

**CHANGE in LOCATION REPORT TEMPLATE**

**Follow On-Site Visit to Virtual Site Visit**

# Background

The Distance Education Accrediting Commission requires all institutions seeking a change of location (however close to the original site) to obtain prior approval from the Commission and undergo an on-site visit. Prior approval serves two main purposes: (1) It provides institutions an opportunity to critically reflect on its operations, processes, and procedures prior to changing locations and (2) it provides the on-site team with a comprehensive overview of the institution, its mission, and its processes that are integral to delivering quality distance education.

The Distance Education Accrediting Commission’s accreditation process is grounded on the fundamental principle of peer review that enables faculty and administrative staff from within higher education to make recommendations essential to ensuring the quality of learning and institutional operations for all students. The process is guided by transparent standards that are established collaboratively by professional peers and member institutions.

The virtual on-site visit already conducted provided an opportunity for evaluators to meet with key staff members, faculty/instructors, principal managers, outside accountants, governing board members, and advisory council members. The evaluators verified that the institution is meeting its mission and can demonstrate successful student achievement.

The virtual on-site evaluators’ reports informed the Commission whether the institution meets, partially meets, or does not meet each of the DEAC accreditation standards and core components. Approximately six weeks after the on-site visit, the Chair’s Report was provided to the institution for response. Both the Chair’s Report and the institution’s response were submitted to the Commission for review prior to final decision making.

The Chair’s Report for Follow Up Site Visit is a summary of the follow up on-site visit team’s evaluation of whether the evidence presented by the institution verified the accreditation decision made by the DEAC Commission.

# Instructions

The U.S. Department of Education issued guidance to accreditors on March 5, 2020 and on December 31, 2020 with respect to 34 Code of Federal Regulations §602.17(c) related to site visits. According to this guidance, beginning on March 13, 2020, for the duration of the national emergency declaration and 180 days following the date on which the COVID-19 national emergency declaration is rescinded, the Secretary is waiving the provisions of § 602.17(c) and requiring accreditors to perform a limited in-person site visit as soon as practicable following the end of the state of emergency. DEAC staff will therefore schedule and conduct a limited in-person site visit guided by Standards XI.A. and XII as allowed by these guidelines or subsequent direction issued by the U.S. Department of Education.

Evaluator(s) should refer to the institutions Substantive Change documents related to its change in location submitted during the COVID-19 national emergency as well as the resultant Chair’s Report, Chair’s Report Response, and Commission Findings.

Findings guidelines:

* **Verified:** The institution provided evidence that verifies compliance with the accreditation standard or core component.
* **Partially Verified:** The institution was able to provide evidence that verifies compliance with some, but not all, of the elements contained in the accreditation standard or core component.
* **Unable to Verify:** The institution was unable to provide evidence that verifies compliance with a majority of the elements contained in the accreditation standard or core component.

The Chair should provide clear and concise descriptions within the “Comments” section of the report to support each determination that a standard or core component is verified, partially verified, or that the institution was unable to verify compliance. If an institution presented evidence that verifies compliance with the accreditation standard, the Chair may want to consider highlighting within the Comments section the evidence the institution presented that enabled it to demonstrate compliance. If an institution was only able to partially verify or was unable to verify compliance with a standard, the Chair needs to adequately describe why this decision was reached and refer, as appropriate, to narrative sections and exhibits within the SER that support the determination.

The Chair must also indicate the required actions necessary for the institution to demonstrate compliance with the partially verified or unverified accreditation standard. Each required action must be tied back to an accreditation standard or core component.

For required actions, the Chair should begin each statement with, “[Insert Name of Institution] needs to [insert the evidence necessary for the institution to verify compliance with the accreditation standard.]”

For suggestions, the Chair should begin each statement with, “[Insert Name of Institution] may want to consider [insert the recommendation for improvement.]”

**Report Submission:** The Chair emails the completed report to the DEAC director of accreditation four weeks after the follow up on-site visit. Once all information is received, DEAC notifies the Chair to appropriately dispose of all institutional materials.

Helpful Hints

* The Chair’s Report should be objectively written in third person, narrative format using declarative sentences and simple verbs. The report should avoid broad generalities and speculative views.
* The Chair’s Report represents an accurate, concise, factual, and thorough presentation of the team’s findings during the on-site visit.
* When making an overall determination whether the institution provided evidence that verifies, partially verifies, or was unable to verify compliance with accreditation standards, the Chair should include evidence of documents reviewed on-site that led to the finding. Include specific examples.
* The Chair’s Report documents attributes and deficiencies using language found in the accreditation standards and core components. All deficiencies must be documented.
* The Chair’s Report should not require an institution to implement a new program or procedure in order to demonstrate compliance with a partially verified or unverified accreditation standard. The Chair’s Report states the required action necessary to provide evidence of compliance. The institution bears responsibility for providing evidence that verifies compliance with DEAC’s accreditation standards.
* The Chair’s Report accurately presents comments, required actions, and suggestions using direct quotations, references, data, and examples from team members’ reports.
* The Chair’s Report should not reference individual team members’ reports or contain supporting exhibits.
* The Chair’s Report does not make recommendations to the Commission concerning the overall accreditation of the institution.

DEAC Change of Location Report (Confidential)

Institution Name: Insert institution name

Date of Original Virtual Visit: Date of on-site visit

Accreditation Decision by the Commission: Summarize the decision made such as “accepted change of location”.

Date of the Commission Decision: Select the meeting.

Date of Follow Up Visit: Date of on-site visit

Name of Evaluator: Evaluator name

Date of Report: Date of Report

On-site Team Members

Chair/Staff

Name  
Title

# On-site Visit Background and Summary

**Visit Summary:** Provide an overview of the on-site visit including how well the institution was prepared.   
**Institutional Overview:** Provide an overview of the applicant institution, including founding, organizational structure, target student population, legal form and governance, and status of state authorization.

# Accreditation Standards Findings

## Standard XI: Financial Responsibility

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.

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| **Standard XI.A. – Verified, Partially Verified, Unable to Verify, or Not Applicable** | Choose a finding. |

**Comments:** Provide comments to support the finding based on the institution’s responses and evidence provided prior to and during the on-site visit.

**Required Actions:** Provide the required actions necessary for the institution to verify compliance with the accreditation standards. Each required action must correspond to an accreditation standard or a core component.

**Suggestions:** Suggestions are those recommendations that are not required to verify minimum accreditation standards but are provided to the institution as an opportunity for growth and improvement.

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

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.

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| **Standard XII.A. – Verified, Partially Verified, Unable to Verify, or Not Applicable** | Choose a finding. |

**Comments:** Provide comments to support the finding based on the institution’s responses and evidence provided prior to and during the on-site visit.

**Required Actions:** Provide the required actions necessary for the institution to verify compliance with the accreditation standards. Each required action must correspond to an accreditation standard or a core component.

**Suggestions:** Suggestions are those recommendations that are not required to verify minimum accreditation standards but are provided to the institution as an opportunity for growth and improvement.

1. **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.
   1. If maintaining documents electronically, the institution provides audit records to verify that the images were properly created and validated.
   2. 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.

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| **Standard XII.C. – Verified, Partially Verified, Unable to Verify, or Not Applicable** | Choose a finding. |

**Comments:** Provide comments to support the finding based on the institution’s responses and evidence provided prior to and during the on-site visit.

**Required Actions:** Provide the required actions necessary for the institution to verify compliance with the accreditation standards. Each required action must correspond to an accreditation standard or a core component.

**Suggestions:** Suggestions are those recommendations that are not required to verify minimum accreditation standards but are provided to the institution as an opportunity for growth and improvement.

1. **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.

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| **Standard XII.D. – Verified, Partially Verified, Unable to Verify, or Not Applicable** | Choose a finding. |

**Comments:** Provide comments to support the finding based on the institution’s responses and evidence provided prior to and during the on-site visit.

**Required Actions:** Provide the required actions necessary for the institution to verify compliance with the accreditation standards. Each required action must correspond to an accreditation standard or a core component.

**Suggestions:** Suggestions are those recommendations that are not required to verify minimum accreditation standards but are provided to the institution as an opportunity for growth and improvement.

1. **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).
   2. Exemptions from state law are supported by state-issued documentation or in statutory language for that state.

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| **Standard XII.E. – Verified, Partially Verified, Unable to Verify, or Not Applicable** | Choose a finding. |

**Comments:** Provide comments to support the finding based on the institution’s responses and evidence provided prior to and during the on-site visit.

**Required Actions:** Provide the required actions necessary for the institution to verify compliance with the accreditation standards. Each required action must correspond to an accreditation standard or a core component.

**Suggestions:** Suggestions are those recommendations that are not required to verify minimum accreditation standards but are provided to the institution as an opportunity for growth and improvement.