may retain the application fee and a one-time registration fee of no more than 20 percent of the tuition, not to exceed $200, and library service fees, plus a percentage of tuition paid by the student in accordance with the published refund schedule.

1. If the institution conducts no in-residence program activities, state “Not Applicable.” If the institution conducts in-residence program activities, state “See In-Residence Program Companion Template.”
2. **Discounts:** Discounted costs are permitted for well-defined groups for specific and bona fide purposes.

Discounted costs must indicate the actual reduction in the costs that would otherwise be charged by the institution. Institutions that offer discounts must demonstrate that students are enrolled in non-discounted courses or programs for a reasonably substantial period of time during each calendar year. An institution offering discounts must calculate refunds based on discounted costs.

An institution that offers discounts must demonstrate that:

* + - * All discounts or special offers identify the specific costs for a course or program.
      * The presentation of discounts and special offers complies with DEAC’s advertising and promotion standards.
      * All discounts (excluding those offered to well-defined groups) or special offers designate a specific expiration date and do not extend beyond the expiration date.

1. Describe any discounts the institution offers.
2. Describe how the institution identifies well-defined groups that receive discounts.
3. Describe the purpose for offering well-defined groups a discount.
4. Describe how information on discounts is published in the institution’s advertising and marketing materials, including the catalog and website.

1. Describe how students are enrolled in non-discounted courses or programs for a reasonably substantial period of time during each calendar year.
2. Describe how the institution calculates refunds based on discounted costs.
3. **Collections:** Collection procedures used by the institution or third parties reflect sound and ethical business practices. Tuition collection practices and procedures are fair, encourage students’ progress, and seek to retain their good will. Collection practices consider the rights and interests of the students and the institution.
4. Describe the institution’s collection procedures.
5. Describe how the institution’s collection practices reflect sound and ethical business practices.
6. Describe how the institution conducts fair tuition collection practices that continue to encourage students’ progress and seek to retain their good will.
7. Describe how collection practices consider the rights and interests of the students and the institution.

Standard X: Institutional Governance

Contact Person: Name and Title of Contact Person

1. **Owners, Governing Board Members, Officials, and Administrators:** The institution’s owners, governing board members, officials, and administrators possess appropriate qualifications and experience for their positions and ability to oversee institutional operations. The owners, governing board members, officials, and administrators are knowledgeable and experienced in one or more aspects of educational administration, finance, teaching/learning, and distance study. The institution’s policies clearly delineate the duties and responsibilities of owners, governing board members, officials, and administrators. Individuals in leadership and managerial positions are qualified by education and experience.
2. Provide the following information for the owner(s), governing board members, chief executive officer, and top institution administrators in EXHIBIT 35: Table of Qualifying Professional Experience using the chart below.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Name | Title | Length of Term | Academic Credentials | Qualifying Professional Experience |
|  |  |  |  |  |

1. Describe how the owner(s), governing board members, chief executive officer, and top institution administrators are knowledgeable and experienced in educational administration. [EXHIBIT 35: Owners, Governing Board Members, CEO, and Administrator Résumés]
2. Describe how the owner(s), governing board members, chief executive officer, and top institution administrators are knowledgeable and experienced to ensure quality regarding:

* Financial practices necessary to ensure institutional stability.
* Teaching and learning.
* Educational offerings delivered via distance education.

1. Describe the institution’s processes and policies that clearly delineate the duties and responsibilities of the owner(s), governing board members, chief executive officer, and top institution administrators. [EXHIBIT 35: Owners, Governing Board Members, CEO, and Top Administrator Job Descriptions]
2. Describe how the institution verifies that all individuals in leadership and managerial positions are qualified by education and experience.
3. Describe how the owner(s), governing board members, chief executive officer, and top institution administrators remain current within the disciplines offered and educational community.
4. **Reputation of Institution, Owners, Governing Board Members, Officials, and Administrators:** The institution and its owners, governing board members, officials, and administrators possess sound reputations a record of integrity and ethical conduct in their professional activities, business operations, and relations. The institution must promptly notify DEAC of any investigative, enforcement, legal or prosecutorial actions which may be initiated or which are current against the institution, its owners, governing board members, officials and administrators. Such notification shall include an explanation of the circumstances giving rise to such actions and the institution’s response to the same as well as its explanation of why such actions should not be deemed a concern with respect to the integrity of the named persons or institutions.
5. Describe how the owner(s), governing board members, chief executive officer, and top institution administrators possess sound reputations and records of integrity.
6. Describe how the owner(s), governing board members, chief executive officer, and top institution administrators practice ethical conduct in their professional activities, business operations, and business relations.
7. State whether or not any owner(s), governing board members, chief executive officer, or top institution administrators have been debarred by federal or state authorities from participating in any funding programs.
8. Certify that the institution will promptly notify DEAC of any investigative, enforcement, legal or prosecutorial actions which may be initiated against the institution, its owners, governing board members, officials and administrators and that such notification shall include an explanation of the circumstances giving rise to such actions and the institution’s response to the same as well as its explanation of why such actions should not be deemed a concern with respect to the integrity of the named persons or institutions.
9. **Succession Plan:** The institution has written plans that describe the process that it follows in the event a leadership succession is necessary. The plan identifies specific people, committees, or boards responsible to carry on the operation of the institution during the transition period. The plan includes a business continuity structure that the institution can implement immediately. The institution reviews and revises the plan on an annual basis.
10. Describe the institution’s succession plan, including what events would initiate a succession of leadership. [EXHIBIT 36: Succession Plan]
11. Identify the leadership, administrators, staff, committees, or boards responsible for carrying on the institution’s operations during the transition period.
12. Describe the institution’s business continuity structure that ensures that students’ education and services are not disrupted during this transition period.
13. Describe how the business continuity procedures are structured for immediate implementation, as necessary.
14. Describe how often the plan is reviewed and revised.
15. Describe the individuals involved in reviewing and revising the succession plan.

Standard XI: Financial Responsibility

Contact Person: Name and Title of Contact Person

1. **Financial Practices:** The institution shows it is financially responsible by providing complete, comparative financial statements covering its two most recent fiscal years and by demonstrating that it has sufficient resources to meet its financial obligations to provide quality instruction and service to its students. Financial statements are audited or reviewed and prepared in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles in the United States of America or International Financial Reporting Standards. The institution’s budgeting processes demonstrate that current and future budgeted operating results are sufficient to allow the institution to accomplish its mission and goals.
2. Describe how the institution demonstrates financial responsibility. [EXHIBIT 37: Audited Comparative or Reviewed Comparative Financial Statements] [EXHIBIT 37: Letter of Financial Statement Validation]
3. Describe how the institution maintains sufficient resources to meet its financial obligations and provide quality educational offerings and service to students.
4. Describe how and how often the institution’s financial statements are audited or reviewed.
5. Describe whether the institution’s financial statements are prepared in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles in the United States of America or International Financial Reporting Standards.
6. Describe the institution’s budgeting processes. [EXHIBIT 37: Last Fiscal/Calendar Year Budget]
7. Identify the individuals involved in and responsible for the institution’s budget.
8. Describe how the budgeting process documents and verifies that current and future operating results are sufficient to allow the institution to accomplish its mission and goals.
9. Describe how the institution is profitable. For non-profits, describe how the institution has an excess of revenues over costs.
10. If the institution is not profitable, describe the institution’s strategic initiatives implemented to achieve a positive operating result sufficient to fund future operations.
11. Describe how the institution is committed to fulfilling all obligations to students in the event a teach-out is required. [EXHIBIT 38: Teach-Out Commitment]
12. Describe how the institution’s current assets are sufficient to meet current liabilities.
13. Describe how the institution uses cost control and analysis systems to verify that it maintains sufficient current assets to fund a teach-out of students.
14. State whether or not the institution or any owner(s) or governing board members ever declared bankruptcy.
15. If a sole proprietorship or partnership, state whether or not the owner(s), governing board members, chief executive officer, or top institution administrators have ever declared bankruptcy.
16. Describe how the institution maintains reserves for honoring future service obligations, bad debts, and refunds.
17. **Financial Management:** Individuals overseeing the fiscal and budgeting processes are qualified by education and experience. The institution employs adequate administrative staff for effective operations, and at least one person is qualified and able to prepare accurate financial reports in a timely manner. Internal auditing trails and controls are in place to assure that finances are properly managed, monitored, and protected. Adequate safeguards prevent unauthorized access to online and on-site financial information.
18. Describe how the individuals responsible for preparing the institution’s financial reports and budgets are qualified by education and experience.
19. Describe how often financial reports and budgets are prepared. [EXHIBIT 37: Financial Reports]
20. Describe who at the institution, whether internally or a third party, is responsible for reviewing and approving financial reports and budgets.
21. State whether or not bonding or insurance is required to insure against fraudulent conduct.
22. Describe the institution’s internal auditing and control processes to verify that finances are properly managed, monitored, and protected.
23. Describe how the institution protects online and on-site financial data from unauthorized access.
24. Describe how the institution takes proactive steps to protect student and financial information from unauthorized access or threats.
25. Describe how the accounts payable (numbers, amounts, and age) reflect sound financial responsibility and management.
26. Describe how the institution maintains adequate inventories of course or instructional materials for current and future students.
27. Describe the institution’s insurance coverage.
28. Provide a list of any significant insurance claims made in the past three to five years.
29. **Financial Stability and Sustainability:** The institution maintains adequate administrative staff and other resources to operate effectively as a going concern and is not exposed to undue or insurmountable risk. Any risk that exists is adequately monitored, manageable, and insured. In the event the financial operations of the institution are supported by a parent company or a third party, audited or reviewed financial statements are provided by the supporting entity to demonstrate that the supporting entity possesses sufficient financial resources to provide the institution continued financial sustainability, as well as the commitment to do so. If the institution’s financial performance is included within the parent corporation’s statements, a supplemental schedule for the individual institution is appended to the parent statement.
30. Describe how the institution employs administrative staff qualified by education and experience to ensure that it can operate effectively as a going concern and is not exposed to undue or insurmountable risk.
31. Describe how identified risks are monitored, managed, and insured.
32. Describe whether or not the institution is supported by a parent company or third party.
33. If the institution is supported by a parent company or third party, describe the supporting entity’s level of administrative and financial involvement. [EXHIBIT 39: Audited or Reviewed Financial Statements of the Supporting Entity]
34. Describe the parent company or third party’s commitment to supporting the entity. [EXHIBIT 39: Parent Company or Third Party Financial Commitment Letter]
35. Describe how the parent company or third party possesses sufficient financial resources and commitment to provide the institution continued financial sustainability.
36. If the institution’s financial performance is included within the parent corporation’s statements, provide a supplemental schedule disclosing the individual institution’s financial status. [EXHIBIT 39: Supplemental Schedule – Institution’s Financial Status]
37. **Financial Reporting:** Financial statements are prepared in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles in the United States of America, often referred to as “GAAP,” including the accrual method of accounting. An independent certified public accountant’s (CPA) audit or review report accompanies these statements.
38. State whether the institution’s financial statements are prepared in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles in the United States of America (i.e., GAAP). [EXHIBIT 40: Opinion Letters]
39. State whether the institution uses the accrual method of accounting.
40. Describe the qualifications and experience of the institution’s independent auditing firm.
41. State whether the independent auditor identified any deviations while conducting the institution’s audit.
42. Describe how the institution is addressing and resolving any identified challenges, anomalies, or threats. [EXHIBIT 40: Plan for Addressing Auditor Concerns]
43. Explain how the institution would continue operations if it received a going concern or liquidity footnote opinion from the independent auditing firm.
44. If a going concern or liquidity uncertainty is resolved through continued shareholder support, explain why the independent auditing firm did not accept the support as sufficient to avoid the going concern opinion or liquidity note.   
      
      
    1. The institution’s financial statements reflect sufficient liquid assets to provide for a staff and faculty.
45. Describe whether the institution’s financial statements reflect sufficient liquid assets to provide for staff and faculty.   
      
      
    1. Annually, the institution has the option of submitting one of these two types of financial statements, unless the Commission directs the institution to submit audited financial statements:
       * + Audited comparative financial statements containing an audit opinion by an independent certified public accountant in accordance with standards established by the American Institution of Certified Public Accountants, or
         + Reviewed comparative financial statements containing a review report by an independent certified public accountant in accordance with standards established by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants.

When circumstances raise a concern as to the financial soundness and stability of an institution, the Commission may, in its discretion, require that the institution deliver within a specified period of time (as reasonably determined by the Commission taking into account, for example, the exigency of the concerns and the size of the institution), audited comparative financial statements or such other financial documentation as the Commission may determine will provide information as to the institution’s financial health and status.

1. Certify that the institution provided either audited or reviewed comparative financial statements in accordance with the above definitions in EXHIBIT 37: Audited or Reviewed Comparative Financial Statements.
2. Certify that the institution understands that the Commission may, in its discretion, require that the institution deliver audited comparative financial statements or such other financial documentation as determined necessary, when circumstances raise question as to the institution’s financial soundness and stability.   
     
   1. Financial statements submitted must include the institution’s fiscal statement for the two most recent fiscal years prepared on a comparative basis or a date specified by the Commission, the CPA’s opinion letter or review report, and a letter of financial statement validation.
3. Certify that the institution submitted its most recent fiscal year end audited or reviewed comparative financial statements, opinion letter or review report, and letter of financial statement validation.
4. **Demonstrated Operations:** In all respects, the institution documents continuous sound and ethical operations, including the necessary resources to accommodate demand and assure that all learners receive a quality educational experience. The institution’s name is free from any association with activity that could damage the reputation of the DEAC accrediting process, such as illegal actions, fraud, unethical conduct, or abuse of consumers.
5. Describe how the institution maintains continuous sound and ethical operations.
6. Describe how the institution provides the resources necessary to accommodate student demand and ensure that all learners receive a quality distance education experience.
7. State whether the institution is free from any association with activity that could damage the standing of the accrediting process (e.g., illegal actions, unethical conduct, or abuse of consumers).

Standard XII: Facilities, Equipment, Supplies, Record Protection and Retention

Contact Person: Name and Title of Contact Person

1. **Facilities, Equipment, and Supplies:** The institution maintains sufficient facilities, equipment, and supplies to achieve its mission and values and support its educational offerings and future operations. A written plan outlines the maintenance and upgrade of facilities, equipment, and supplies and includes a disaster response and recovery plan. The plan states the resources that are budgeted to support its goals. Buildings, workspace, and equipment comply with local fire, building, health, and safety regulations and are appropriately equipped to handle the educational program(s) of the institution.
2. Describe how the institution’s facilities, equipment, and supplies promote the achievement of its mission and values. [EXHIBIT 41: Floor Plan]
3. Describe how the institution’s facilities, equipment, and supplies support its educational offerings and future operations.
4. Describe the institution’s plan for the maintenance and upgrade of its facilities, equipment, and supplies. [EXHIBIT 41: Facilities, Equipment, and Supplies Maintenance Plan]
5. Describe the institution’s disaster response and recovery procedures based on its geographical location(s).
6. Describe how the institution verifies that there are adequate financial resources and budgets to maintain and upgrade its facilities and equipment.
7. Describe how the technical infrastructure is adequate to provide timely delivery of distance education and support services and to accommodate future student enrollment growth.
8. Describe how the institution’s building, workspace, and equipment comply with local fire, building, health, and safety regulations. [EXHIBIT 41: Fire, Health, and Occupancy Inspection Licenses]
9. Describe the type of professional liability, property, and general liability insurance held by the institution, and provide a copy of the Certificate of Liability Insurance. [EXHIBIT 41: Certificate of Liability Insurance]
10. **In-Residence Program Component:** The institution provides appropriate training facilities for students participating in in-residence training and information on housing, as applicable. The facilities are in compliance with all state and federal requirements. The institution maintains adequate insurance to protect students, faculty, and staff while participating in in-residence training.
11. If the institution conducts no in-residence program activities, state “Not Applicable.” If the institution conducts in-residence program activities, state “See In-Residence Program Companion Template.”
12. **Record Protection:** The institution’s financial, administrative, and student educational records are maintained in a reasonably accessible place and are adequately protected in accordance with applicable federal and state laws.
13. Describe the institution’s procedures for maintaining financial, administrative, and student records.
14. Describe how the institution takes proactive steps to protect financial, administrative, and student information from unauthorized access or threats.
15. Describe how record maintenance and protection procedures comply with applicable federal and state laws.
16. Describe how physical records are secured on site.
17. Describe how digital records are secured and backed up to minimize data loss.   
      
      
    1. If maintaining documents electronically, the institution provides audit records to verify that the images were properly created and validated.
18. Describe the institution’s process for properly creating and validating digital records.   
      
      
    1. If an institution accepts digitally signed transcripts or electronically transferred verified data from an outside source, the institution documents the outside source using a system that provides registration and verification of participants, protocols for securely sending and receiving files, logging of file transmissions, and electronic notification. The outside source complies with all applicable laws and regulations governing the activities and services provided, including FERPA and other laws concerning the privacy and confidentiality of information and records.
19. Describe the institution’s process for accepting digital signatures on electronically processed documents (e.g., official transcripts, enrollment agreements).
20. Describe how the institution ensures students that all transmitted information is adequately protected and in compliance with FERPA and other laws concerning privacy and confidentiality of student data.
21. **Record Retention:** The institution’s financial, administrative, and student educational records are retained in accordance with applicable federal and state laws. The institution implements a comprehensive document retention policy.
22. Describe the institution’s process for retaining financial, administrative, and student records in accordance with applicable federal and state laws.
23. State how long financial records are maintained.
24. State how long administrative records are maintained.
25. State how long student records are maintained.
26. Describe the institution’s comprehensive document retention policy.
27. Identify the individual responsible for ensuring the proper retention of financial, administrative, and student records.
28. Describe how often records are internally audited for compliance with all applicable federal and state laws.
29. **State Authorization:** 
    1. The institution is properly licensed, authorized, exempted, or approved by all applicable state education institutional authorizations (or their equivalent for non-U.S. institutions).
30. Describe how the institution is properly licensed, authorized, exempted, or approved by all applicable state education institutional authorizations (or their non-U.S. institutional equivalent). [EXHIBIT 3: DEAC State Authorization Form], [EXHIBIT 3: State Licensure and Authorization and Other Accreditation Documents]
    1. Exemptions from state law are supported by state-issued documentation or in statutory language for that state.
31. Describe any exemptions from state law the institution has determined and the state-issued documentation or statutory language used to determine its exemption.

# DEAC Helpful Guidance Documents

Below are some helpful guidance documents that DEAC member institutions, external reviewers, and staff have compiled over the years. These are intended to be suggestions that institutions can use when developing documents or in meeting DEAC requirements. Institutions are encouraged to use these documents as samples when creating processes and procedures that meet each unique institution’s needs. Institutions are not required to follow these suggestions or formats, and the extent to which accreditation standards are met will not be based on these samples.

### **EXHIBIT 6: Institutional Effectiveness and Strategic Plan**

#### Background

Some may ask, “Isn’t institutional effectiveness and strategic planning the same thing?” While they are complementary and related, ongoing assessment of institutional effectiveness and strategic planning are different.

Institutional effectiveness is an ongoing, cyclical process by which the institution assesses its administrative operations, support services, educational offerings, and facilities by gathering, analyzing, and using data on these areas to determine how well it is accomplishing its mission, goals, and outcomes against defined benchmarks. This assessment process is used to inform decisions and continuous improvements efforts based on assessment results. Institutional effectiveness is a comprehensive roadmap used to measure continuous improvement at the institutional level. Outcomes assessment also contributes to this process by measuring course/program level effectiveness through students’ achievement of learning outcomes. Data and results gathered from the institutional effectiveness assessment process are used to inform strategic planning that is monitored annually and reviewed and revised during regular intervals.

Strategic planning, on the other hand, is the integrated planning that links the mission, priorities, people, and institutional operations in a flexible system of evaluation, decision-making, and action. Strategic planning shapes and guides the entire institution as it evolves over time and within its educational community. Strategic planning is critical to an institution’s success, and even long-term survival, within higher education. As the competition in distance education continues to increase, it is important that institutions participate in a dynamic and continuous strategic planning process. The strategic planning process provides institutions with the structure needed to achieve their mission while identifying and committing the resources necessary to achieve strategic initiatives. The process allows institutions to objectively evaluate and plan for challenges and threats while maximizing opportunities and enhancing strengths.

Institutions do not need to produce two plans, but they should demonstrate that institutional effectiveness efforts and data inform the strategic plan.

#### Characteristics of an Effective Strategic Plan

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Institution’s Strategic Plan Elements** | **Description of Elements** |
| **Executive Summary** |  |
| Mission | Why your institution was established. [Why] |
| Vision | Future-oriented direction. [Where] |
| Goals | Indicators of future-oriented direction. [Steps] |
| Strategies | Statements of the method of achievement. [How] |
| Outcomes | Indicators of successful achievement. |
| **Strategies** |  |
| Review Mission | Time to review mission based on previous strategic planning cycle data and results. |
| SWOT | Internal indicators: strengths and weaknesses  External indicators: opportunities and threats |
| Strategic Analysis | Self-examination on enhancing strengths, eliminating weaknesses, maximizing opportunities, and protecting against threats. |
| Strategic Programs | Proposed solutions and methods of execution. |
| Action Plans | Detailed steps for implementing solutions and achieving results. |
| Operating Plan | Overall plan for achieving strategic planning initiatives. |
| Budget | Overall budget to ensure available resources for achieving strategic planning initiatives. |
| Personnel | Identifying individuals responsible for overseeing the achievement of strategic initiatives. |
| Monitoring | Identifying the timeline for achieving strategic initiatives. |
| **Future Plans** |  |
| Goals | Identifying future projects and initiatives for continued growth. |
| **Reporting Results** |  |
| Reports | Identifying the reports necessary to track strategic initiatives and provide relevant data to inform decisions. |
| Committees | Identifying relevant stakeholders necessary for internal and external feedback on achievement of strategic initiatives. |
| **Addenda** |  |
| Supporting Documentation | Data, budgets, charts, feedback, and other documentation that supports the identified strategic planning efforts. |

### EXHIBIT 9: Curriculum Development Manual

#### Background

A curriculum development manual is a structured document that communicates the institution’s mission, goals, outcomes, learning experiences, instructional resources, and assessments that constitute a specific academic program. The manual represents an articulation of what the institution has identified that students should know and be able to demonstrate and supports faculty/instructors in achieving these goals through sound curriculum development principles.

#### Characteristics of an Effective Curriculum Development Manual

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Institution’s Curriculum Development Manual Elements** | **Description of Elements** |
| **Background** |  |
| Mission | Why your institution was established. [Why] |
| Vision | Future-oriented direction. [Where] |
| Purpose | Describes the organizational structure of the institution’s educational offerings. |
| Program Outcomes | Indicators of successful achievement. |
| Target Student Population | Describes the typical student the institution serves based on its educational offerings. |
| Documenting Clock/Credit Hours | Examples and rationale for assigning clock/credit hours. Documentation for each course/program for credit hours, hours of study, average time a student takes to complete each course and program. |
| **Curriculum Design** |  |
| Designing a Course | Course outlines, name of course, identifying course numbers, prerequisite courses, outcomes, course materials, format, grading, and creating outcomes. |
| **Course Materials** |  |
| Course Approval | Process for obtaining appropriate internal and external approvals. |
| Course Syllabus | Description of faculty/instructor’s plans for achieving program/course outcomes, recommended resources and instructional materials, course policies, faculty/instructor contact information, study schedule, office hours, etc. |
| Textbooks and Other Instructional Materials | Title, author, ISBN, publisher, date, costs, etc. |
| Reading Assignments | Average amount of required reading, estimated time per assignment. |
| Reading Level and Clarity | Microsoft Word reading level option |
| Comprehension Quizzes | Multiple-choice or true/false |
| Other Assignments and Projects | Short essays, team projects, etc. |
| Grading Assignments | Grading rubrics |
| Journaling | How often, length, other requirements, etc. |
| Examinations | How to create exams, types of questions, length of exams, posting new courses. |
| Research Papers | Formatting requirements, length, footnoting, etc. |
| Learning Resources | Library services, audio and video tools, webinars, PowerPoint presentations, etc. |
| Keeping Curriculum Current | Revision schedule and correction information. |
| Course Modules | Individual courses constitute a degree program. Each module contains an overview of outcomes, list of reading assignments, comprehensive quizzes, accessing quizzes, exercises and projects, and exams. |
| **Appendices** |  |
|  | Syllabus Examples  Course Module Template  How to Take a Course at Our Institution  Academic Freedom Policy  Intellectual Property Policy |

**Notes on Academic Rigor**

A well-designed, rigorous curriculum:

1. Requires students to synthesize and apply course ideas.

2. Reflects views and content that are relevant to current thought and practice.

3. Provides a platform for students to demonstrate mastery of knowledge and engagement in scholarship.

4. Requires students to take active responsibility for learning.

5. Utilizes Bloom’s Taxonomy or other hierarchical model to classify educational learning objectives into measurable, progressively higher levels of complexity and specificity.

The academic rigor of a curriculum is expected to reflect the standards set by the discipline as well as those the comparable programs offered for Standard III.B.5 and in Exhibit 7: Program Comparisons.

Evidence of academic rigor may include assessment reports, program reviews, or input from the institution’s advisory council. At the course level, evidence should include a combination of examples from the following: learning objectives, course assignments, exams, and/or descriptions of student learning activities.

Highly effective institutions undertake a regularly scheduled curricular review process to ensure an appropriate level of rigor and relevance of curricula at each level and to review curriculum mapping of each course to program objectives and institutional objectives. For example, many institutions use a numbering system as follows wherein rigor increases with each numbered level. Levels 100 to 400 typically indicate undergraduate courses while 500 and above indicates graduate courses (master’s, first professional, and doctoral):

100 Level: Courses at the 100 level prepare students for academic success by developing foundational knowledge and skills.

200 Level: Courses at the 200 level require students to develop connections between concepts both within their field and between disciplines, expand on ideas central to the discipline, and enrich a student's perspective of the world.

300 Level: Courses at the 300 level expose students to specialized concepts and techniques central to the discipline. Students apply knowledge and skills previously learned to unfamiliar topics and problems. Students engage in the craft in a supervised or guided manner.

400 Level: Courses at the 400 level require students to synthesize advanced knowledge and master skills in the discipline and/or guide students to independent production and engagement in the craft.

500 Level: Courses at the 500 level require students to synthesize advanced scholarly knowledge and master skills in the discipline at the graduate level with independent production and engagement in the craft or discipline.

600 Level: Courses at the 600 level require students to study, master, and synthesize advanced scholarly knowledge and theoretical concepts.

700 Level and above: Courses at the 700 level and above require students to employ advanced or specialized knowledge and theoretical concepts in scholarly and/or professional settings.

### EXHIBIT 10: Clock/Credit Hour Policy

#### Background

DEAC conducts an effective review and evaluation of the reliability and accuracy of an institution’s assignment of academic credit hours. As part of its review, DEAC evaluators examine an institution’s policies and procedures for determining the clock/credit hours it awards for its courses and programs, including how the institution applies its policies and procedures to programs and coursework. Evaluators make a reasonable determination of whether the institution’s assignment of academic clock/credit hours conforms to commonly accepted best practices in education.

DEAC’s subject specialists determine whether the institution has properly assigned academic clock/credit hours to its courses/programs. The educational evaluator verifies this determination by evaluating the clock/credit hour assignment during the on-site visit.

#### Non-Degree Institutions

Institutions must display both credit hours and clock hours if clock-hour designations are required by the state. Therefore, if an institution is required to report courses/programs in clock hours, then the institution must have a policy and procedure for determining and applying the number of clock hours it assigns.

#### Definition of Academic Units of Measurement

DEAC’s definition of academic units of measurement is as follows:

Semester and quarter hours shall be equivalent to the commonly accepted and traditionally defined units of academic measurement in accredited institutions. Academic degree or academic credit-bearing distance learning courses are measured by the learning outcomes normally achieved through 45 hours of student work for one semester credit1 or 30 hours of student work for one quarter credit.2 This formula is typically referred to as a Carnegie unit and is used by the American Council on Education in its Credit Recommendation Evaluative Criteria.

1One credit/semester hour is 15 hours of academic engagement and 30 hours of preparation.

2One quarter hour credit is 10 hours of academic engagement and 20 hours of preparation.

Student work includes direct or indirect faculty instruction. *Academic engagement* may include, but is not limited to, submitting an academic assignment, listening to class lectures or webinars (synchronous or asynchronous), taking an exam, completing an interactive tutorial or computer-assisted instruction, attending a study group that is assigned by the institution, contributing to an academic online discussion, initiating contact with a faculty member to ask a question about the academic subject studied in the course, conducting laboratory work, and completing an externship or internship. *Preparation* is typically homework, such as reading and study time, and completing assignments and projects. Therefore, a three-credit-hour course would require 135 semester hours (45 hours of academic engagement and 90 hours of preparation).

All student work must be documented in the curriculum materials and syllabi, including a reasonable approximation of the time required for the student to complete the assignments. Evaluation of a student’s work must be identified as a grading criterion and weighted appropriately in the determination of a final grade for a course.

#### Documenting Academic Units of Measurement

An institution’s policy on determining credit hours should provide detailed information on how it estimates and documents the number of credit hours for each course. For example, an institution stating that it is using the same “college textbook” that other universities use is not enough to document that the course is worth three credit hours.

The institution must provide concrete evidence that it has provided adequate guidance during the development of a course/program to substantiate the credit hours assigned. The institution should cite other research or studies done in order to document its definitions or formulas for verifying student work.

The following is an example of one way to document the required credit hours for one course. (Note: this hypothetical 10-week course is being presented as three semester hours.)

**Course: English 101** (10 weeks)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Activity** | **Assignments** | **Estimated hours for the average student** |
| Academic Engagement | Listening to or reading course lectures: 25 pages per hour (1 hour per week) | 10 |
| Reading additional website documents: 25 pages per hour (1/2 hour per week) | 5 |
| Audio and video: 22 pages per hour (1/2 hour per week) | 5 |
| Reading discussion forums and making responses (1 hour per week) | 10 |
| Presenting and reading student reports: 1 hour per week | 10 |
| Taking quizzes and exams: .5 hours per week | 5 |
| TOTAL: should be at least 45 hours per semester | 45 |
|  |  |  |
| Preparation (outside of class) | Required textbooks, ordinary reading level: 30 pages per hour | 20 |
| Required textbooks, difficult reading level: 25 pages per hour | - |
| Reaction/reflection papers and book reports: 1 hour per page | 10 |
| Case studies: 1 hour per page | 5 |
| Research papers: 3 hours per page | 15 |
| Study for quizzes and exams: | 20 |
| Project, journaling, or other assignments: | 20 |
| TOTAL: Should be at least 90 hours per semester | 90 |
|  |  |  |
| Overall Total | Should be at least 135 hours for a three-credit course per semester | 135 |

Total Hours per week = 13.5 for 10 weeks.

The average adult reading rate is 250 words per minute with 70 percent comprehension. [Smith, Brenda D. “Breaking Through: College Reading” 7th Ed. Longman, 2004]

Reading for learning (100-200 wpm); reading for comprehension (200-400 wpm); and skimming (400-700 wpm). With an average of 400 words per page, at 200 words per minute a student should read around 30 pages per hour (200 words per minute x 60 = 12,000 words per hour divided by 400 = 30 pages per hour). Therefore, we are using 25-30 pages per hour.

Audiobooks are recommended to be 150-160 words per minute or 22 pages per hour.

Reading on Monitor: 180-200 wpm or 27 pages per hour.

Slide presentations are closer to 100 wpm or 15 pages per hour.

#### Assessing the Appropriateness of Academic Units of Measurement Allocations

DEAC’s subject specialists are asked to use the following when assessing the appropriateness of the credit allocations provided by the institution:

1. Review the institution’s policy and procedure for awarding credit, and consider the following:

* Does the institution’s policy for awarding credit address the amount of instructional or contact time assigned and homework typically expected of a student?
* Does the institution’s policy equate credit hours with intended learning outcomes and student achievement that could be reasonably achieved by a student in the time frame allotted for the course?
* Does the policy comply with DEAC’s definition of credit hour?
* Is the institution’s assignment of credit to courses reflective of its policy on the award of credit?
* Does the institution have any third-party validation of credit hour calculations/recommendations, such as the ACE College Credit Recommendation Service or the National College Credit Recommendation Service?

1. Identify the institution’s principal degree level and the number of credit hours for degrees at each level. The following minimum number of credit hours should apply to the programs (per C.9. Policy on Degree Programs):

* Associate degrees = 60 semester hours or 90 quarter hours
* Bachelor’s degrees = 120 semester hours or 180 quarter hours
* Master’s degrees = 36 semester hours or 54 quarter hours
* First Professional degrees = 50 semester hours or 75 quarter hours (beyond a Bachelor’s degree)
* Professional Doctoral degree = 60 semester hours or 90 quarter hours

1. Scan the course descriptions in the catalog and the number of credit hours assigned to courses:

* At a semester-based institution, courses will be typically from two to four credit hours and extend 8 to 15 weeks. The description in the catalog should indicate a course that meets collegiate expectations for rigor, workload, and measurable learning objectives. Identify courses that depart markedly from these expectations and provide an action plan and timeline for correction.
* Institutions may have courses that are in compressed format, self-paced, or otherwise structured. Credit assignments should be reasonable and remain in compliance with the established policy and procedure for awarding credit regardless of format.

1. Scan course syllabi to determine how frequently students are required to “log in” or “meet” each week and/or what other scheduled activities are required for each course. Pay particular attention to courses with high credit hours completed in a short period of time or with less frequently scheduled interaction between student and instructor.
2. Identify and review syllabi for a representative sample of the courses. When reviewing, consider the following for each course:

Preparation (per term): Reading assignments—

Textbooks: number of pages in each assignment and the reading level (allow longer for technical information)

Reaction papers and books reports: number of pages

Case studies: number of pages per hour

Research papers: number of pages per hour

Study for quizzes and examinations: number of hours

Project, journaling and exams: number of hours

Engagement (per term):

Reading:

Website documents: number of pages and reading level

Discussion forums and postings: estimated time

Other students’ reports: number of pages

Listening to course lectures: number of minutes

Audio and video: number of minutes

Taking quizzes and exams: number of minutes

Presenting Reports: number of minutes

1. When reviewing a textbook, note that sometimes the textbook may have the same name, but it may not include all the course materials. Conversely, the institution may be using a commonly used textbook but is not including topics that are commonly included in the specific course. In addition, some institutions appear as if they are “covering” the text, but the assignments do not reflect the rigor that may typically be expected in the specific course.
2. If provided, review a sampling of student submissions to see the level of performance of students, along with the instructor’s grading of that submission. It is important to note that the nature and quality of an assessment also have relevance to the validity of both the level of the course and the credit hours that are being claimed.

#### Verifying Student Engagement

An institution must verify that the intended level of student engagement in the distance education course or program is being achieved. One way for an institution to document how many hours students are spending to complete a task is to survey students at the end of each term. Some institutions gather this data from students with each submitted assignment. Another way could be tracking and monitoring the amount of time a student spends in the learning management system. However, the type of data collected by various management systems and the options for working outside the LMS can result in inaccurate time estimates. Therefore, this should not be the only source of verification.

Institutions offering correspondence courses or self-paced online learning must, for each credit-bearing program, use a reliable method for ascertaining how much time students spend engaged in their studies and provide a full explanation of how the method is used to make credit-hour-assignment determinations, along with relevant supporting data.

For example, to document and verify student engagement/study time for a correspondence or self-paced online program, institutions may elect to keep track of the amount of time a student takes to complete a course of study by including a question with each required exam or assignment, such as, “How many hours—including reading, study time and other preparation—did it take you to complete this section/component of this course?

The institution should provide guidance to course developers and faculty on how long students should spend listening to or viewing audio or video presentations, participating in online discussions, preparing student reports, completing quizzes and examinations, reading textbooks, writing papers, and studying for quizzes and exams.

### EXHIBIT 19: Complaint/Grievance Policy

#### Background

DEAC requires applicants and accredited institutions to have written complaint policies and procedures for the purposes of receiving, responding to, addressing, and resolving, as appropriate, complaints made by students, faculty, administrators, or any party, including one who has good reason to believe that an institution is not complying with DEAC accreditation standards.

#### Institutional Complaint Policies

At a minimum, the institution’s policy must instruct students where and how to file a complaint or grievance and the maximum time for resolution. The institution’s complaint policy and procedure must be made available to all students. The institution must define what it considers to be a student complaint. Student complaints typically are about such items as administrative issues, financial issues, technical issues, faculty performance, grading, program content, program effectiveness/expectations, library services, and misrepresentation of career or placement services for institutions that offer such services.

The institution must review in a timely, fair, and equitable manner any complaint it receives from students. When the complaint concerns a faculty member or administrator, the institution may not complete its review and make a final decision regarding a complaint unless, and in accordance with its published procedures, it ensures that the faculty member or administrator has sufficient opportunity to provide a response to the complaint. The institution must take any follow-up action needed, including enforcement action, if necessary, based on results of its review.

The institution’s complaint policy must also include how it notifies students regarding where and how they may file complaints with state agencies and its accrediting agencies(s), as appropriate.

DEAC will review the quality and reputation of an institution by taking into account the institution’s record of student complaints. DEAC evaluators will be asked to review and assess the institution’s complaint policies and procedures to make certain that the institution is monitoring its quality of education and services.

### EXHIBIT 20: Outcomes Assessment Plan

#### Background

Outcomes assessment is the systematic examination of student learning within an academic program. The primary goal of outcomes assessment is the continuous improvement of an institution’s academic quality. An effective outcomes assessment plan provides institutional structure when conducting outcomes assessment. An outcomes assessment plan is a tool that explains the concepts and processes, provides examples and strategies for measuring student achievement and satisfaction, and offers approaches used in ongoing curriculum reviews.

DEAC and on-site evaluators will apply and judge evidence presented by institutions to demonstrate acceptable outcomes assessment programs. Evidence includes student satisfaction, program completion/graduation rates, and evidence of achievement of student learning outcomes. Institutions must also demonstrate how student learning outcomes relate to institutional learning outcomes and/or institutional goals and objectives.

Institutions are expected to have in place a formal, written, and actively executed plan for conducting outcomes assessment and satisfaction studies in order to demonstrate compliance with Standard V. Additionally, institutions must show evidence that this data is analyzed and considered in the institution’s quality improvement efforts at the course, program, and institutional levels (see Table B).

Each institution is required to submit data that demonstrates acceptable student achievement and satisfaction, including data from student learning outcomes assessments that is both direct and indirect. Indirect measures may include student surveys, completion/graduation rates, placement rates (where applicable), and applicable employment rates. Examples of direct measures should include student assessment portfolios, authentic assessment procedures, capstone projects, and test results. Each institution must also demonstrate evidence of how this data drives quality improvement activities and should be prepared to demonstrate how this data is disclosed to the public.

DEAC expects each institution to demonstrate acceptable student achievement and satisfaction based on valid and reliable assessment techniques. To this end, the institution collects and analyzes relevant data and uses the data to demonstrate compliance with Standard V. Suggestions for the evidence that the institution must provide to DEAC are described below.

DEAC accreditation standards have always required that institutions implement an ongoing procedure to demonstrate that students have (1) attained the required learning outcomes and (2) been successful in achieving the benefits established for a course or program. Institutions have had to show that a high proportion of students are satisfied with the educational services provided and that a satisfactory percentage of enrolled students finish the program, as defined by metrics that are provided by DEAC. This Guide provides a road map of how an institution’s outcomes assessment plan can enhance its internal processes and strengthen its programs to become the best educational provider that it can be.

If an institution feels that it cannot adequately and fairly fulfill the reporting requirements as described in this Guide, it may suggest other ways of providing evidence that it meets Standard V. DEAC will make a determination on a case-by-case basis if the institution’s methods of providing evidence are acceptable for meeting Standard V.

#### The Three Pillars of DEAC Outcomes Assessment

1. **Student Achievement.** The institution has a systematic and ongoing process for assessing student learning that uses both direct and indirect measures of learning outcomes assessment to show achievement of the program outcomes. A sample degree program outcomes table is available in Table B.
2. **Perceived Student Satisfaction.** In addition to the outcomes assessments indicated above, the Commission will use the overall assessments made by the students taking the program as additional indicators of student success and satisfaction.
3. **Completion/Graduation rates.** These numbers show how many students were able to complete a program of study and pass all assignments and assessments required by the institution or were graduate from an entire degree program, and whether the completion or graduation rates fall within the range of comparability with peer institutions

#### Characteristics of an Effective Outcomes Assessment Plan

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Institution’s Outcomes Assessment Plan Elements** | **Description of Elements** |
| **Overview** | |
| About | Why the plan is written; what it seeks to accomplish or its purpose; who is responsible for implementing the plan; principles of learning assessment; implementation timeline; review of plan. |
| Mission | Why your institution was established. [Why] |
| Vision | Future-oriented direction. [Where] |
| Purpose | Describes the organizational structure of the institution’s educational offerings. |
| Program Outcomes | Indicators of successful achievement. |
| Target Student Population | Describes the typical student the institution serves based on its educational offerings. |
| **Assessing Student Achievement** | |
| Introduction | Overview |
| Identifying Program and Course Outcomes | Define and identify the learning goals and outcomes; identify what the students will be able to do or know; and identify how this is determined. |
| Outcomes Measurement Tools | Lesson exam grades, final exam grades, final course grades, GPA, written projects, projects, internships, transfer of credits; third-party- administered test scores; certifications. |
| Review of Student Achievement Results | Data that demonstrates that students are achieving learning outcomes that are appropriate to the institution’s mission; data demonstrates the rigor and depth of the degrees, diplomas, or certificates offered. |
| Reporting Student Achievement Results | Report any third-party assessment results, such as test scores on industry examinations or certifications as compared to national average scores, etc. |
| Using Student Achievement Results | Revise as needed to improve outcomes. |
| **Assessing Student Satisfaction** | |
| Introduction | Overview |
| Student Satisfaction Measurement Tools | Student surveys, unsolicited testimonials; referrals; repeat enrollments; few student complaints; end-of-course evaluation; graduation survey. |
| Review of Student Satisfaction Results | How often tools are reviewed; who is responsible; what are the benchmarks? |
| Reporting Student Satisfaction Results | Surveys of three mandatory questions must be reported to DEAC in Annual Report each year, due January 31. |
| Using Student Satisfaction Results | What happens when the percentage of “yes” responses to the three questions fall below 75 percent? |
| **Assessing Progress Through the Course/Program** | |
| Introduction | Overview |
| Collecting Course/Program Progress Data | Course completion data, program graduation data, time to complete a course, credentialing. |
| Review of Progress Data | What happens when a completion rates falls below a certain percentage? |
| Reporting Data to DEAC | Report completion and graduation rates to DEAC in Annual Report each year, due January 31st. |
| Using Progress Data for Improvement | Revise or terminate courses with low completion rates. |
| **Improving the Institution Through Outcomes Assessment** | How will the institution use this information to improve teaching and learning, as well as student services, etc.? |
| Instructional and Educational Support Services | Review and revise as needed. |
| Program Outcomes and Curriculum | Review and revise as needed. |
| Course Outcomes | Review and revise as needed. |
| Content and Instructional Materials | Review and revise as needed. |
| Assessments | Review and revise as needed. |
| Institutional Policies and Procedures | Review and revise as needed. |
| Institutional Mission and Outcomes | Review and revise as needed. |
| **Attachments** | |
| Areas Assessed and Methods of Assessment and When They Are Used | Table A below. |
| Methods of Assessment and How Institution Interprets and Uses Results | Table B below. |
| Other Samples | Sample of: Student surveys, instructor course evaluations, non-start survey, graduate survey, alumni survey, employer survey, etc. |

#### Student Achievement and Satisfaction

1. **Achievement of Student Learning Outcomes:** When an institution undergoes an initial or renewal of accreditation, it must provide in its Self-Evaluation Report (SER) both a formal written outcomes assessment plan for regularly conducting student learning outcomes assessments for all of its courses/programs and evidence that it follows the plan. This plan must also include documentation on how data regarding student learning outcomes is used to assess institutional outcomes and/or goals. Each accredited institution must confirm that it meets this requirement by initialing the appropriate statements in “Section II. Certification of Compliance with Commission Requirements” in its Annual Report to DEAC and by providing a narrative on its continuous improvement results.

The institution must demonstrate and document in its SER through results of learning outcome assessments that students achieve learning outcomes that are appropriate to its mission and to the rigor and depth of the degrees or certificates offered. The institution must also describe how its outcomes assessment plan has contributed to the improvement of the institution over time and explain how the plan demonstrates that the institution is fulfilling its stated mission. This is referred to as “closing the loop.” It is an important step in the cycle of outcomes assessment. It is the process by which the institution uses evidence of student learning to gauge the effectiveness of the educational practices and methodologies and to identify and implement strategies for improving student learning. It is not enough to just collect data. The data must be analyzed and put to use.

“Assessment” is an ongoing process aimed at understanding and improving student learning. When developing an outcomes assessment plan, an institution should consider: 1) what it wants students to be able to do or know, 2) how it ascertains that the students can do or know these things, and 3) how it will use the information received to improve teaching and learning. The plan should begin with a solid set of learning goals and outcomes that are quantifiable, realistic, and measurable.

The institution’s outcomes assessment plan should describe the different areas assessed, the methods of assessment and when they are used, and how the institution interprets and uses the results. The tables found at the end of this document are provided to suggest some possible resources for methods of assessment and when they can be used. Institutions should tailor the data shown in the sample tables to fit their method of assessment and interpretations for their institution’s courses and/or programs and institutional outcomes and/or goals and objectives.

The institution must use both direct and indirect measures of outcome learning assessments to show achievement of course and program outcomes and must provide documented evidence that shows that the results are used to improve programs, curricula, instruction, faculty development, and services. The following is a listing of currently accepted direct and indirect measures of learning outcomes assessment that may be used to satisfy the outcomes requirement:

**Direct measures** require students to demonstrate knowledge and skills and provide data that directly measures achievement of expected outcomes. Examples may include but are not limited to:

1. **Capstone Course** (or experience): A capstone course, project, or practical experience integrates the knowledge, concepts, and skills associated with an entire sequence of study within a discipline or program. The structure and content of a capstone experience are linked to a discipline/program’s goals and objectives for student learning. Capstone experiences provide students with a forum to combine various aspects of their program/discipline experiences. Capstone experiences provide faculty and programs/disciplines with a forum to assess student academic achievement in a variety of knowledge- and skills-based areas by integrating their educational experiences.
2. **Embedded Assessments:** Assessment practices embedded within courses generate information about what and how students are learning within the programs/disciplines. This form of assessment takes advantage of existing curricular strategies. Common embedded assessments include student projects, papers, and questions placed in course assignments. These projects, papers, or questions are intended to assess student outcomes. Embedded assessments are incorporated into all sections of the particular course or discipline, whether taught by full-time faculty or part-time instructors. Best practices recommend that the student work and/or responses be evaluated by faculty other than the course faculty member or by outside reviewers to determine if students are achieving the academic goals established by programs.
3. **Internship Performance:** Performance in a real-world setting is assessed through the use of a rubric. Students are assessed in their program/discipline-specific job skills, knowledge, and ability to interact professionally.
4. **National Licensure, Certification, or Professional Examination:** These standardized tests are developed by outside, professional organizations to assess general knowledge in a discipline. Examples include the Bar Exam, State Medical-related exams, Certified Safety Professional (CSP), CISCO Certified Network Associate exam, and Law Enforcement Academy exam (POST: Peace Officer Standard and Training). In any case, where the outcome of a course or program is demonstrable through performance on outside assessments, such as those required for employment in a profession for which the program trains graduates, institutions will be expected to provide any data available to them that shows this outcome.
5. **Portfolio Assessment:** Portfolios are collections of student work that exhibit to the faculty and student the student’s progress and achievement in a program or discipline of study. A portfolio used for assessment purposes can include research papers and reports, examples of student work, projects, self-evaluations, journals, case studies, as well as other submissions.
6. **Pre/Post Testing:** This form of assessment is used to determine what a student has learned. A test or similar assignment is given at the beginning of a course or program and a similar test or assignment is given at the end. This form of assessment is helpful in measuring both cognitive and attitudinal development.
7. **Standardized Examinations:** There are two types of standardized tests: norm-referenced and criterion-referenced examinations. Norm-referenced exams describe performance in comparison to others, while criterion-referenced exams describe student performance directly and judges that performance by some preset standard.
8. **Outside Assessors:** These are assessments of student pre- and post-work completed by outside assessors who rate student attainment of outcomes as compared to students at other institutions that have completed similar programs.
9. **Approved Thesis or Dissertation:** This category would include approved theses, research projects, or dissertations that have been judged and approved by a committee.

**Indirect Measures** are an indirect assessment of student learning since they measure student, graduate, or stakeholders’ satisfaction and impressions of educational experiences, rather than knowledge and skills acquired. However, when combined with direct measures of learning, indirect assessments can provide a comprehensive pathway to enhancing student academic achievement. Evidence should be available to demonstrate that the institution actively seeks student feedback (and/or stakeholder feedback, when applicable) on its courses and programs. Indirect measures may include but are not limited to:

1. **Student Learning Assessments:** End-of-course student surveys are an example of the indirect measures that can be used to show that learning outcomes are being achieved.
2. **Graduate and Alumni Surveys:** Graduate surveys have assisted in understanding the educational needs of the students. Former students can provide important information about both the curriculum and the co-curricular activities. Information can include student insights on educational experiences, what they like or dislike about different instructional approaches, impressions about the online environment, program equipment and technology levels, perceived benefits from student and instructional support services, and the value of the education to their work experiences and career goals.
3. **Employer Surveys:** Employer surveys provide useful information about the curriculum, programs, and students that other forms of assessment cannot provide. Employers provide information about skill levels of recent graduates, abilities to communicate effectively orally and in writing, specific program competencies, and abilities to utilize current program-specific technology. Employer surveys help institutions determine the relevance of educational experiences and programs.
4. **Advisory Board Feedback:** Information from advisory board meetings, such as recommendations on program improvement, current practices, or curriculum updates, may be used as an indirect measure.
5. **Benchmarking Against Other Institutions:** Results of standardized tests, licensure pass rates, or any number of other measures can be compared to other schools’ performance on the same measures.
6. **Perceived Student Satisfaction:** The institution documents that students are satisfied with the instructional and educational services provided. A standard part of DEAC accreditation has been an evaluation of student responses to survey questions designed by DEAC. Students in DEAC-accredited institutions fit a profile, and most are older and perform roles other than that of student. They are adequate judges of whether the program delivered what it promised.

The following are guidelines for completing the student satisfaction assessment.

* 1. Questions designed to elicit the measure of satisfaction are asked of some students annually. DEAC has developed three questions to be asked of randomly selected students.
  2. A baseline is been established. For each course or program offered by an institution, three of every four students responding to a random survey must answer positively about their experiences.

1. **Progress Through the Course/Program:** The institution documents that students complete their studies at rates that compare favorably with those of courses/programs offered by similar DEAC-accredited institutions or benchmarks set by DEAC.

Although these rates have long been included in DEAC accreditation decisions, the nature of distance education and its students make them a less useful indicator of course outcomes than they may be in traditional education. Where adult students are responsible for their educational choices, they may decide that their personal goals have been reached before completing the course. Open enrollments and “study anytime” opportunities result in noticeably lower completion rates for distance education. Institutions offering identical courses in both resident and distance modes report consistently lower graduation rates from the distance education offerings, and over the years, many fine institutions of unquestioned effectiveness have demonstrated that high student success can exist alongside low course/program completion/graduation rates.

These rates will now have benchmarks designed to identify areas in need of DEAC attention. DEAC members will be assigned to one of several peer groups, depending upon whether the courses are educational, vocational, or avocational; the level of degree or credential offered; and other factors. In order to make the results statistically valid, there must be at least five institutions in a peer group. A benchmark completion/graduation rate representing the completion rate of all programs in the peer group will be determined for each peer group or degree level. Vocational programs with completion rates within 15 percentage points of the mean for the group will be considered to meet the benchmark. Graduation rates within 15 percentage points of the mean for the assigned degree level will be considered to meet the benchmark.

If the DEAC’s analysis does not show that the institution’s data compare favorably with those of similar DEAC-accredited institutions, the institution must provide a written explanation, and the Commission will review the institution’s explanation and take whatever follow-up action it deems appropriate. Such action may include (1) accepting the institution’s explanations and taking no further action, (2) determining that the institution may no longer offer the course/program in its present form, and/or (3) ordering the institution to undergo a full accreditation review if the institution does not make the appropriate changes.

#### Student Satisfaction

DEAC defines “student satisfaction” as evidence presented by an institution that shows that the students and graduates of the institution have expressed their overall satisfaction with the lessons/courses and services as they have experienced them.

Student satisfaction can range from whether the course/lesson materials were current and comprehensive to whether grading services were prompt and fair and if faculty members have performed adequately. Student expressions of satisfaction are normally attained through institution surveys, but an institution can also gather and present data such as unsolicited testimonials, referrals of other students, and repeat enrollments in new or subsequent courses.

The students’ expression of their own satisfaction is another form of evidence used to document outcome achievement. The institution must provide evidence that demonstrates that students are satisfied with the instructional and educational services provided. It must provide evidence in its Annual Report by reporting the required data. In addition, an institution undergoing initial or renewal of accreditation must also provide evidence in its Self-Evaluation Report.

To measure student satisfaction, the institution must survey the students in each of its vocational programs or courses/degree programs. When reporting information to DEAC in its Annual Report, an institution will be asked to report the number and percentage of “Yes” responses to the three questions below from 10 of its most popular vocational programs and/or courses (as defined by number of enrollments). If an institution has more than one division, e.g., vocational and/or degree granting, it must choose 10 courses/programs from each division. The institution should aim for at least a 30 percent response rate to its surveys.

The following definitions apply for the purposes of this guidance on Student Achievement and Satisfaction:

**Degree-granting:** A “**course**” is defined as units of learning that result with the award of a certificate of academic credit when completed. Examples of course titles are, “American History,” or “Business Management.”

**Vocational:** A “program” is defined as units of learning that result with the award of a diploma or certificate (nonacademic credit). Examples of program titles are “Medical Billing,” or “Interior Design.”

The institution **must** include in its surveys the following **three questions** and use the “Yes-No” response. The questions are worded so that they apply to students who have dropped out, are still studying, or have completed the course/program:

* 1. Did you achieve, or will you have achieved upon completing your studies, the goals you had when you started this course or program?
  2. Would you recommend these studies to a friend?
  3. All things considered, were you satisfied with your studies with us?

The minimum acceptable “Yes” response rate is that three of four responders (or 75 percent) must answer “Yes” to each of the three mandatory questions. If the institution receives less than 75 percent for those who answered “yes” to the three questions, the institution must provide a written explanation, and the Commission will review the institution’s explanation and take whatever follow-up action it deems appropriate. Such action may include (1) accepting the institution’s explanations and taking no further action, (2) determining that the institution may no longer offer the course/program in its present form, and/or (3) ordering the institution to undergo a full accreditation review if the institution does not make the appropriate changes.

The institution may determine the time frame for collecting the survey data. The institution will be asked annually to provide a sample of the surveys used and a description of how they were conducted. The description should include the names of all 10 courses/programs, the time frame used to collect the data, and the number and percentage of “Yes” answers to questions 1, 2, and 3 above. The institution should aim for at least a 30 percent response rate to its surveys. Evidence should be available to demonstrate that the institution actively seeks student feedback on its courses and programs

#### Example of Survey Data

An institution offers a course in Business Management. During the calendar year 2012, the institution sends a survey that includes the three mandatory questions to the 700 students who enrolled in the course that year, including those students who dropped out (110), those who complete the course (400), and those still studying (190). The institution received 10 surveys stamped as undeliverable, which makes the Survey Sampling 690 (110 + 400 + 190 = 700 – 10 = 690). The institution received 210 completed surveys, which makes the Return Rate 30 percent (210 divided by 690 = .304 or 30%). Of the 210 completed surveys received, 200 answered “Yes” to question 1, 189 answered “yes” to question 2, and 205 answered “yes” to question 3. Along with a sample of the survey, and a description of the survey method, the institution completes 8. Satisfaction on the Annual Report Form.

If the percentage of those answering “Yes” to any of these questions is below 75 percent, the institution must provide a written explanation, and the Commission will review the institution’s explanation and take whatever follow-up action it deems appropriate. Such action may include (1) accepting the institution’s explanations and taking no further action, (2) determining that the institution may no longer offer the course/program in its present form, and/or (3) ordering the institution to undergo a full accreditation review.

#### Progress Through the Course/Program

**Please Note:** *Beginning with the 2013 Annual Report, degree-granting institutions are no longer required to report course completion rates in their Annual Reports as evidence of progressing through a degree program. However, tracking and reporting course completion rates is still a requirement of an institution’s initial or reaccreditation process and as an element of an institution’s outcomes assessment plan.*

The institution must demonstrate that students complete their studies at rates that compare favorably with the rates of students enrolled in similar programs offered by similar DEAC-accredited institutions. The Commission defines “compare favorably” as meaning completion rates (for vocational programs) or graduation rates (for degree programs) that do not fall below 15 percentage points of the mean completion or graduation rate for similar courses or programs at similar DEAC institutions. Groups must comprise at least five institutions. A benchmark completion or graduation rate representing the mean completion/graduation rate of all programs in the peer group is determined for each peer group. Vocational programs with completion rates within 15 percentage points of the mean for the group will be considered to meet the benchmark. Graduation rates within 15 percentage points of the mean for the assigned degree level will be considered to meet the benchmark. DEAC will collect, analyze, and compare the data from the institution’s Annual Report or Self-Evaluation Report and notify the institution if it falls below the 15-point limit. The Commission will set the mean completion rate annually. The Commission will review the reported institutional data for accuracy and consider other available relevant industry data and studies.

For an institution undergoing initial or renewal of accreditation, DEAC staff will provide the on-site evaluators with the data from similar programs offered by similar DEAC-accredited institutions in order to help them determine if the institution meets Standard V.C. The evaluators will also consider the data provided in the institution’s Self-Evaluation Report when making their determination. For the purposes of calculating the program completion and graduation rates, the term “completion” indicates that a student completed a vocational or non-credit bearing program, while the term “graduation” means that a student completed the entire degree program. The institution must collect completion data on each vocational or non-credit- bearing program and graduation data on each degree program. For the purpose of the Annual Report, an institution will be asked to complete 4. Degree Program Graduation Rate and 5. Non-Degree Program Completion, as applicable.

#### Graduation Rate for Degree Programs

Each institution must collect and report graduation rates at 150 percent of “Normal Time” for its academic programs as defined below:

* **Normal Completion Time:** DEAC has adopted the definition developed by the Joint Commission on Accountability Reporting (JCAR) as a definition of normal time. Normal time is defined as “the time necessary for a student to complete all requirements for a degree according to an institution’s catalog.” This is typically four years for a bachelor’s degree, two to three years for an associate degree, two to three years for master’s degree, and four years for first professional and doctoral programs.
* **Date Range of Cohort to be Measured:** Normally the date range is an academic year as defined by the institution, but it may be an enrollment period within an academic year (i.e., fall semester). Select the most recent academic year in which new students enrolling in that period would have had time to complete, as determined by calculating 150 percent of Normal Time.
* **Number of Students in Cohort:** The cohort should include all new students (not a random sampling) enrolled in the program in the academic year or enrollment period.
* **Enrollments:** Students who remained enrolled after the five-day minimum cancellation period and met all admissions criteria.
* **Exclusions:** Exclusions are categories that fall outside of the definition for enrollments and may include circumstances such as deployment for active duty military service, medical leave of absence, death, other approved leave of absence, or other reasons for exclusions as determined by the institution. Note - DEAC may request additional information for students reported under "exclusions".
* **Net Cohort:** “Number of Students in Cohort” minus “Exclusions”. The net cohort includes students who have graduated, withdrawn, stopped out, or are still attending.
* **Students Graduating:** Number of students in the cohort who earned their degree by completing all program requirements.
* **Graduation Rate:** Number of “Students Graduating” divided by number of students in the “Net Cohort”.

#### Other Information Considered

In determining whether an institution undergoing its initial or renewal of accreditation meets Standard V, DEAC also considers the direct evidence of the results of its own mail survey of students using the “DEAC Student Survey Form.” An institution must submit 100 names/labels with its application form. If an institution has more than one division, e.g., vocational programs and academic degrees, it must submit 100 names for each division. The on-site evaluators and the Commission will review the student surveys to evaluate the institution’s performance. The survey results from the Commission-administered student survey will be compared to those of institution-administered surveys to establish the validity of the institution’s survey results. The Commission will also consider evidence from (1) analysis of student complaints received about the institution; (2) information solicited in a survey that the Commission sends to state and federal agencies, consumer agencies, and Better Business Bureaus; and (3) any other data or information it encounters about the institution, regardless of its source.

#### Commission’s Review

The Commission will review the data supplied in the institution’s Annual Report and will compare the completion and graduation rates with similar institutions offering similar courses/programs and degree levels. To make the comparison, the Commission staff will determine which institutions and programs are similar. For institutions undergoing initial or re-accreditation, the on-site evaluators and subject specialists will review the information in the Self-Evaluation Report and make the comparison with Commission-supplied data.

To be considered a “favorable comparison,” a course or program must not fall below 15 points of the mean completion rate for similar courses or programs for the institution’s assigned peer group. The graduation rates for degree programs will be compared with graduation rates for similar degree levels, e.g., associate, bachelor’s, master’s, first professional, and professional doctorate.

If the Commission’s analysis does not show that the institution’s data compare favorably with those of similar DEAC-accredited institutions, the institution must provide a written explanation of its data and how they were gathered, and the Commission will review the institution’s explanation and take whatever follow-up action it deems appropriate. Such action may include (1) accepting the institution’s explanations and taking no further action, (2) determining that the institution may no longer offer the course/program in its present form, and/or (3) ordering the institution to undergo a full reaccreditation review if the institution does not make the appropriate changes.

#### Annual Reporting of Continuous Improvement Results

The institution’s CEO/president is asked to initial that his or her institution had “formal written plans for regularly conducting student learning outcomes assessments and institution self-improvements.” The Annual Report requires institutions to provide a narrative on its activities or improvements that were made during the reporting year based directly on the results of its outcomes assessment efforts. These institutional changes or improvements can be minor or major, depending on the data collected.

#### Conclusion

DEAC judges the acceptability of the case an institution makes for meeting Standard V by looking at all of the evidence and at the thoroughness, clarity, and adequacy of the documentation presented in the Self-Evaluation Report and Annual Report.

When an institution is undergoing its initial accreditation or renewal of accreditation, the on-site evaluators will review and evaluate the information provided by the Commission and by the institution against the minimum levels of acceptance described above. They will also determine if there are any extenuating circumstances that should be considered in the case of an institution whose performance falls below minimum acceptable levels.

If the Commission’s analysis shows that the institution’s outcomes data do not meet the prescribed minimum acceptable levels, the institution must provide a written explanation and the Commission will review the institution’s explanation and take whatever follow-up action it deems appropriate. Such action may include (1) accepting the institution’s explanations and taking no further action, (2) determining that the institution may no longer offer the course/program in its present form, and/or (3) ordering the institution to undergo a full accreditation review if the institution does not make the appropriate changes.

Evidence provided by the institution must be relevant, verifiable, representative, and cumulative. It may not be modified to produce a desired outcome. Hence, the burden of proof is always on the institution to show how its evidence meets Standard V.

When an institution believes that it operates under conditions where assessing outcomes can be achieved more accurately by using standards other than those listed in this policy, it may petition the Commission for a variance. Where DEAC believes that any such variance or reinforcement of the established standard will improve the assessment of objectives and outcomes, it will grant a variance.

#### Table A – Assessment Areas and Direct Measure Methods

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Areas Assessed:** | **Method of Direct Measure Assessment and When It Is Used:** |
| **Basic Skills** (reading, writing, math computing) | standardized tests; pre- and post-test; portfolio at end of course; thesis; pre- and post-examinations; embedded assessments; outside assessments. |
| **Competencies** (critical thinking, oral communication, quantitative reasoning, problem-solving, etc.) | standardized tests; comprehensive examinations; thesis; internships; capstone projects; portfolio. |
| **Disciplinary Knowledge** | standardized examinations; evaluation by outside instructors; capstone project; portfolio, thesis; performance on national, state-mandated, comprehensive, standardized, and/or graduate examinations; outside assessments; national licensure. |
| **Technical/Professional Skills** | national licensure or board examinations; practica, internships; capstone project; outside assessment; portfolios; comprehensive examination; pre- and post- testing; embedded assessments. |
| **General Education or Core** | pre- and post-test; portfolio; review of student input form; capstone project; student survey; course-embedded assessment; outside assessments. |
| **Interdisciplinary Knowledge** | competency examinations; portfolios; capstone project; graduate school admission; evaluation of performance; faculty assessment; outside assessment. |
| **Values** | assessed within context of internship; capstone project; embedded assessments; portfolio; final thesis; pre- and post-exams; outside assessments. |

#### Table B – Sample Program Outcomes Assessment Template

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Degree Level / Degree-Level Guideline: Undergraduate/Associate** | | | | | | |
| **Program: Associate of Arts in General Studies** | | | | | | |
|  | | | |  | | |
| **Program Mission** | |  | | | | |
| The purpose of the AA in General Studies is to provide foundational knowledge and academic experiences in the humanities and fine arts; history and social and behavioral sciences; and natural sciences and mathematics that are responsive to the professional, civic and, cultural needs of its diverse student population. | | | | | | |
| **Program Objective** | **Learning Outcomes** | **Direct Measures** | **Assessment Method: Rubric** | | **Benchmarks Results** | |
| PO 1: Students will demonstrate a college-level ability to read and to communicate effectively through speaking, writing, and listening. | 1) Student will be able to employ basic writing skills in order to compose effective and grammatically correct paragraphs. | 1) EH 1010  Unit VI Formal Writing Assignment | 1) Formal Writing Assignment Rubric | | At least 80 percent of students in the sample will achieve at or above competency level 3 for formal writing assignments. | 88 percent of students scored in competency levels 3 or 4 on the rubric. (mean=3.5) |
| 2) SLS 1000  Unit VIII Reflection Paper | 2) Reflection Paper Rubric –  Criteria for Organization and Grammar | | At least 80 percent of students in the sample will achieve “competent” or “exemplary” on the Organization and Grammar Criteria Component of the rubric. | 92 percent of students scored “competent” or “exemplary” on the Organization and Grammar Criteria Component of the rubric. |
| 2) Student will be able to apply effective research and writing techniques for preparing an APA formatted research paper. | 1) EH 1020  Unit VIII Research Paper | 1) Research Paper Rubric | | At least 80 percent of students in the sample will achieve at or above competency level 3 on  the rubric. | 77 percent of students scored in competency levels 3 or 4 on the rubric. (mean=2.7) |
| 2) PS 1010 Unit I Article Critique | 2) Article Critique Rubric – Application of Analysis Criterion | | At least 80 percent of students who major in General Studies will achieve at or above competency level 3 on the Application of Analysis Criterion Component of the rubric. | 75 percent of students scored in competency levels 3 or 4 on the Application of Analysis Criterion Component of the rubric. |
| 3) Student will be able to relate the concepts of planning, writing, and completing reports and/or oral presentations. | *1) SP 1010*  *Informative Speech* | 1) Informative Speech Rubric | | At least 80 percent of students in the sample will achieve at or above competency level 3 on the rubric. | 85 percent of students scored in competency levels 3 or 4 on the rubric. (mean=3.4) |
| *2) SP 1010*  *Persuasive Speech* | 2) Persuasive Speech Rubric | | At least 80 percent of students in the sample will achieve at or above competency level 3 on the rubric. | 85 percent of students scored in competency levels 3 or 4 on the rubric. (mean=3.2) |
| **Note**: This is a sample outcome assessment plan of only one program goal. An actual plan would include two to four program goals and associated learning outcomes. | | | | | | |
| Actions for Improving Student Learning | | | | | | |
| For SLOs 1 and 3, students performed at or above the competency level. However, results for SLO 2 indicate that additional activities should be implemented. The following improvements will be implemented:  ‐ A Success Center specialist will be assigned to students with grades below 70 percent in formal writing assignments in EH1020 and PS1010.  ‐ An APA manual will be provided for all students in the General Studies Program.  ‐ An interactive tutorial on accessing the online library and conducting research will be available for students in the student portal.  ‐ Additional APA activities will be incorporated into EH1020 and PS1010 before the formal writing assignments.  ‐ In order to improve the Application of Analysis Criterion of the rubric, a persuasive paper will be added to the PS1010 course to promote higher level learning. | | | | | | |
| Review Cycle – Direct Measures | | | | | | |
| One goal and corresponding outcomes to be accessed each year. | | | | | | |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Indirect Measures (Instrument Used) | Criteria/Assessment Method | Benchmarks | Results:  5-point Likert Scale (“Strongly Agree” = 5 to “Strongly Disagree” = 1) |
| 1. Alumni and Employer Survey | Survey Question: As a result of my degree from XYZ, I have gained the skills and knowledge required to successfully lead and manage others. | Students will report a mean score of 4.0 for this survey question in 2019. | Mean = 3.8 (vs. 3.6 in 2018) |
| 2. End-of-Program Survey | Survey Question: As a result of my degree from XYZ I possess the ability to think and act creatively both in my personal life and at the workplace. | Students will report a mean score of 4.0 for this survey question in 2019. | Mean = 3.5 (vs. 3.3 in 2018) |
| Actions for Improving Student Learning | | | |
| 1. After reviewing the alumni and employer survey results, we are incorporating collaborative projects to develop characteristics of leadership into the SOC 1234 and PSC 1234 courses. 2. After reviewing end-of-program survey results, we are adding reflection papers to promote student creativity in the EH 1100 and EH1200 courses. | | | |
| Review Cycle - Indirect Measures | | | |
| Each of the above measures will be evaluated by faculty members and academic leadership annually to determine how well students are mastering the material. | | | |

Additional Examples: Timeline Tables

(These are not required or complete templates)

#### Table C – Assessment of Student Academic Achievement – End of Program

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| INSTITUTION NAME | | | | | |
| ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT  END OF PROGRAM | | | | | |
| ASSESSMENT TOOLS | TARGET POPULATION | DISTRIBUTION OF RESULTS | USE OF RESULTS | RESPONSIBILITY | IMPLEMENTATION  TIMELINE |
| Capstone courses/projects | Degree-seeking students | Department and program reviews | Assessment of overall student learning in particular program | Individual faculty  member/  learning management system | At the end of each student’s capstone course |
| Exit Surveys | Degree-seeking students | Academic Dean and University Committee | Assessment of program outcomes and student satisfaction | University Committee | Upon graduation |

#### Table D – Assessment of Student Academic Achievement After Graduation

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| INSTITUTION NAME | | | | | |
| ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT  AFTER GRADUATION | | | | | |
| ASSESSMENT TOOLS | TARGET POPULATION | DISTRIBUTION OF RESULTS | USE OF RESULTS | RESPONSIBILITY | IMPLEMENTATION  TIMELINE |
| Alumni Survey | All Institution Graduates | University Committee | Gauge  students’ self- assessment of student learning experience | University Committee | One year and three  years after graduation |
| Applicable certification exams | Applicable program graduates | University Committee | Measure of student learning outcomes met | University Committee | Per cohort graduating, reported in aggregate annually |

#### Table E – Assessment of Student Academic Achievement Periodically

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| INSTITUTION NAME | | | | | |
| ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT  PERIODICALLY: Other assessment measures are utilized by the institution on time frames independent of the academic process of individual students. | | | | | |
| ASSESSMENT TOOLS | TARGET POPULATION | DISTRIBUTION OF RESULTS | USE OF RESULTS | RESPONSIBILITY | IMPLEMENTATION  TIMELINE |
| Academic  Program Review | All programs on a rotating basis | Faculty, Chief  Academic  Officer,  University  Committee,  Executive  Council, and  Advisory  Committees | For program modification and validation. Program-level accreditation. | Chief Academic  Officer Academic Dean | Every program, every five years, and as required |

#### Table F – Assessment Matrix by Date

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| INSTITUTION NAME  ASSESSMENT MATRIX - DATE | | | | | | |
| **Direct Measures of Student Learning** | LEVEL OF ASSESSMENT | TIMING OF ASSESSMENT RELATIVE TO STUDENT ACADEMIC PROGRESS | | | | |
| Course Level | FIRST UNDERGRAD COURSE | WITHIN  COURSE/  SEMESTER | END OF PROGRAM | AFTER GRADUATION | PERIODICALLY |
|  | Pre-Test/Post-Test |  |  |  |
| Capstone Course Projects |
| Competencies |
| Rubric scores on assignments |
| Practice Experiences |
| Program Level |  |  | Capstone Course Projects | Specific certification exam pass rates  Student publications or presentations |  |
| Practice Experiences |
| Competencies linked to industry standards |
| ePortfolios |
| General Education | Proficiency Profile Undergraduate Programs |  |  |  |  |
| **Indirect Measures of Student Learning** | Course Level |  | Student end-of -course evaluation |  |  |  |
| Faculty end-of-course evaluation |
| Program Level |  |  | Exit Survey |  | Academic Program Review |
| Systematic Plan of Evaluation |
| Institutional Level |  |  |  | Alumni Survey | Quarterly and Annual Reports |

### EXHIBIT 26: Professional Development Documents

Internal development examples may include, but are not limited to:

* required/optional online training courses,
* professional development events,
* webinars and courses provided by the institution,
* faculty academies for new instructors,
* peer forums,
* faculty mentoring,
* support resources (financial, research, personnel), and
* support policies (sabbaticals, course release).

  External development examples may include, but are not limited to:

* conference participation and attendance;
* support for external leadership opportunities;
* webinars or courses provided by third-party organizations or companies;
* continuing education opportunities;
* partnerships with business, organizations, or institutions; and
* faculty exchange opportunities.

### EXHIBIT 36: Succession Plan

#### Background

All institutions must have a written plan that outlines the process by which the leadership and management succession would be approached and realized. Identify specific people, committees, or boards that would be responsible to carry on the operation of the institution. The plan should be reviewed and revised on an annual basis.

#### Characteristics of an Effective Succession Plan

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Elements** | **Description** |
| **Introduction** | Overview of Plan |
| **Timing of Leadership Transfer** | Include a statement that identifies when and under what circumstances the transfer of leadership would take place. |
| **Process of Succession** | List step-by-step actions by which the search for a successor will take place. Outline the process by which the leadership and management succession would be approached and realized. |
| **Interim Presidential Authority** | State clearly with whom the interim presidential authority should rest in the event of death or disability of the CEO. If it is with more than one person, an order should be clearly stated and responsibilities clearly identified. Identify specific people, committees, or boards that would be responsible to carry on the operation of the institution. |
| **Business Continuity** | State how the institution’s ongoing operations should be handled during the transition period. |
| **Key Person Insurance** | The CEO should have a life insurance policy, which designates the institution as the beneficiary. It may be decided that only a portion of the policy be set aside to assure the continued viability of the institution. The proceeds should also act as security for any ongoing obligations (e.g., executive search) in the event of the death of the CEO. |
| **Financial Analysis** | State how often and by whom a financial review should be conducted. The financial analysis should show the financial impact of the transition of the CEO. |
| **Search Team Formation** | If a search team will be used to find a qualified successor, state it in your plan. If an outside recruitment firm is to be retained, the firm should be identified. |
| **Identification of Potential Successors** | Identify guidelines that the search team should use when looking for a replacement, including the proposed timeline of actions. |
| **Candidate Qualifications** | The experience, qualifications, and personal characteristics requirement for the position of the CEO should be established. |
| **Candidate Selection and Compensation** | Include a statement describing who makes the final decision and how the final section will be made. Also include who would establish the amount of compensation for the new CEO. |
| **Short-Term Contingency Plan** | You may wish to set forth a general “operating plan” covering six months in the event of the unexpected demise of the CEO. This plan should be reviewed on a regular basis. |
| **Review of Plan** | The plan should be reviewed and revised on an annual basis. |

### EXHIBIT 37: Audited Comparative or Reviewed Comparative Financial Statements

#### Background

The purpose of this documentis to provide practical advice to business evaluators who are charged with analyzing the financial condition of an institution to determine if it meets DEAC Standard **XI. A. Financial Practices**, which states:

*The institution shows it is financially responsible by providing complete, comparative financial statements covering its two most recent fiscal years and by demonstrating that it has sufficient resources to meet its financial obligations to provide quality instruction and service to its students. Financial statements are audited or reviewed and prepared in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles in the United States of America. The institution’s budgeting processes demonstrate that current and future budgeted operating results are sufficient to allow the institution to accomplish its mission and goals.*

There is no “one-size fits all” approach when evaluating any institution’s financial condition, and it is best to approach this task with the idea of being flexible and creative in analyzing financial statements. The information in the financial statements and supplemental notes provides insight into the financial strength and earnings capacity of the institution.

The management of an institution needs timely and accurate financial information in order to make decisions that will help ensure the future of the institution. The DEAC evaluator needs to see this same information to reach a decision on whether the applicant meets Standard IX.

The challenge becomes this: There are no one or two financial formulas or off-the-shelf metrics that can routinely tell an evaluator how to make a decision on whether or not an institution meets the standard. It requires careful consideration of dozens of different facts, figures, and concepts, and each financial statement is unique.

What information must the evaluator consider in making a judgment on financial stability? What questions must the evaluator ask? What financial formulas can be used to help reach a just decision?

This document attempts to assist evaluators in answering these questions and helping them make a judgment that is fair to the applicant institution and protects the integrity of the accrediting process. DEAC business standards evaluators should use this information to help them reach a sound judgment in evaluating the financial health of an institution and determine if the institution meets DEAC accreditation standards.

#### What Comprises Financial Statements?

The financial statements of an institution include a series of business activity reports and also the institution’s financial position at a “moment in time,” typically as of the institution’s fiscal year end. The financial statements provide meaningful information on changes in an institution’s financial position over the year and should contain—at a minimum—the following:

* A **Balance Sheet** is a snapshot as of a date certain that shows the asset (owns), liabilities (owes) and stockholders’ equity (for profit) or net assets (not for profit) of an institution.
* The **Income Statement** is an annual report card or score card, indicating the revenues an institution received and expenses it incurred over the course of a 12-month period. The difference between the two is the profit (or loss) for the period of time.
* **Cash Flow** statements indicate the exchange of money between the institution and outside parties over the same period of time. This statement can help in the determination of the cash health of an institution by showing how cash was received and how it was used in operations, investing decisions, and financing arrangements.
* **Statement of Shareholders’ Equity (for profit) or Changes in Net Assets (not for profit)** shows changes in the interest of the institution’s shareholders over the fiscal year (for profit) or changes in the institution’s net assets (not for profit).

Financial Statements must be prepared using the **Accrual Basis** of accounting. This is the format required by DEAC. Accrual basis accounting includes recognizing income when it is earned and recording expenses when incurred. The **Cash Basis** of accounting, a method of accounting that is not generally accepted, records income only when it is received and records expenses only when paid. The cash basis is not an acceptable accounting method for DEAC’s purposes.

When possible, it is recommended that an evaluator request a copy of the internal, unauditedfinancial report for the month prior to the institution’s “year end,” in order to review if there had been any large dollar amounts reallocated or unusual revenue or expense adjustments made to make the institution “look good” at the end of its fiscal year.

#### Questions for the institution to consider when preparing its financial information for DEAC

1. **Do the institution’s financial statements demonstrate overall financial responsibility?**

Are the accounting functions computerized? What type of accounting software is used? Which staff members are involved in the various accounting functions, and is there an adequate segregation of duties among the accounting staff? What are the data security procedures? Are there audit trails? While it is not a DEAC standard that an institution use any particular accounting software package, this information will assist in demonstrating whether effective internal controls are in place.

1. **Are the statements either “reviewed” or “audited”?**

This information is found on the opinion letter by a Certified Public Accountant (CPA), typically entitled INDEPENDENT AUDITOR’S REPORT.The reviewed or audited reports by an outside CPA gives more confidence in the numbers being reported. When financial statements are “compilations,” there has been no verification of the accuracy of the information and numbers given to the CPA by the institution, and the CPA expresses no form of assurance on the statements.

In a CPA’s report, the CPA will indicate whether the audit was performed in accordance with generally accepted auditing principles (GAAP) or if review procedures were performed, as well as if the financial statements are in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles. If the financial statements are audited, the CPA will express an opinion on the overall fairness of the financial statements. You can be assured the CPA firm has gone through the financial and accounting operations in greater detail, and you can spend most of your time reviewing the statements and reading the notes to the statements to determine the financial condition of the institution. A key item to look for is whether the CPA’s opinion is “qualified”; in other words, is there any concern on the part of the CPA firm that the institution may not be able to continue to operate “as a going concern”? In some cases, the CPA may provide an unqualified opinion or review report, but the financial statements may include a note discussing the institution’s ability to continue as a going concern or describe liquidity or cash flow issues and management’s plans. If there is a qualified opinion or a footnote discussing the entity’s going concern challenges, the institution will need to present compelling evidence for how it plans to continue to operate as a going concern. **NOTE:** A going concern opinion or footnote would be a strong indication that the institution does not meet Standards XI.A. or XI.C.

**b. Are the financial statements complete and are they comparative, i.e., do they cover the two most recent fiscal years?**

This is important in order to evaluate what direction the institution is going, noting any substantial increases (decreases) over the two-year period in revenues, profits, cash position, etc. A review of each line item helps to determine what significant changes may have occurred from year to year. Some line items require more information from the institution and/or explanation of possible extraordinary, one-time events, such as a large purchase of equipment or sale of assets.

1. **Are all notes and supplementary schedules to statements included?**

This area provides information about the institution’s accounting practices and detailed account information. Institutions are required to disclose all significant accounting policies and accounting practices, including changes that affect the institution’s financial condition. This area will also note information about the institution’s revenue recognition policies, income tax position, advertising expenditures, and employee benefits programs, including any accrued employee benefits and banking arrangements (loans, lines of credit, repayment terms).

**d. Do the statements include an income statement, balance sheet, statement of cash flows, a statement of changes in shareholders’ equity or net assets, and explanatory notes?**

These reports are required components of the Financial Statements, and of each is briefly described below as each part of the financial statement is explained in further detail. No one statement within the financial statement tells the complete story. It is when the various statements and notes are combined and read as a whole that they provide important insights for the business standards evaluator in determining the overall financial stability of an institution.

**e.  Did the institution provide detailed operating statements for institution divisions?**

In addition to the financial statements, many institutions have **divisional statements**, which are specific to a program or division of an institution. These may not be included in the reviewed or audited report but may be internal reports generated from the institution’s accounting software and/or Excel report writing. These operating statements indicate if the division, independently, is making a profit or loss.

**f. Are the statements prepared using the accrual method of accounting?**

Accrual basis accounting includes revenues when they are earned and expenses when incurred. Cash basis accounting includes income when it is received and expenses when paid. DEAC requires the use of accrual accounting.

**2. Did the institution submit a properly executed copy of the appropriate Teach-Out Commitment form?**

An institution must include a signed and up-to-date copy of its Teach-Out Commitment with its Self-Evaluation Report.

**3. Did the institution submit a properly executed letter of “financial statement validation”?**

An institution must include a copy of the executed letter of financial statement validation with the exhibits to its Self-Evaluation Report. DEAC requires every applicant to submit this letter.

**4. Does the institution use an effective budgeting process?**

Institutional approaches in creating budgets vary greatly, since each institution is unique and diverse in size and mission. Larger institutions may gain input from the various program directors, and divisions of an institution, compiling the proposed budget for approval by a board. Smaller institutions may involve a few management members. It is more important to determine that there is an effective process in place where the top management and/or ownership is involved in the budget development and approval process and accepts such responsibility for this task.

**5. Are current assets sufficient to meet current liabilities?**

This is known as the “current” ratio, whereby current assets are divided by current liabilities. It is used to measure the institution’s short-term ability to pay its liabilities. The higher the ratio, the more solvent is the position of an institution. Current assets are assets that are cash, will be converted to cash, or prepaid expenses to be expensed and used within one year, and liabilities that are due to be paid within a year or less are considered “current.” Non-current assets are assets that would take typically more than a year to use, such as property, furniture and equipment. Non-current (or long- term) liabilities are items due after a year, such as notes payable after one year. It is important to compare the current ratio for the past two years to determine if there is a positive or negative trend (discussed below).

**6. Does the entity have a history of profitable operations (or have an increase in net assets for not- for-profit entities)?**

An entity that has a history of profitable operations demonstrates sound financial operations. An entity that has a history of losses increases the probability that the entity may be unable to meet its obligations in the future and serve its students.

**Other Financial Metrics:** Use these other well-known formulas to help you analyze the financial health of an institution:

1. **Profit** (or excess of revenues over expenses for nonprofits) as a percentage of revenues. Look for the two-year trend. Is it getting better or worse? If it’s worse, have a discussion with president and CFO or highest-ranking financial officer about the reasons why. If a loss isincurred, have an in-depth discussion on the reason why and what the institution is doing to get it positive.
2. **Cash Balance/Expense Coverage:** How much cash is on hand? How many months of expenses can the institution cover? Look for a two-year trend. Is the institution maintaining that balance? Has it gotten better or worse? Have a discussion about cash management with the president and CFO or highest-ranking financial officer.
3. **Current Ratio** **– Current Assets/Current Liabilities** (see also item 5 above): This will give you a second opportunity to evaluate how the institution is able to cover its short-term obligations. This is similar to cash but much broader because it allows for the fact that some institutions carry a high accounts receivable balance that will be turned into cash as students pay. Look for trends, compare the two years of statements, and have a discussion with the president and the CFO or highest-ranking financial officer
4. **Debt to Assets Ratio:** This is a little more complicated, but overall, you want to take a look at the nature and structure of the institution’s debt and make sure that the institution will be able to repay its debt both in the near term and the long term. The closer the ratio is to 1:1, the more concern the reviewer should have. A ratio of 50 percent or less would be of less concern. The key is to understand the period the debt is repayable over and the ability of the institution to generate sufficient cash to meet the terms.
5. **Cash Flow from Operations:** This is the amount of cash generated in operations and is contained on the Statement of Cash Flows. Look for consistent, positive cash flows. If receivables are increasing significantly faster than revenues on a percentage basis, this will have an adverse impact on operating cash flow. Is the institution generating sufficient cash flow to meet its obligations?
6. **Tangible Equity:**  This is the amount of the equity remaining after deducting intangible assets from stockholders’ equity or fund balance. A negative balance indicates that the institution’s tangible assets are less than its liabilities. The key is to understand how the institution plans to repay its liabilities over the longer term.

**7. Are the reserves for honoring future obligations and allowances for bad debts and refunds adequate?**

This information is found on the Balance Sheet and footnotes to the financial statements. Allowances for bad debts are deducted from accounts receivable while reserves for refunds are included in liabilities. Bad debts are typically determined based on a historical percentage for uncollected accounts receivables. Some institutions may reserve an amount to cover possible future refunds based on previous experience. Institutions also need to have a sound procedure in calculating deferred (unearned) revenue; this amount will be reflected on the Balance Sheet under current liabilities.

**8. Do the accounts payable (amounts and length of time outstanding) reflect sound financial responsibility and management?**

Do the institution’s accounts payables demonstrate that expenses are being paid in a timely manner?

**10. Does the institution have adequate insurance coverage, and is it properly allocated?**

Determine if the institution has adequate levels of insurance coverage, including liability, property, employee bonding, directors and officers, business continuation, etc. Does the institution have adequate disaster coverage if an earthquake or hurricane should strike? Does it have a disaster preparedness plan?

**11. For an institution with resident training program(s), is there adequate liability coverage for students at resident training sites?**

Given the number of students who are “on campus” each year, does the institution have adequate liability coverage?

### EXHIBIT 41: Facilities, Equipment, and Supplies Maintenance Plan

#### Background

All DEAC accredited institutions must have a written plan to maintain and continuously improve or upgrade facilities, equipment, and supplies used to support the institution’s goals. The plan must include the resources that will be budgeted to support the institution’s programs and future growth. The plan must identify by name the specific individuals, committees, or boards that are responsible for reviewing, revising, and implementing the plan. The plan must be reviewed and revised on an annual basis, and the institution needs to provide evidence of the review and changes made as a result of the annual review.

#### Characteristics of an Effective Facilities, Equipment, and Supplies Maintenance Plan

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Elements** | **Description** |
| **Introduction** | Overview of Plan – describe how the institution’s overall improvement plan incorporates this plan and supports the institutional goals, objectives, and future growth. |
| **Responsible parties** | Identify by name the specific individuals, committees, or boards that are responsible for reviewing, revising, and implementing the plan, including a schedule for the annual review. |
| **Annual Budget and financial analysis** | Give an overview of the annual budgeting process. Identify the specific accounts that represent expenses related to facilities, equipment, and supplies. Include a detailed explanation of the financial analysis done to determine the amounts allocated for facilities, equipment, and supplies. |
| **Reporting requirements** | Provide details on the reports and information used to review and to decide improvements, replacements, or deletion of facilities, equipment, and supplies. (Reports should be retained to provide evidence of compliance.) |
| **Resources budgeted for maintenance of facilities, equipment, and supplies** | State what resources are budgeted for maintenance of facilities, equipment, and supplies. |
| **Resources budgeted for replacement or upgrade of facilities, equipment, and supplies** | State what resources are budgeted for replacement or upgrade of facilities, equipment, and supplies. |
| **Resources budgeted for future growth of facilities, equipment, and supplies** | State what resources are budgeted for future growth of facilities, equipment, and supplies. Include support for the future growth (e.g. documentation from the institution’s strategic plan). |
| **Inspections of facilities** | Provide a list of safety inspections needed; state how often and by whom, and any costs involved (i.e., elevators, fire alarms, sprinkler systems, etc.). |
| **Inventory and Insurance** | Identify what items need to be held in inventory, and define at what stage additional items need to be ordered or replaced. Provide information on property insurance and how often it is reviewed. |
| **Property Taxes** | Identify equipment that requires property taxes be paid; state date taxes will be due and estimate of the amounts. Include in your plan documentation supporting your statements (e.g., a copy of your tax bill). |
| **Emergency Action Plan** | Provide a set of protocols for dealing with emergencies of varying degrees.  Priorities of the plan are to:   * ensure the safety of all personnel. * minimize interruptions to normal. business operations. * mitigate damage to the physical property. * establish alternative means of operation in advance. and * provide for smooth restoration of the headquarters facility. |
| **Functions** | In the event of a disaster, the functions of the administrators are to:   * provide emergency notification as quickly as possible, * provide initial identification and counts of employees, * assign employees to specific emergency tasks, * provide continuous information to emergency personnel, and * communicate with the employees and families. |
| **Authority** | Based on the nature of the emergency, the institution’s Emergency Management Team (EMT) will be led by the president or named designate (also name alternates in case the president is not available). Name who will be responsible for accounting for people, notifying families, etc. |
| **Activation** | Level 1 – minor incident that is quickly resolved with internal resources or limited help. The Emergency Plan is not activated.  Level 2 – a major emergency that impacts sizable portions of the institution’s facilities that may affect life safety. Emergency Plan is activated.  Level 3 – A disaster that involves the entire facility and surrounding community. |
| **Evacuations** | In Level 2 and 3, personnel are notified via alarms, phone paging system, text messages, etc. Everyone should exit the building in an orderly fashion. |
| **Hazards** | Report all accidents, suspected fire hazards, injuries, or exposures to hazardous substances, |
| **Fire** | Provide details on what should be done by employees, e.g., report to supervisory immediately, call 911, etc. |
| **Bomb Threat** | Notify your supervisor immediately. |
| **Workplace Violence** | Try to stay calm, do not attempt to argue. Seek help as soon as possible and take cover. Never attempt to disarm or accept a weapon from the person in question. Report all incidents to your supervisor. |
| **Medical Emergency** | Call 911, designate someone to go for help, provide CPR if needed. |
| **Power Outage** | Assess the extent of the outage in your area. Assign a person to communicate to employees not to come to work or to leave work in an orderly fashion. |
| **Severe Weather Emergency Procedures – Applicable to the institution’s geographic location** | **Severe Thunderstorms:** Do not use the telephone, stay away from windows and doors, keep the use of electrical devices to a minimum.  **Tornadoes**: Tornado Watch does not require taking shelter. If a warning is issues, shut off electrical equipment and take shelter immediately. Do not go outside. Move away from doors and windows, get as close to the floor as possible or under a table or desk.  **Hurricanes:** If a Hurricane Warning is issued (this means winds more than 74 mph are expected to hit the area within 48 hours), contact your supervisor.  **Flooding:** A flood warning means flooding is imminent. Contact your supervisor. |
| **Evacuation** | A building evacuation is mandatory whenever a fire alarm sounds. Emergency exits should be marked and prominently displayed throughout the building. Designate one person to make certain everyone has left the facilities. |
| **Backup Disaster Recovery Plan** | Provide the names, titles, and contact information for remote/off-site personnel who are responsible for backing up and retrieving data.  Provide names of the hardware and software and the order of importance for retrieving data, and provide a contact person, account numbers, passwords, etc. for immediate help. |
| **Compromising data** | Provide the names, title, and contact information for IT personnel if computers have been hacked or data is compromised. |
| **Back-up Procedures** | List who is responsible for backing up data, how often it is done, and where the backups are maintained. |
| **Emergency Response Procedures** | Provide the steps the technology personnel should follow to back up data during an emergency. |
| **Recovery Actions** | Provide the steps for recovering data and notifying personnel, and insurance companies. |
| **Review, Revision, and Implementation of Plan** | Describe who is responsible for the overall review and revision of the plan. Who will do any training needed? The plan should be reviewed and revised on an annual basis. |
| **Review of Plan** | The plan should be reviewed and revised on an annual basis. |

### Required Documents

#### Letter of Financial Statement Validation

THIS LETTER MUST ACCOMPANY AN INSTITUTION’S FINANCIAL STATEMENTS.

December 30, 2020

Dr. Leah Matthews

Executive Director

Distance Education Accrediting Commission

1101 17TH Street, NW

Washington, DC 20036

Dear Dr. Matthews:

As a certifying officer, I acknowledge my responsibilities for establishing and maintaining controls and procedures that ensure that I am aware of material information relating to [name of institution].  The attached report discloses (a) all material weaknesses in internal controls that came to the attention of certifying officers, (b) any fraud involving management or employees with significant responsibilities, and (c) any significant changes in internal controls, including actions to correct material weaknesses, during the period covered by this report.        
  
I have reviewed this report. Based on my knowledge:

(1)  This report contains all the facts needed to prevent it from being misleading and it contains no untrue statements.

(2) Financial statements and other information fairly present the financial condition, results of operations, and cash flow.

Certified by:

Chief Executive Officer:

Chief Financial Officer:

#### Code of Ethics

**for Student Recruitment Personnel**

**of**

**Accredited Distance Education Institutions**

As a student recruitment representative\* of an accredited distance education institution, I recognize that I have certain responsibilities toward students, the public, and my institution. To fulfill these responsibilities, I pledge adherence to this Code of Ethics.

I will observe fully the standards, rules, policies, and guidelines established by my institution, the Distance Education Accrediting Commission, the State Education Agency, and other legally authorized agencies.

\* \* \*

I will adhere to high ethical standards in the conduct of my work, and to the best of my ability, will:

1. Observe fully the rights of all applicants and commit no action that would be detrimental to any applicant’s opportunity to enroll because of race, sex, color, creed, or national origin.

2. Never knowingly make any false or misleading representation to any applicant nor use any coercive practices in presenting information.

3. Enroll applicants only in the course or courses in which they have expressed their interest, provided they meet the qualifications and standards established by my institution for enrollment.

4. Provide applicants only with information authorized by my institution regarding the occupational opportunities for graduates, and never make claims guaranteeing employment, job promotion prospects or income increases to an applicant.

5. State accurately and clearly to prospective students the approvals, accreditation, business and employer recognition, and course acceptance accorded to my institution.

6. Provide only full and accurate information on the transferability of academic credits and acceptance of degrees or credentials by other educational institutions, and disclose affirmatively the fact that the acceptance of credits and degrees is entirely the prerogative of the receiving institution and acceptance cannot be guaranteed.

7. Provide prospective applicants only complete and accurate information on the total financial obligation they will be incurring prior to accepting their enrollment application.

8. Provide students complete and accurate information about financing options and answer any questions prior to enrolling.

9. Never use tuition assistance available from a governmental agency or other source as the primary inducement for enrollment.

10. Refrain at all times from making any statement or inference that might falsely impugn the integrity or value of any other institution, method of training, or profession.

11. Discharge faithfully, and to the best of my ability, all of the duties, obligations, and procedures established by my institution for my position and know all of my obligations as an institutional representative.

12. Reflect at all times the highest credit upon myself, my institution, and the field of distance education and always strive to enhance the reputation of my profession through my conduct as an institutional representative.

\*A recruitment representative is someone who enrolls prospective students, including but not limited to telephone marketers, enrollment advisors, and admissions representatives.

Accredited institutions are required to complete and publish DEAC’s Student Achievement Disclosure for the Public form in the format provided on its website [www.deac.org](http://www.deac.org). Institutions seeking initial accreditation should prepare a draft version of this form and provide it as Exhibit 22 for review with the Self-Evaluation Report. Only institutions who have already received DEAC accreditation may publish the DEAC’s Student Achievement Disclosure for the Public form on their websites.

#### Student Achievement Disclosure for the Public (Exhibit 22 Template for institutions seeking initial accreditation)

DEAC accredited institutions offer a broad array of instructional programs and student support services to meet varied educational and professional goals of a highly diverse student population. Institutions determine appropriate performance criteria to measure the success of their students in achieving their goals in the context of the institution’s specific mission and scope. You will find below (1) a summary of how this institution measures student achievement in the context of the institution’s mission and educational programs and (2) student achievement metrics that the institution believes best reflect student and program performance. For more information about DEAC standards and requirements, please visit [www.deac.org](http://www.deac.org).

This information was prepared by Institution Name.

and published on its website on Date of Publication.

Summary of Institution Mission and Student Achievement

Please describe your school, in no more than 200 words.

Aggregated Institutional Data on Student Achievement

Please insert your data here.