

**FEDERAL STUDENT ASSISTANCE INSTITUTIONS**

**COMPANION SELF-EVALUATION REPORT**

**REPORT TEMPLATE**

# Background

The Distance Education Accrediting Commission requires all institutions to compete a Self-Evaluation Report when seeking accreditation. The process of self-evaluation serves two main purposes: (1) It provides an institution an opportunity to critically reflect on its operations, processes, and procedures at regular intervals 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 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 on-site visit provides 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 verify that the institution is meeting its mission and can demonstrate successful student achievement.

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

The Chair of the on-site team is responsible for guiding the completion of the on-site evaluation in accordance with the Commission’s processes and procedures and ensures that evaluators complete their tasks during the on-site evaluation.

**Note:** This report is for review of an institution’s ongoing participation in Title IV Programs via the institution’s Federal Student Assistance – Companion Self-Evaluation Report. A separate report template is available for review of an institution’s Engaging in Federal Student Assistance Title IV Programs Post Approval Report.

**Self-Evaluation Report** **(SER**)
The Self-Evaluation Report tells a story about the institution, beginning with its history and mission and then focusing on its evolution and future. Institutions have the opportunity to present their passion for serving students and providing educational 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’s accreditation standards.

# Instructions

It is the Evaluators’ responsibility to make an initial determination whether the institution meets DEAC’s Accreditation Standards and core components and to complete the following report template.

Findings guidelines:

* **Meets Standard:** The institution demonstrates compliance with the intent of the accreditation standard or core component.
* **Partially Meets Standard:** The institution was able to demonstrate compliance with some, but not all, of the elements contained in the accreditation standard or core component.
* **Does Not Meet Standard:** The institution was unable to demonstrate compliance with a majority of the elements contained in the accreditation standard or core component.

The evaluator should provide clear and concise descriptions within the “Comments” section of the report to support each determination that a standard or core component is met, partially met, or not met. If an institution meets the accreditation standard, the evaluator may want to consider highlighting within the Comments section the processes and procedures the institution followed that enabled it to demonstrate compliance. If an institution partially meets or does not meet a standard, the evaluator needs to adequately describe why the decision was reached and refer, as appropriate, to narrative sections and exhibits within the SER that support the determination.

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

For required actions, the evaluator should begin each statement with, “[Insert Name of Institution] needs to [insert the action necessary by the institution to demonstrate compliance with the accreditation standard.]”

As part of the peer review process, it is important that institutions receive suggestions for improving their offerings and support services related to the administration of Title IV programs. The accreditation process allows the institution to benefit from an external review and perspective. The evaluator is encouraged to provide suggestions within the report. Suggestions are those recommendations that are not required to meet minimum accreditation standards but are provided to the institution as an opportunity for growth and improvement.

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

**Report Submission:** The evaluator emails the completed report to the Chair, DEAC staff observer, and DEAC director of accreditation two weeks following the on-site visit. Once all information is received, DEAC notifies the business evaluator to appropriately dispose of all institutional materials.

Helpful Hints

* The evaluator’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 evaluator’s report represents an accurate, concise, factual, and thorough presentation of the individual findings during the on-site visit. The evaluator clearly communicates findings to the Chair by providing evidence.
* When making a determination whether the institution meets, partially meets, or does not meet accreditation standards, the evaluator must include evidence of documents reviewed on site or analyzed in the Self-Evaluation Report and Exhibits that led to the finding. Include specific examples.
* The evaluator’s report documents attributes and deficiencies using language found in the accreditation standards and core components. All deficiencies must be documented.
* The evaluator’s report should not require an institution to implement a new program or procedure in order to demonstrate compliance with a partially met or unmet accreditation standard. The evaluator’s report states the required action necessary to provide evidence or demonstrate compliance. The institution bears responsibility for demonstrating compliance with DEAC’s accreditation standards.
* The evaluator’s report accurately presents comments, required actions, and suggestions using direct quotations, references, data, and examples from the on-site visit.
* The evaluator’s report does not make recommendations to the Commission concerning the overall accreditation of the institution.

# DEAC Federal Student Assistance Report (Confidential)

Name of Institution: Name of Institution

Date of On-site Visit: Date of on-site visit

Submitted By: Evaluator Name

Date of Report: Date of Report

Accreditation Standards

Standard III: Program Outcomes, Curricula, and Materials

1. **Academic Units of Measurement:** DEAC reviews the institution’s policies and procedures for defining its chosen academic unit of measurement and how they are measured, as defined in 34 CFR 600. DEAC evaluates the process an institution uses to award credits for courses and programs and makes a reasonable determination whether the institution’s assignment of credit hours conforms to commonly accepted practices in higher education.

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| **Standard III.F. – Meets, Partially Meets, Does Not Meet, 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 demonstrate 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 meet minimum accreditation standards but are provided to the institution as an opportunity for growth and improvement.

Standard IV: Educational and Student Support Services

1. **Satisfactory Academic Progress:** The institution implements and consistently applies a satisfactory academic progress policy that complies with all Federal Student Assistance Title IV program requirements as stated in current Federal regulations.

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| **Standard IV.E. – Meets, Partially Meets, Does Not Meet, or Not Applicable** | Choose a finding. |

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

1. **Regular and Substantive Interaction:** The institution implements policies and procedures that assure that regular and substantive interaction occurs between students and faculty. The institution maintains records that document appropriate interactions occur throughout the student’s enrollment.

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| **Standard IV.1. – Meets, Partially Meets, Does Not Meet, or Not Applicable** | Choose a finding. |

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

1. **Career and Financial Aid Advising:** The institution makes available to students, upon request, career advising related to their program of study. The institution makes available financial aid advising to all students in need of financial assistance, students that are applying for financial assistance, and other persons seeking additional information regarding the process for applying and receiving Federal Student Assistance. Such advising may take place via a variety of media sources and communication methods. Upon request of the student, the institution provides personal assistance on questions related to the application and delivery of financial aid.

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| **Standard IV.2. – Meets, Partially Meets, Does Not Meet, or Not Applicable** | Choose a finding. |

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

1. **Entrance and Exit Loan Advising:** The institution conducts entrance and exit loan advising that encourages loan repayment. The institution, through the financial aid office and the use of available media, encourages repayment of any Federal Student Assistance student loan funds that were obtained for payment of tuition and other costs associated with the student’s attendance and enrollment in the institution’s educational offerings.

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| **Standard IV.3. – Meets, Partially Meets, Does Not Meet, or Not Applicable** | Choose a finding. |

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Standard VII: Advertising, Promotional Literature, and Recruitment Personnel

1. **Advertising and Promotion Disclosures:** Any statements the institution makes in any advertising or promotional materials are complete and accurate regarding the following:
	1. Its eligibility for or participation in FSA Title IV programs,
	2. Its efforts to become certified to participate in such programs, and/or
	3. The availability of FSA Title IV benefits to students who enroll at the institution.

The institution will not use the availability of FSA Title IV funds to students as the primary inducement or rationale for students to enroll in a program.

All promotional materials, catalogs, websites, or other materials that describe the financial assistance available to students, including any FSA Title IV funds that might be available, must state that the assistance is available only to those students who qualify and must include the federal and institutional requirements students must meet in order to qualify for and maintain eligibility for such assistance.

The institution discloses accurate course material information, including ISBN and retail prices. The institution’s textbook pricing policy for new or used textbooks is fair to students.

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| **Standard VII.A. – Meets, Partially Meets, Does Not Meet, or Not Applicable** | Choose a finding. |

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**Required Actions:** Provide the required actions necessary for the institution to demonstrate 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 meet minimum accreditation standards but are provided to the institution as an opportunity for growth and improvement.

1. **Student Recruitment:** Individuals authorized by the institution to participate in the enrollment process with prospective students do not have final decision-making authority in the approval or awarding of FSA Title IV. An institution that participates in FSA Title IV programs is aware of, and complies with, all U.S. Department of Education regulations and restrictions on methods of compensation that pertain directly or indirectly to success in student recruiting or admission activities or in making financial aid decisions.

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| **Standard VII.C. – Meets, Partially Meets, Does Not Meet, or Not Applicable** | Choose a finding. |

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

Standard IX: Financial Disclosures, Cancellations, and Refund Policies

1. **Refund Policy:** The 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 under Standard IX.C. The institution discloses the date from which refunds are calculated (e.g., the date of determination of withdrawal or termination). The institution complies first with the Return of Title IV requirements when a student who is a FSA Title IV recipient withdraws from the institution.

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| **Standard IX.C. – Meets, Partially Meets, Does Not Meet, or Not Applicable** | Choose a finding. |

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**Required Actions:** Provide the required actions necessary for the institution to demonstrate 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 meet minimum accreditation standards but are provided to the institution as an opportunity for growth and improvement.

Standard XI: Financial Responsibility

1. **Federal Student Assistance Administrator:** The institution employs a capable individual(s) responsible for administering all FSA Title IV programs in which it participates and for coordinating those programs with the institution’s other financial assistance programs. The institution employs other individuals, as needed, to assist in the administration of FSA Title IV programs.

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| **Standard XI.1. – Meets, Partially Meets, Does Not Meet, or Not Applicable** | Choose a finding. |

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**Required Actions:** Provide the required actions necessary for the institution to demonstrate 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 meet minimum accreditation standards but are provided to the institution as an opportunity for growth and improvement.

1. **Default Management Plan:** The institution’s default management plan addresses student loan information (borrower’s rights and responsibilities, information regarding repayment and consolidation of student loan debt, communications with lenders and loan servicing agents, and the consequences of default), advising and monitoring, cooperation with lenders, and collection information to facilitate location of borrowers. The institution documents implementation of the default management programs and regularly conducts an evaluation of the effectiveness of its efforts as part of its self-study program.

The published cohort rate for the institution for any cohort year—where 30 or more borrowers enter repayment—cannot exceed the allowable rates as prescribed by the U.S. Department of Education. Institutions that receive a published rated greater than 25 percent are required to implement and adhere to a default reduction plan that specifically outlines the means by which the institution will provide services and contracts to the borrowers in an attempt to reduce the cohort default rate.

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| **Standard XI.2. – Meets, Partially Meets, Does Not Meet, or Not Applicable** | Choose a finding. |

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**Required Actions:** Provide the required actions necessary for the institution to demonstrate 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 meet minimum accreditation standards but are provided to the institution as an opportunity for growth and improvement.

1. **Financial Responsibility:** The institution meets the financial responsibility and administrative capability rules for Federal financial aid participation that includes the annual submission of audited comparative financial statements for the two most recent fiscal years, auditor opinion and management letters, and composite score calculation.

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| **Standard XI.3. – Meets, Partially Meets, Does Not Meet, or Not Applicable** | Choose a finding. |

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**Required Actions:** Provide the required actions necessary for the institution to demonstrate 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 meet minimum accreditation standards but are provided to the institution as an opportunity for growth and improvement.

1. **Limitations on Title IV Revenue and Enrollment Growth:**
2. Revenue from all FSA Title IV programs by eligible institutions may not account for more than 50 percent of an institution’s total revenue during its first 12 months of eligibility for FSA Title IV program participation, and not more than 75 percent of its revenue for all subsequent years of participation until such time that the institution (a) receives renewal of accreditation while participating in Title IV programs, and (b) demonstrates that its three-year cohort default rate and financial statement composite score fall within acceptable ranges as prescribed by the U.S. Department of Education. Once the institution successfully meets the aforementioned requirements, the Commission will approve the institution to draw the maximum revenue from FSA Title IV Programs allowed under applicable Title IV regulations. “Revenue” is defined as total receipts from all of the institution’s distance education students for tuition, books, fees, and all institutional charges, excluding refunds made, regardless of whether they received FSA Title IV programs funds.

Students who enrolled in an institution’s programs prior to the date in which FSA Title IV program eligibility is granted and who subsequently elect to receive FSA Title IV funds will not be included in the institution’s FSA Title IV program revenues.

1. An institution that, due to its participation in FSA Title IV programs, experiences annual growth of more than a 50 percent increase in student enrollments and/or has more than a 50 percent increase in annual tuition receipts in any calendar year may be directed to undergo an on-site evaluation, at the discretion of the DEAC.

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| **Standard XI.4. – Meets, Partially Meets, Does Not Meet, or Not Applicable** | Choose a finding. |

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**Required Actions:** Provide the required actions necessary for the institution to demonstrate 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 meet minimum accreditation standards but are provided to the institution as an opportunity for growth and improvement.

1. **Program Reviews:** The institution notifies DEAC in writing within 10 days of having undergone any program reviews, inspections, or other reviews of its participation in Federal Student Assistance Title IV programs by the U.S. Department of Education. The institution also provides complete copies of any reports (both preliminary and final) of these reviews and provides any available compliance audits within 10 days of its receipt of these documents.

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| **Standard XI.5. – Meets, Partially Meets, Does Not Meet, or Not Applicable** | Choose a finding. |

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**Required Actions:** Provide the required actions necessary for the institution to demonstrate 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 meet minimum accreditation standards but are provided to the institution as an opportunity for growth and improvement.

1. **Bankruptcy:** An institution that files for federal bankruptcy protection, simultaneously and immediately forfeits its DEAC accredited status and Federal Student Assistance Title IV program eligibility.

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| **Standard XI.6. – Meets, Partially Meets, Does Not Meet, or Not Applicable** | Choose a finding. |

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