

PART FOUR: APPENDICES

I. CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

It is in the best interest of the Distance Education Accrediting Commission (DEAC) to be aware of and properly manage all conflicts of interest and appearances of a conflict of interest. This conflict of interest policy is designed to help accrediting commissioners, evaluators, subject specialists, consultants, administrative staff, appeals panel members, and employees of the DEAC to identify situations that present potential conflicts of interest and to provide DEAC with a procedure to appropriately manage conflicts and ensure that its accrediting activities are conducted in an environment free of bias, in accordance with legal requirements and the goals of accountability and transparency in DEAC's operations.

A. CONFLICT OF INTEREST DEFINED

For purposes of this policy, a person with a conflict of interest is referred to as an "interested person." The following circumstances shall be deemed to create a conflict of interest:

- Ownership of some or all of an institution, its assets, or the stock of the company that owns or operates the institution;
- The holding of mortgages, liens, or other debt instruments or interest upon an institution or its assets;
- Having been employed, or currently employed, at the institution;
- Currently employed with a DEAC institution that competes with the institution;
- Having served, or currently serving, as a consultant to the institution;
- Having served, or currently serving, on a board, advisory council, or committee of the institution;
- Having attended the institution as a student;
- Having financial interest (including holding stocks, etc.) in the institution or a business or enterprise that competes with DEAC;
- Having a close personal friend or family member at the institution; or
- Having accepted gifts, entertainment, or other favors from individuals or entities (see below).

Other situations may create the appearance of a conflict or present a duality of interests in connection with a person who has influence over the activities or finances of the DEAC.

All such circumstances should be disclosed to the DEAC executive director, as appropriate, and a decision made as to what course of action the organization or individuals should take so that the best interests of the DEAC are not compromised by the personal interests of stakeholders in the DEAC.

B. GIFTS, GRATUITIES, AND ENTERTAINMENT

Accepting gifts, entertainment, or other favors from individuals or entities can also result in a conflict or duality of interest when the party providing the gift/entertainment/favor

does so under circumstances where it might be inferred that such action was intended to influence or possibly would influence the interested person in the performance of his or her duties. Souvenirs (typically available to the public) are permissible but should be restricted to inexpensive items representing the institution.

1. DEFINITIONS

In this policy, the following terms are defined as:

- a. A “conflict of interest” is any circumstance described in part A of this policy.
- b. An “interested person” is any person serving as commissioner, evaluator, subject specialist, consultant, administrative staff, appeals panel member, or employee of DEAC or anyone else who is in a position of control over DEAC and has a personal interest that is in conflict with the interests of DEAC.
- c. A “family member” is a spouse, parent, child, or spouse of a child or a brother, sister, or spouse of a brother or sister, of an interested person.
- d. A “material financial interest” in an entity is a financial interest of any kind, which, in view of all the circumstances, is substantial enough that it would, or reasonably could, affect an interested person’s or family member’s judgment with respect to transactions to which the entity is a party. Where the potential for pecuniary gain or the appearance of it is involved, as in reporting on or evaluating a current or potential direct competitor or partner or an institution in which the participant has a financial interest, the participant has a conflict of interest.
- e. An “appearance of a conflict” means there is an appearance of partiality involved, as in a situation where the person who has a conflict of interest has a relationship with an institution or its principals such that evaluations or decisions may appear to be unduly influenced by that relationship.
- f. A “duality of interests” means when a person has divided loyalties or when a person has a personal interest that conflicts with the interest of DEAC.

2. PROCEDURES

The procedures for addressing a conflict of interest, an appearance of a conflict, or a duality of interests are as follows:

- a. Prior to a Commission meeting, an on-site evaluation, a course/program review, an appeals panel hearing, a consultation, or any action on an institution involving a conflict of interest, the person having a conflict of interest shall disclose to the DEAC executive director all facts material to the conflict of interest. If any interested persons are aware that staff or other persons have a conflict of interest, relevant facts should be disclosed

by the interested person him/herself to the executive director for purposes of disclosure.

- b. Where the appearance of partiality is involved, as in a situation where the person who has a conflict of interest has a relationship with an institution or its principals such that evaluations or decisions may appear to be unduly influenced by that relationship, the person with the conflict of interest must advise the next higher person in the process and must recuse him/herself. Guidance should be sought from the DEAC executive director in questionable cases.
- c. A person who has a conflict of interest shall not participate in or be permitted to hear any discussion of or to vote on any matter being considered. Such person shall not attempt to exert his or her personal influence with respect to the matter, either at or outside the meeting.
- d. In the event it is not entirely clear that a conflict of interest exists, the individual with the potential conflict shall disclose the circumstances to the DEAC staff member/executive director, who shall determine whether a conflict of interest exists that is subject to this policy.

3. CONFIDENTIALITY

Protecting confidentiality is an important part of the accreditation process. Interested persons are reminded of the following:

- a. Each accrediting commissioner, evaluator, subject specialist, consultant, administrative staff, appeals panel member, or employee shall exercise care not to disclose confidential information acquired in connection with disclosures of conflicts of interest or potential conflicts, which might be adverse to the interests of DEAC.
- b. Accrediting commissioners, evaluators, subject specialists, consultants, administrative staff, appeals panel members, and employees will not discuss any confidential aspect of an application for DEAC accreditation with the applicant, an institution accredited by DEAC, a direct competitor of the applicant, or any other third party except as required in order to discharge the responsibilities of the participant in the accreditation review. DEAC will communicate the results of the Commission's decision to the applicant and the public.
- c. Furthermore, accrediting commissioners, evaluators, subject specialists, consultants, administrative staff, appeals panel members, and employees shall not disclose or use information relating to the business of DEAC for their personal profit or advantage or the personal profit or advantage of their family member(s).

4. REVIEW OF POLICY

The following describes the review process for this policy:

- a. Each accrediting commissioner, evaluator, subject specialist, consultant, administrative staff, appeals panel member, or employee shall be provided with and asked to review a copy of this policy and to acknowledge in writing that he or she has done so.
- b. Each accrediting commissioner, evaluator, subject specialist, consultant, administrative staff, appeals panel member, or employee shall complete a Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form identifying any relationships, positions or circumstances in which s/he is involved that s/he believes could present a conflict of interest.
- c. Any such information regarding the business interests of an accrediting commissioner, evaluator, subject specialist, consultant, administrative staff, appeals panel member, or DEAC employee, or a family member thereof, shall be treated as confidential and shall generally be made available only to the executive director and any committee appointed to address conflicts of interest, except to the extent additional disclosure is necessary in connection with the implementation of this policy.
- d. This policy shall be reviewed annually by each member of the Accrediting Commission. Any changes to the policy shall be communicated to all staff and interested persons.
- e. On-site evaluators must annually read and agree to the conditions of the DEAC Code of Conduct for On-Site Evaluators in addition to this policy.

5. CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE FORM

This form is completed annually by each accrediting commissioner, evaluator, subject specialist, consultant, administrative staff, appeals panel member, or employee.

I agree to complete the Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form for all institutions I review.

I have read and received a copy of DEAC's Conflict of Interest Policy.

Name: _____ Signature: _____
Title: _____ E-mail: _____
Institution/Company: _____ Date: _____

II. CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE FORM

Name: _____ E-mail: _____

Institution(s) being reviewed: _____ Date Visit/Review/Meeting: _____

Your Position: _____

Please note that a separate form must be completed for each occasion. For multiple institutions, a list or agenda may be attached to this document.

Conflict of Interest: The following circumstances shall be deemed to create a conflict of interest:

- Ownership of some or all of an institution, its assets, or the stock of the company that owns or operates the institution;
- The holding of mortgages, liens, or other debt instruments or interest upon an institution or its assets;
- Having been employed, or currently employed, at the institution;
- Currently employed with a DEAC institution that competes with the institution;
- Having served, or currently serving, as a consultant to the institution;
- Having served, or currently serving, on a board, advisory council, or committee of the institution;
- Having attended the institution as a student;
- Having financial interest (including holding stocks, etc.) in the institution or a business or enterprise that competes with DEAC;
- Having a close personal friend or family member at the institution; or
- Having accepted gifts, entertainment or other favors from individuals or entities (see below).

___ I **do not** have a conflict of interest with this/these institution(s)

___ I **do** have a conflict of interest to report (please describe on next page)

Other situations may create the *appearance of a conflict* or present a *duality of interests* in connection with a person who has influence over the activities or finances of the DEAC. All such circumstances should be disclosed to the DEAC executive director, as appropriate, and a decision made as to what course of action the organization or individuals should take so that the best interests of the DEAC are not compromised by the personal interests of stakeholders in the DEAC.

I hereby certify that the information set forth above is true and complete to the best of my knowledge. I have reviewed, and agree to abide by, DEAC's Conflict of Interest Policy.

Signature: _____ Today's Date: _____

III. CODE OF CONDUCT FOR ON-SITE EVALUATORS

A. High standards of honesty, integrity, and impartiality by on-site evaluators are essential for the proper performance of the Distance Education Accrediting Commission's business and the maintenance of confidence by institutions in the accreditation process. This confidence is influenced not only by the way an on-site evaluator conducts him/herself, but also in the way he/she conducts him/herself in the eyes of other accredited institutions and the public. To help on-site evaluators avoid any misconduct and conflicts of interest and to ensure that DEAC's accreditation activities are conducted in an environment free of bias, DEAC has adopted the following code of conduct.

As an on-site evaluator, I agree to:

1. conduct myself in a manner which seeks to avoid a conflict of interest or any appearance of conflict of interest;
2. read, sign, and abide by DEAC's Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form;
3. engage in no outside employment or other outside activity not compatible with the full and proper discharge of the responsibilities of a member of the DEAC Examining Committee;
4. recruit no staff or offer my services, nor shall I take any information or materials for personal interest or gain during the on-site evaluation;
5. state no opinion or prediction concerning possible action by the Commission that may result from the on-site evaluation;
6. direct any inquiries I may have, or request for additional information after the on-site visit, to the DEAC staff;
7. treat all information obtained through the institution's participation in the accreditation process as confidential, and not disclose such information to parties other than members of the examining committee, the Commission, and the DEAC staff except pursuant to valid governmental regulation or judicial procedure;
8. participate in no litigation or other legal proceedings involving institutions that are or may seek to become accredited by DEAC without consulting with DEAC's counsel and the executive director;
9. discuss no accreditation matters on behalf of the appeals panel or Commission with members of the media, referring any media inquiries to the executive director;
10. discuss no legal matters involving the institution evaluated or to be

evaluated with counsel for the institution or any third party;

11. exercise due diligence in becoming familiar with, and an authority on, DEAC accreditation standards and policies;
12. participate in a training program prior to my participation in on-site evaluations that include training on DEAC's Conflict of Interest Policy, exercise due diligence in preparing for the institution's on-site evaluation, and come to the on-site evaluation familiar with all assigned materials and prepared to fully participate in the process;
13. participate fully in the process and otherwise conduct myself during the on-site visit in a manner consistent with my best, impartial and unfettered judgment, and in furtherance of the Commission's purpose;
14. conduct myself professionally, impartially, and courteously during the on-site evaluation; and
15. report any alleged violations of the Code of Conduct immediately to the DEAC executive director.

B. CODE OF CONDUCT FOR ON-SITE EVALUATORS AGREEMENT

This form is completed annually.

I have read and agree to the conditions and have received a copy of the DEAC Code of Conduct for On-Site Evaluators.

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____

If the DEAC staff member or Commission member should determine that an on-site evaluator has violated the DEAC Code of Conduct, he/she may sanction the offending on-site evaluator through an oral or written reprimand or prohibit that individual from being a member of any DEAC evaluation team in the future.

IV. SELECTING AND TRAINING COMMISSIONERS

A. PROCEDURES FOR THE SELECTING AND TRAINING DEAC COMMISSIONERS

The process of selecting and vetting an individual to serve on the Commission begins with DEAC's Nominating Committee. The Committee is charged with nominating individuals to be elected or appointed to the Accrediting Commission. Institution members of the Commission are elected by DEAC-accredited members, and public members of the Commission are appointed by the Accrediting Commission. The Nominating Committee is comprised of five individuals, three from the DEAC-accredited membership not currently serving on the Commission and two Commissioners, with one being a public member.

Nominations come from interested persons, the general public, and DEAC-accredited members. Using the qualifications described below, the executive director first interviews the nominees to see if they are willing to perform the responsibilities required of Commissioners, including completing the training, time commitments, and meeting dates and to identify any conflict of interests.

For institution commissioners, the Nominating Committee reviews and vets the nominees' résumés. Once candidates are recommended by the Nominating Committee and confirmed by the Commission, the nominations for institution members are published for a period not less than 30 days prior to the Annual Business Meeting of the DEAC. Once the nominations are closed, the members of DEAC vote.

The nominations for the public commissioners are presented to the members of the Commission, who make the final appointment. Commissioners have the opportunity to interact with nominees as public commissioner candidates are invited to observe an Accrediting Commission meeting before the Commission votes on appointments.

B. SIZE AND MAKE-UP OF THE COMMISSION

The selection criteria used for the Board of Directors who serve as the Accrediting Commission are prescribed by the *DEAC Bylaws* Article IV Directors. Under Section 2, it states the Board of Directors will "consist of ten (10) Directors, five (5) Institutional Directors from Members of the Corporation elected by the Members and five (5) Public Directors appointed by the Board of Directors to represent the public. Under Section 3 it states that at least two members of the Commission must be "academics," defined by DEAC as a person who works full time at an educational institution who, possibly in addition to other duties, actively teaches, delivers educational content to learners, or engages in educational research related to the institution's mission. At least two members of the Commission must be "administrators" defined by DEAC as a person currently or recently directly engaged in a significant manner in the administration of an institution."

At its Annual Business Meeting, the DEAC members elect directors from the

ranks of accredited members to replace those whose terms of office expire that year. Public members are appointed by the Board of Directors to replace public members whose terms expire.

When an unexpected vacancy occurs by reason of resignation or otherwise, or when a Commission member from an accredited institution is no longer currently active in academic or administrative functions, the Chair of the Commission will declare the position vacant, and the Chair will appoint a qualified individual to fill the position, who will thereby start his/her own first term upon taking his/her seat on the Commission.

By custom, the Chair of the Board of Directors is a public Commissioner who has at least two years of service remaining on his or her term. Normally, a Chair does not serve more than three years as the Chair. Also by custom, the Vice Chair has at least two years of service remaining on his or her term. Normally, a Vice Chair does not serve more than three years as the Vice Chair.

C. QUALIFICATIONS OF COMMISSIONERS

Public Commissioners: Public Commissioners are selected from diversified fields and backgrounds to include, insofar as possible, representatives from government, industry, business, finance, and education.

In seeking individuals to be recommended for appointment to the Board of Directors, the DEAC Nominating Committee considers individuals whose qualifications and experience will provide expertise that would best help the Commission deal with special areas of institution evaluation (i.e., finance, administration, management, curriculum, etc.).

In addition to the above, the following informal guidelines will be considered in appointing Public Commissioners from outside the distance study field:

1. Personal qualities of leadership, integrity, ability, and personal reputation; and
2. Formal education—earning one or more appropriately accredited academic degrees.

A Public Commissioner may not be 1) an employee, member of the governing board, owner, or shareholder of, or consultant to, an institution that either is accredited by DEAC or has applied for such accreditation; 2) a member of any organization that transacts business with or receives any funding or payments from DEAC; or 3) a spouse, parent, child, or sibling of an individual identified in 1) or 2) above.

Institution Commissioners: Institution Commissioners are selected from DEAC-accredited institutions and are individuals who are currently active academic or administrative personnel who do not have a representative currently serving on the Accrediting Commission.

The Commissioners are selected so that they are representative of the variety of institutions in the Distance Education Accrediting Commission and the distance education field insofar as possible.

In addition to the above, the following informal guidelines are considered in appointing Commissioners from the distance study institution field:

1. The personal qualities of leadership, integrity, ability, and personal reputation;
2. Formal education—holding one or more appropriately accredited academic degrees;
3. Experience in the distance study field with a contemporary knowledge of the field;
4. Demonstrated supportiveness of the accrediting program;
5. Experience as a member of Accrediting Examining Committees; and
6. Interest in and support of the Distance Education Accrediting Commission as evidenced by regular attendance at DEAC functions and personal as well as institutional participation on committees and at DEAC workshops, conferences, and other events.

All Commissioners must have an interest and willingness to serve and should be able to devote the time to do the necessary reading and background preparation and attend all Commission meetings so that they can serve effectively.

D. RESPONSIBILITIES OF COMMISSIONERS

The Commissioners have the following responsibilities consistent with the DEAC Bylaws. The Commission's responsibilities are:

1. Establish, implement, and promulgate standards and policies reflecting the qualities of sound and reputable distance education and training institutions and determine effective procedures and administrative guidelines for evaluating distance education and training institutions seeking DEAC accreditation.
2. Receive and act upon applications for accreditation and reaccreditation from distance education institutions, evaluate new programs submitted for approval, decide the merits of any petitions from institutions, and oversee an ongoing program that ensures all standards and policies are effective, current, and compliant with existing requirements for a recognized accrediting association.
3. Conduct an institutional accreditation program that is compliant with extant federal and CHEA-adopted recognition criteria for nationally recognized accrediting associations.

4. Review the reports of evaluation committees and all other pertinent materials, including the Self-Evaluation Report, and, acting as a joint body of decision makers, accredit, deny, or withdraw accreditation from accredited institutions or order a Show Cause. In cases where accreditation is withdrawn or denied, the institution will be given the reasons for the adverse decision and will be given the opportunity of appealing the adverse decision before it becomes final.
5. Re-evaluate accredited institutions at reasonable intervals.
6. Exercise such other powers and duties as are necessary to carry out the functions of a nationally recognized accrediting association.

E. TRAINING OF COMMISSIONERS

Commissioners must successfully complete DEAC's online course entitled, "DEAC Evaluator's Training Program," before attending their first Commission meeting. In addition to the online training course, DEAC's staff provides an annual training seminar. All Commissioners are required to attend this seminar. Items covered during this seminar include the mission and goals of DEAC; the history, traditions, and culture of the commission; the accreditation process and how Accrediting Commission meetings are conducted; how applications are processed, from start to finish; duties and obligations of Commission members; how the Commission makes decisions; enforcement of timelines; ethics, conflicts of interest, confidentiality of the process and legal issues; appeals panel role and function; and how to execute Commissioners duties and stay current. Recusals are addressed in the conflicts of interest session.

All Commissioners are also required to occasionally participate in an on-site evaluation as an observer. DEAC provides additional training through its workshops and webinars, which the Commissioners routinely participate in or attend. Commissioners also keep current on any changes to DEAC's standards, policies, or procedures through information provided in DEAC's numerous publications and through its website postings.

F. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Each Commissioner is required to review, sign, and abide by the DEAC Conflict of Interest Policy each January. Each Commission must also review, sign, and abide by DEAC's Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form before each Commission meeting. These forms are kept on file or stored electronically at the DEAC office in Washington, D.C.

V. SELECTING AND TRAINING EVALUATORS

A. PROCEDURES FOR SELECTING AND TRAINING DEAC EVALUATORS

The Distance Education Accrediting Commission prides itself on attracting competent and knowledgeable individuals to serve as on-site evaluators and subject specialists. The selection of evaluators and subject specialist reviewers is based upon the judgment of the director of accreditation acting under the established guidelines of this policy. Each on-site team has academic and administrative personnel represented.

B. ON-SITE EVALUATORS

The Commission trains and uses top executives and other staff from accredited institutions as on-site evaluators, as well as highly qualified academic experts from other accredited higher education institutions and from other sectors of society. In the vast majority of cases, each examining committee is comprised the CEOs or senior executive officers of accredited institutions, thus ensuring an authentic “peer review” from the ranks of the most highly respected practitioners in the field.

Evaluators are also selected from among accredited public and private institution educators, executives, and practitioners in business, technical, and service fields. Evaluation teams are made up of a mix of educators and practitioners. Some of the evaluators are retired persons who have otherwise remained active in their field of expertise.

As an added safeguard to ensure against potential or perceived conflicts in the selection of visiting evaluators, applicant institutions receive an examination schedule containing the names and affiliations of visiting evaluators and short biographies on each evaluator. The institutions then have an opportunity to discuss any specific objections they may have to a particular evaluator. In the case where an expressed objection is found to be valid, the executive director will appoint another evaluator to take the place of the evaluator who had been questioned.

To become a qualified examiner, one must complete an online or paper-based training program entitled *DEAC Evaluator Training Program* and receive a certificate of completion. The Accrediting Commission maintains a record of the qualifications of people who have been trained as on-site evaluators through this training program.

Before new evaluators are asked to serve on an on-site team, they must:

1. Have demonstrated expertise, ability, and accomplishment in the area they are selected to examine;
2. Read, agree to abide by, and sign the DEAC Code of Conduct for On-Site Evaluators, which includes reading, agreeing to abide by, and signing DEAC’s Conflict of Interest Policy and Conflict of Interest and Disclosure Form (see below); and

3. Have completed the training program, *DEAC Evaluator Training Program*.

In selecting evaluators for visits, the director of accreditation considers the nature of the institution being visited, the methods of operation unique to the institution, the nature of the program(s) offered, and the expertise and past examining experience of the evaluator. For visits to degree-granting institutions, a subject specialist is always included. These evaluators must possess an academic degree that is in a similar field and one higher than the degrees being offered by the institution, or the relevant terminal degree.

C. SUBJECT SPECIALIST

Special care is given to select professionals for subject specialists who are current and knowledgeable in their area of expertise (i.e., evaluation of curriculum content that reflects up-to-date technologies and skills). The vast majority of subject matter experts come to the Commission from regionally accredited institutions of higher learning, often by personal recommendation of the executive officers of higher education associations, e.g., the American Council on Education or any of the regional accrediting associations. The various specialized accrediting associations offer a rich source of potential qualified subject specialist evaluators. DEAC makes effective use of its working relationships with the various accrediting bodies to obtain and build an extensive roster of highly qualified experts.

To be selected as a subject specialist, the Commission asks that the person evidence no bias against the distance education method or no conflict of interest with the institution. For vocational courses, special care is given in selecting current practitioners who are working in the field of study. As discussed above, for degree programs, the subject specialists must have the appropriate academic degrees from an institution accredited by an agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education and/or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation. Typically, the subject specialist must have a degree that is one higher than the degree being evaluated or the appropriate terminal degree. The degrees must be related to the degrees being evaluated. For doctorate degrees, the evaluator must have the same doctorate degree and have practiced in the field for several years before he or she would be considered for the evaluation.

To become a qualified subject specialist, one must complete the training program entitled *DEAC Evaluator Training Program* and receive a certificate of completion. The Accrediting Commission maintains a record of the qualifications of people who have been trained as subject specialists through this training program.

The duty of a subject specialist is to determine if curriculum materials offered by the institution are complete, accurate, and up to date in light of the stated objectives of the course. The subject specialist must judge whether the course is of good quality and whether it meets the published standards of the Accrediting Commission. For credit-bearing courses, the subject specialists must be able to judge the comparability of curricula to in-residence programs.

Subject specialists are used for evaluating courses off site and on site. The Commission's *Guide for Subject Specialist Evaluators* on DEAC's website describes the responsibilities for both types of reviewers. Each subject specialist is given the appropriate rating forms.

For visits to degree-granting institutions, a subject specialist is always appointed to the on-site committee visiting the institution. When a subject specialist accompanies an on-site team to the institution, he/she is able to follow up on questions related to the course materials by examining the institution's procedures for offering its educational programs.

DEAC staff is available to answer any questions from subject specialists concerning the accreditation standards, policies, and procedures.

D. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Every evaluator and subject specialist must read, sign, and abide by DEAC's Conflict of Interest Policy and the Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form before reviewing any institution and its program as part of the accreditation process. In addition, on-site evaluators and subject specialist must also read, sign, and abide by DEAC's Code of Conduct for On-Site Evaluators.

E. FUNCTIONS OF EVALUATING TEAM MEMBERS

The following outlines the roles and responsibilities for each evaluating team member.

1. **Readiness Assessment Evaluator**

- Reviews institution's initial Self-Evaluation Report and Exhibits
- Submits report to the director of accreditation and determines if the institution is ready for an on-site visit.

2. **Chair**

- Coordinates visit
- Ensures that evaluators complete their tasks during the on-site visit
- Sets date for report submission
- Prepares Chair's Report
- Submits Chair's Report to the director of accreditation

3. **Education Evaluator**

- Evaluates institution's compliance with accreditation standards using DEAC rating forms
- Submits report to the Chair and the director of accreditation
- Verifies special areas through documentation and interviews:
 - Institutional mission
 - Institutional effectiveness and strategic planning
 - Program outcomes, curricula, and materials
 - Educational and student support services
 - Student achievement and satisfaction
 - Academic leadership and faculty qualifications
 - Admissions practices

- Reviews comments from subject specialists
- Handles special concern by reviewing:
 - Student surveys and/or complaints
 - Curricula and online platforms
 - Student records and tracking progression
 - Course/program completions
 - Examinations and other assessments
 - Faculty interaction
 - Outcomes assessment plan and data
 - Student and faculty files
 - Minutes of board, advisory boards, faculty meetings, curriculum committees, etc.
 - Strategic plan and other research
 - Succession plan

4. Business Evaluator

- Evaluates institution's compliance with accreditation standards using DEAC rating forms
- Submits report to the Chair and director of accreditation
- Verifies special areas through documentation and interviews:
 - Enrollment agreements
 - Financial disclosures, cancellations, and refund policies
 - Institutional governance
 - Financial responsibility
 - Facilities, equipment, supplies, record protection and retention
- Handles special concerns by reviewing:
 - Financial statements
 - Enrollment agreements
 - Refund policies
 - Catalog, advertisements, and website
 - Facilities, equipment, supplies, and record protection

5. Degree Program Evaluator

- Evaluates accreditation standards using DEAC rating forms
- Submits report to the Chair and director of accreditation
- Reviews subject specialists' comments
- Handles special concerns by reviewing:
 - Program outcomes, curricula, and instructional materials
 - Faculty qualifications
 - Student/faculty ratios
 - Credit hour policy and data

6. Subject Specialists

- Evaluates accreditation standards using DEAC rating forms
- Submits report to the Chair and director of accreditation
- Reviews curricula, assignments/examinations, student/faculty interaction

- Interviews faculty/instructors and students

7. DEAC Staff Member

- Coordinates schedules and logistics
- Answers questions concerning accreditation standards and procedures

8. State Agency Observer

- Participates as a full member of the on-site team
- Provides pertinent information from state files
- Observes institution's evaluation and accreditation process
- Files comments to DEAC (optional)

VI. SELECTING AND TRAINING APPEALS PANEL MEMBERS

A. PROCEDURES FOR SELECTING AND TRAINING DEAC APPEALS PANEL MEMBERS

Part Two, Section XII of the DEAC *Accreditation Handbook* states that an institution may appeal a decision by the Accrediting Commission to deny or withdraw accreditation. This policy details the process of selecting the members of the appeals panel, their responsibilities, and training.

B. APPEALS PROCESS

An institution's appeal is heard by an independent appeals panel that is separate from the Commission and serves as an additional level of due process for the institution. The appeals panel has no authority concerning the reasonableness or appropriateness of eligibility criteria, policies, procedures, or accreditation standards. The panel is not empowered to overrule the Commission by imposing its own determinations on what the panel believes should constitute adequate procedures, institution response times, or other administrative policies promulgated by the Commission. It can only affirm, amend, remand, or reverse a prior **decision** of the Commission as set forth below. Its role is to determine whether the Commission's adverse action was not supported by the record or was clearly erroneous. The institutions, both initial applicants and accredited institutions, always have the burden of proof in demonstrating that an adverse action of the Commission was not supported by the record or was otherwise erroneous.

C. PROCESS FOR SELECTION OF AN APPEALS PANEL MEMBER

The process of selecting and vetting a person to serve on the appeals panel begins with the Commission selecting from a pool of candidates meeting the criteria below.

The appeals panel will consist of three people appointed by the Accrediting Commission. One will represent the public interest, one will represent academic/education interests, and one will be a distance education institution administrator/executive. Potential members of appeals panels will be selected from the ranks of former members of the Accrediting Commission, the corps of Commission evaluators, and active staff of DEAC-accredited institutions who have completed the DEAC evaluator training program. All panelists are subject to DEAC's Conflict of Interest Policy and are vetted to assure that they are free from any subject matter bias before being selected for a particular appeal.

The Commission selects three people to serve on the appeals panel: a public member, an academic, and an administrator. Once the Commission appoints the three people and they accept, the executive director submits the names and qualifications of the appeals panel members to the institution in advance. An institution has 10 days from the receipt of the panel members' names to object on the basis of possible conflict of interest as described in DEAC's Conflict of Interest Policy. If the Commission determines that a conflict exists, the panelist is replaced. No panel member may serve if he/she participated, in any respect, in the

underlying decision by the Accrediting Commission to deny or withdraw the accreditation of the institution

D. TRAINING OF APPEALS PANEL MEMBERS

Once the appeals panel members are chosen, DEAC works with the institution and the panel members to set a date for the appeal hearing. In preparation for hearing the institution's appeal, the panel members are sent the documentation needed to perform their tasks. The panel members are briefed by DEAC's executive director and legal counsel on their responsibilities and duties. An outside mediator may or may not be brought in to conduct the appeals hearing. The consideration of the appeal is based upon the Commission's written findings and reasons related to the action, the institution's written response detailing grounds for appeal, and relevant supportive documents.

The appeals panel members are told the date, time, and place of the appeals hearing. They are also provided an agenda of the meeting, which contains of the names and titles of the people attending the hearing. DEAC staff works with panel members to arrange for transportation and hotel accommodations, which DEAC pays for.

The institution must set forth the specific grounds for its appeal and state the reasons the institution believes the adverse decision should be set aside or revised. In making its appeal, the institution has the burden to show that the Commission's decision resulted from errors or omissions in the execution of Commission policies and procedures, or that the decision was arbitrary or capricious and was not based on substantial evidence on the record. No new materials may be presented for the appeals panel's consideration on appeal.

E. RESPONSIBILITY AND DUTIES OF THE APPEALS PANEL MEMBERS

The appeals panel members shall have the following responsibilities, consistent with DEAC policies and procedures:

1. when appointed to the appeals panel, s/he must read, sign, and abide by DEAC's Conflict of Interest Policy and sign the Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form. These forms must be submitted to DEAC within 10 days after agreeing to serve on an appeals panel;
2. exercise due diligence in becoming familiar with, and an authority on, DEAC standards, policies, and procedures, and participate in all training sessions conducted by DEAC's staff;
3. agree to review all documentation pertinent to the institution's appeal;
4. treat all information obtained through the institution's participation in the appeal process as confidential, and do not disclose such information to parties other than the DEAC staff and legal counsel;

5. direct any inquiries s/he may have, or request for additional information after the appeal hearing to the DEAC executive director;
6. state no opinion or prediction concerning possible actions the Commission may take as a result of the appeal hearing; and
7. exercise such powers and duties as are necessary to carry out the functions of a DEAC appeals panel.

VII. OBLIGATIONS OF ACCREDITATION

Accreditation brings with it a number of obligations for the institution. An accredited institution must continue to meet all accreditation standards. The institution must continue to justify the confidence placed in it by DEAC and improve itself in all areas. Accredited institutions are obligated to:

A. FILE AN ANNUAL REPORT

Each accredited institution is required to file an Annual Report form to the Commission. The institution must advise the Commission of significant changes since its initial or last renewal of accreditation cycle. An institution is assessed a late fee if its Annual Report is not submitted by January 31. As part of the Annual Report, the institution must report its data on course completion and program graduation rates. The institution must also submit data on students' satisfaction as demonstrated by the percentage of students who answer affirmatively to the three mandatory DEAC questions.

B. PAY ANNUAL DUES AND ACCREDITATION FEES

An accredited institution is charged an annual accreditation fee to sustain the accreditation process. As a member of DEAC, each member institution is charged annual dues. These dues support the research and professional activities of DEAC. The dues and fees are based on annual tuition receipts. An institution must submit a completed "Computation for Dues and Fees Form." A statement is sent to the institution indicating the amount of dues and accreditation fees owed. Dues and fees not paid in full by April 30 are charged a late fee. An accredited institution failing to meet its financial obligations to DEAC by September 30 is subject to a special accreditation visit.

C. TEACH-OUT COMMITMENT

The institution should be mindful of its formal commitment to "teach out" all students who enroll in its distance study programs irrespective of changes in the institution's accreditation status. The institution should update the Teach-Out Commitment and send it to the Commission when there are changes in the institution's ownership, management, or location. Institutions must also submit a Teach-Out Plan, if required.

D. NEW AND REVISED COURSES

The institution must inform the Commission whenever it adds or revises a course/program.

E. CORRECT ANY INCORRECT OR MISLEADING INFORMATION

An accredited institution is required to issue public correction to all incorrect or misleading information knowingly or unknowingly released in reference to its accreditation status, the contents of reports of the examining committee from accreditation-related visits, and/or any actions taken by the Commission with respect to the institution.

F. MAINTAIN PROPER LICENSURES, AUTHORIZATIONS, OR APPROVALS

An accredited institution may not retain accreditation if it is not properly licensed,

authorized, or approved by the applicable state educational oversight authority. Each accredited institution must conform to all the provisions of applicable laws and regulations.

G. ADVISE COMMISSION IN A TIMELY MANNER

An accredited institution must promptly inform the Commission of any actions it plans to take itself or actions taken against it by other agencies if those actions could affect its good status in the eyes of the Commission or the public, and resolve complaints in a forthright, prompt, amicable, and equitable manner. Members should make periodic contact with the staff of the Commission apprising them of governmental and media actions which may affect their institutions or the Commission.

H. ADVISE COMMISSION OF SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE

It is the duty of the Commission to make certain that any substantive change an accredited institution makes does not adversely affect its capacity to continue to meet DEAC's accreditation standards. An institution must obtain the Commission's approval before the change in the institution's scope of accreditation is granted.

I. PARTICIPATE IN ON-SITE EVALUATIONS

An institution should encourage its staff and faculty to actively participate in DEAC's accreditation process as one opportunity for professional development. The Commission conducts training sessions through its online course entitled *DEAC Evaluator Training Program*. Peer-reviewers receive instructions on being effective evaluators.

J. RENEWAL OF ACCREDITATION

An accredited institution must take the steps necessary to renew its accreditation at least every five years (three years following initial accreditation). After this time, without affirmative action by the Commission to continue the renewal of an institution's accreditation, the accreditation expires as of the date determined by the Commission. DEAC staff sends the institution a reminder to submit its application for accreditation by the date specified. Once the institution is granted renewal of accreditation, the DEAC staff issues a new accreditation certificate citing the original date of accreditation and the renewal of accreditation date.

K. FAILURE TO MEET OBLIGATIONS

If at any time an institution fails to meet its obligations of accreditation in a timely manner, including failure to pay its financial obligations to DEAC, the Commission may order a special visit.

VIII. **DEAC CODE OF ETHICS FOR STUDENT RECRUITMENT PERSONNEL**

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

- A. 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.
- B. I will observe fully the accreditation standards, rules, policies, procedures, and guidelines established by my institution, the Distance Education Accrediting Commission, the state education agency, and other legally authorized agencies.
- C. 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 or 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 prior to enrolling complete and accurate information about

financing options for students, and answer any questions.

9. Never use tuition assistance available from a government 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 and obligations and procedures established by my institution for my position and know all of my obligations and 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.

IX. ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY ASSESSMENT

A. Prospective students 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 must demonstrate college-level proficiency in English through one of the following for admission:

1. **Undergraduate Degree:** A minimum total score of **57** on the paper-delivered Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL PBT), or **61** on the Internet Based Test (iBT); **6.0** on the International English Language Test (IELTS); **44** on the Pearson Test of English Academic Score Report; **95** on the Duolingo English Test; or **53** on the 4-skill Michigan English Test (MET), or **650/LP** on the Michigan Examination for the Certificate of Competency in English (ECCE), or **650/LP** on the Michigan Examination for the Certificate of Proficiency in English (ECPE).

A high school diploma completed at an accredited/recognized high school (where the medium of instruction is English).

2. **Master's Degree:** A minimum total score of **60** on the paper-delivered Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL PBT), or **71** on the Internet Based Test (iBT); **6.5** on the International English Language Test (IELTS); **50** on the Pearson Test of English Academic Score Report; **100** on the Duolingo English Test; or **55** on the 4-skill Michigan English Test (MET), or **650/LP** on the Michigan Examination for the Certificate of Competency in English (ECCE), or **650/LP** on the Michigan Examination for the Certificate of Proficiency in English (ECPE).

3. **First Professional Degree or Professional Doctoral Degree:** A minimum score of **65** on the paper-delivered Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL PBT), or **80** on the Internet Based Test (iBT); **6.5** on the International English Language Test (IELTS); **58** on the Pearson Test of English Academic Score Report; **105** on the Duolingo English Test; or **55** on the 4-skill Michigan English Test (MET), or **650/LP** on the Michigan Examination for the Certificate of Competency in English (ECCE), or **650/LP** on the Michigan Examination for the Certificate of Proficiency in English (ECPE).

4. A minimum score on the College Board Accuplacer ESL Exam Series as follows:

ESL Language Use: Score of 85

ESL Listening: Score of 80

ESL Reading: Score of 85

ESL Sentence Meaning: Score of 90

ESL Writeplacer: Score of 4

Comprehensive Score for all exams of 350

5. A minimum grade of Pre-1 on the Eiken English Proficiency Exam;
 6. A minimum B-2 English proficiency level identified within the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) standards and assessed through various ESOL examinations, including the University of Cambridge;
 7. A transcript indicating completion of at least 30 semester credit hours with an average grade of “C” or higher at an institution accredited by an agency recognized by the United States Secretary of Education and/or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), or accepted foreign equivalent that is listed in the International Handbook of Universities where the language of instruction was English. An average grade of B or higher is required for the master’s degree, first professional degree, or professional doctoral degree.
- B. Transcripts not in English must be evaluated by an appropriate third party and translated into English or evaluated by a trained transcript evaluator fluent in the language on the transcript. In this case, the evaluator must have expertise in the educational practices of the country of origin and include an English translation of the review.

X. STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT BENCHMARKS

The degree program benchmarks are set forth in the table below. DEAC is continuing with its historical practice of setting graduation rate benchmarks at approximately 15 points below the average for the total number of students in all institutions at each degree level. Data are collected from DEAC-accredited institutions as a baseline for the use of empirical, quantitative measures of institutional effectiveness and improvement strategies that focus on distance education. DEAC reviews the data it receives each year in annual report submissions from accredited institutions to determine if adjustments are needed. This practice is intended to accommodate both annual fluctuations within institutions and variable factors across institutions and programs.

	<i>Average Graduation Rate</i>	<i>Graduation Rate</i>
Associate Degree Programs		
<i>Distance Education</i>	47%	32%
<i>Correspondence/Competency-Based</i>	28%	*
Bachelor's Degree Programs	58%	43%
Master's Degree Programs	69%	54%
First Professional Degree Programs	77%	62%
Doctoral Degree Programs	55%	40%

**The Commission does not set a benchmark at 15 points below the average. However, it recognizes that different factors could fairly account for an institution reporting a rate below the 28% average. Accordingly, with respect to institutions reporting a lower rate, the Commission will conduct a secondary analysis of individual course completion rates, evaluation of student portfolios, and other information that would reasonably demonstrate institutional effectiveness.*

Data on student persistence and completion in shorter-term, non-degree educational programs offered at DEAC-accredited institutions are submitted and reviewed on an annual basis. Based upon a longitudinal review of these data, DEAC continues to set a completion rate benchmark at 60 percent for these programs.

	<i>Average Completion Rate</i>	<i>Completion Rate</i>
Non-degree Programs	80%	60%

DEAC values other quantifiable means of evaluating institutional effectiveness. Institutions may provide data on their IPEDS outcomes measures, IPEDS graduation rates, or National Student Clearinghouse Total Completion Rates in addition to data reported directly to the DEAC.

XI. STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND SATISFACTION

A. ACHIEVEMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

When an institution undergoes 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 documentation that it follows the plan. The institution's Outcomes Assessment Plan must also include documentation on how student learning outcomes data is used to assess institutional outcomes, goals, and strategic initiatives. Each accredited institution must confirm that it meets this requirement in its Annual Report to the Commission and by providing a narrative on its continuous improvement results.

The institution must demonstrate and document in its Self-Evaluation Report through results of learning outcomes 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. The institution must demonstrate that it uses evidence of student learning to gauge the effectiveness of the educational practices and methodologies through its institutional effectiveness planning efforts. This data should also be used to identify and implement strategies for improving student learning. It is not enough for an institution to simply collect data. The institution must demonstrate that the evidence is analyzed and drives curricular and institutional improvements.

Assessment is an ongoing process aimed at understanding and improving student learning. An institution's Outcomes Assessment Plan should communicate 1) what the institution wants students to be able to do or know, 2) how it knows the students achieved these outcomes, and 3) how the institution will use the information received to improve teaching and learning. An Outcomes Assessment Plan should begin with a solid set of learning 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 it interprets and uses the results. The institution must use both direct and indirect measures of outcomes learning assessments to show achievement of course and program outcomes, and provide documented evidence that shows that the results are used to improve programs, curricula, instruction, faculty development, and support services.

B. PERCEIVED STUDENT SATISFACTION

The institution documents that students are satisfied with the instructional and educational services provided. DEAC evaluates student responses to survey questions designed by the Commission as a part of the DEAC accreditation process. Students in DEAC-accredited institutions fit a profile, and most are older and maintain other personal and professional commitments. They are adequate judges of whether the

program delivered what it promised. The institution should regularly survey students, at a minimum annually, using questions designed to elicit the measure of satisfaction. The institution should establish a baseline. The Commission developed three questions to be asked randomly of students. For each course and program offered by an institution, three of every four students responding to a random survey must answer positively about their experiences.

C. PROGRESS THROUGH THE COURSE/PROGRAM

The institution documents that students complete their studies at rates that compare favorably to those of courses/programs offered by similar DEAC-accredited institutions or benchmarks set by the Commission. See Appendix X.

D. OTHER INFORMATION CONSIDERED

In determining whether an institution undergoing its initial or renewal of accreditation meets Standard V. Student Achievement and Satisfaction, the Commission considers the direct evidence of the results of its own survey of students using the DEAC Student Survey Form. An institution must submit 100 names (labels for correspondence institutions) with their application form. If an institution has more than one division (e.g., vocational or academic degrees), it must submit 100 names from 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.

If the institution feels that it cannot adequately and fairly fulfill the reporting requirements as described above, it may suggest other ways of providing evidence that it meets Standard V. Student Achievement and Satisfaction. The Commission will make a determination on a case-by-case basis if the institution's methods of providing evidence are acceptable for meeting Standard V. Student Achievement and Satisfaction.

E. 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 DEAC staff will determine which institutions and programs are similar. For institutions undergoing initial or renewal of 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 compares 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.

F. ANNUAL REPORTING OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT RESULTS

The institution in its Annual Report is required to provide a narrative on its activities or improvements which 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.

G. CONCLUSION

The Commission will judge the acceptability of the case an institution makes for meeting Standard V. Student Achievement and Satisfaction by reviewing all of the evidence and 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.

Evidence provided by the institution must be relevant, verifiable, representative, and cumulative. It may not be modified to produce a desired outcome. The burden of proof is always on the institution to provide evidence that it meets Standard V. Student Achievement and Satisfaction.

XII. PILOT PROGRAMS

The DEAC will consider suspension of certain policies and grant approval to a limited number of applicants which propose innovative pilot programs that contribute to strengthening the institution and its education and training and benefit its students. The Commission may use the experience gained from such pilot projects to adjust and improve its accrediting programs.

A. ELIGIBILITY

An applicant for a pilot program must be accredited by the DEAC. An applicant for a pilot program must be an institution in good standing with DEAC, and its proposed pilot program must also be in compliance with federal, state, and local law.

B. APPLICATION

The Commission will consider an application for a pilot program in accordance with the educational significance of the proposal and the potential for contribution to the development of education and training and of accreditation standards. A determination by the Commission not to accept an application for a pilot program will be without prejudice to its resubmission at a later time or to the institution's current accredited status.

An applicant for a pilot program must submit the following:

1. A narrative statement demonstrating the applicant's eligibility and alignment with its mission and describing the pilot program in detail. This narrative should indicate the specific accreditation standards for which a waiver is requested. The narrative should include a description of the specific objectives sought to be accomplished and an explanation of how the pilot program will strengthen the institution, contribute to the development of its education and training, and benefit students.
2. A statement of the length of time necessary to implement the pilot program proposal and to assess its effectiveness. This statement should explain the basis of the institution's projections.
3. A demonstration that the faculty, instructional material, equipment, and facilities that will be used in conjunction with the pilot program are sufficient to meet the objectives of the proposal. This demonstration must include staff and faculty personnel reports for all persons who will act in an instructional or administrative capacity in the pilot program and a detailed description of the instructional materials, equipment, and facilities that may be used.
4. A projection of the number of students expected to enroll and complete the training and the basis for the applicant's projections.
5. An explanation of how the applicant will recruit and admit students, assure

that students are fully and accurately informed about the education/training to be provided, and determine that students have the capability to benefit from and succeed at the education/training. The institution must demonstrate that students' health, safety, and welfare will be protected.

6. A plan that describes the funding for the pilot program and demonstrates that the applicant is able to support and complete the pilot program.
7. A certification statement, signed by the applicant, that the information included in the application for a pilot program is true and correct.

C. EVALUATION

Upon the receipt of the above information, the Commission will require an on-site visit to verify the information supplied and to develop a further understanding of the pilot program. The findings of the evaluator(s) will be set forth in a report that will be provided to the applicant and the Commission. The applicant will have the opportunity to respond to the report.

D. COMMISSION REVIEW

Upon consideration of the information provided, the findings and assessment described in "Evaluation" above, and the applicant's response to the findings, the Commission may grant approval for the proposed pilot program if it finds that the program can be reasonably expected to strengthen the institution and its education and training and benefit its students. The Commission reserves the right to limit the duration of the pilot program and the number of students who will be allowed to participate. The Commission may establish such other terms and conditions upon any approval granted under the pilot program as it deems appropriate. The Commission will establish an appropriate fee to cover the costs associated with each pilot program.

XIII. SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES THAT WARRANT WAIVERS OF DEAC STANDARDS & PROCEDURES

The Distance Education Accrediting Commission reserves the right to grant waivers of its standards, policies, procedures and timeframes when special circumstances warrant such waivers, for a period of time as determined by DEAC annually, and not to exceed three years unless DEAC determines there is good cause to extend the period of time, and if—

- A. DEAC and the institution can show that the circumstances requiring the period of noncompliance are beyond the institution's control, such as—
 - 1. A natural disaster or other catastrophic event significantly impacting an institution's or program's operations.
 - 2. Accepting students from another institution that is implementing a teach-out or closing.
 - 3. Significant and documented local or national economic changes, such as an economic recession or closure of a large local employer.
 - 4. Changes relating to State licensure requirements.
 - 5. The normal application of the agency's standards creates an undue hardship on students, or
 - 6. Instructors who do not meet the agency's typical faculty standards, but who are otherwise qualified by education or work experience, to teach courses within a dual or concurrent enrollment program, as defined in 20 U.S.C. 7801, or career and technical education courses.

- B. The grant of the period of noncompliance is approved by DEAC's decision-making body,

- C. DEAC projects that the institution or program has the resources necessary to achieve compliance with the standard, policy, or procedure postponed within the time allotted,
and

- D. The institution or program demonstrates to the satisfaction of DEAC that the period of noncompliance will not—
 - 1. Contribute to the cost of the program to the student without the student's consent;
 - 2. Create any undue hardship on, or harm to, students; or
 - 3. Compromise the program's academic quality.

GLOSSARY

ACADEMIC

A member of an institution of learning, relating to education and scholarship.

ACADEMIC PROGRAM

A series of courses designed to lead to a degree, diploma, or certificate credential in a defined field of study or occupation. Academic programs are guided by specific program outcomes.

ACCEPTED BEST PRACTICE

A technique or methodology that, through experience and research, has been proven to reliably lead to a desired or optimum result within an industry or profession.

ACCREDITATION

A voluntary, nongovernmental, peer-based form of quality assurance at the institutional level. Institutions demonstrate compliance with state, federal, and accreditation standards determined through initial and periodic evaluations in order to achieve accreditation.

ACRONYMS (COMMONLY USED IN HIGHER EDUCATION)

AACRAO	American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers
AA	Associate of Arts degree
AAS	Associate of Applied Science degree
AS	Associate of Science degree
BA	Bachelor of Arts degree
BS	Bachelor of Science degree
BSN	Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree
CAEL	Council for Adult and Experiential Learning
CEU	Continuing Education Unit
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CHEA	Council for Higher Education Accreditation
CLEP	College Level Examination Program
DA	Doctor of Arts degree (specified fields)
DBA	Doctor of Business Administration
DMin	Doctor of Ministry
DPA	Doctor of Public Administration
DPT	Doctor of Physical Therapy
DOT	Doctor of Occupational Therapy
DSc	Doctor of Science (specified fields)
EdD	Doctor of Education degree
FAFSA	Free Application for Federal Student Aid
GED	General Education Development
GPA	Grade Point Average

IPEDS	Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System
MA	Master of Arts degree
MBA	Master of Business Administration degree
MS	Master of Science degree
NACIQI	National Advisory Committee for Institutional Quality and Integrity
NCSARA	National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
USED	United States Department of Education

ACTIVE STUDENT

An enrolled student who has completed at least one assignment or examination, is making satisfactory progress, or has affirmed in writing an intent to continue studying.

ADDITIONAL LOCATION

Per Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 34 §602: a facility that is geographically apart from the main campus of the institution and at which the institution offers at least 50 percent of a program and may qualify as a branch campus.

ADMINISTRATIVE SITE

A separate office located geographically apart from the main headquarters location, which typically provides an off-site workplace for the convenience of institution officials who do not live near the headquarters. Neither educational programs nor instructional services to students are offered from an administrative site.

ADMINISTRATOR

An individual who manages an institution of learning.

ASSESSMENT (OF STUDENT LEARNING)

An ongoing, iterative process consisting of defining learning outcomes, choosing a method or approach, gathering evidence of learning, analyzing and interpreting the evidence, and using the results to improve student learning.

ASSIGNMENT

A specific task or amount of work performed by a student and submitted for evaluation.

ARTICULATION AGREEMENTS

Cooperation between two or more institutions to facilitate the transfer of students' credit or other predetermined collaboration.

ASYNCHRONOUS

Instructional communication or interaction that does not occur at the same time, place, or rate.

AVOCATIONAL

Courses or programs designed for personal academic enhancement or professional development.

BENCHMARK

A point of reference or standard in relation to which something can be compared and judged. A specific level of student performance may serve as the benchmark that students are expected to meet at a particular point in time or developmental level. Retention and graduation rates may also be benchmarked against those of peer institutions or national norms.

BRANCH CAMPUS

Per Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 34 §602: an additional location of an institution that is geographically apart and independent of the main campus of the institution. The Secretary considers a location of an institution to be independent of the main campus if the location (1) Is permanent in nature; (2) Offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized educational credential; (3) Has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization; and (4) Has its own budgetary and hiring authority.

CANCELLATION

The process of withdrawing a student, refunding tuition and fees owed to the student, and relieving the student and institution of further obligations.

CAPSTONE

A culminating project or experience, usually associated with undergraduate and graduate education, that generally takes place in the student's final year of study and requires review, synthesis, and application of what has been learned over the course of the student's instructional experience. The result may be a report, product, or performance. The capstone can provide evidence for assessment of a range of outcomes (e.g., core competencies, program outcomes, institution-level outcomes).

CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

Degree: Typically, certificate programs contain a collection of credit-bearing courses configured to equip students with specialized knowledge in a subject area with content that is less extensive than what is provided in an entire degree program.

Non-Degree: Certificate/diploma programs consist of modules or lessons that result in the award of a "certificate" or "diploma" at the completion of a course of study.

CHANGE IN LEGAL STATUS

A change in the legal definition of the company or corporation, which is typically defined by the state or United States government, such as changing from a for-profit to a nonprofit or from an S Corporation to an LLC.

CHANGE OF FORM OF CONTROL

The sale of all or a majority interest of the institution's assets, sale or assignment of the controlling interest of the voting stock of a corporation that owns the institution or that controls the institution through one or more subsidiaries, merger or consolidation of the institution with other institutions, or an independent corporation with a different

ownership. When an institution changes its form of control, defined as the ability to direct or cause the direction of the actions of an institution, it is essentially changing ownership.

CHANGE OF OWNERSHIP

Any transaction or combination of transactions that would result in a change in the control of an accredited institution.

CIP CODES

The Classification of Instructional Programs provides a taxonomic scheme that supports the accurate tracking and reporting of fields of study and program completions activity.

CLOCK HOUR

One instructional hour defined as 50 minutes of instruction in a 60-minute period.

COMPETENCY

In assessment of student learning, a specific skill, body of knowledge, or disposition; can also refer to the student's ability to demonstrate that learning.

COMPLETION

Signifies a student met the requirements for an individual course, semester, or term.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

For purposes of this policy, a person with a conflict of interest is referred to as an "interested person." The following circumstances shall be deemed to create a conflict of interest:

- Ownership of some or all of an institution, its assets, or the stock of the company that owns or operates the institution;
- The holding of mortgages, liens, or other debt instruments or interest upon an institution or its assets;
- Having been employed, or currently employed, at the institution;
- Currently employed with a DEAC institution that competes with the institution;
- Having served, or currently serving, as a consultant to the institution;
- Having served, or currently serving, on a board, advisory council, or committee of the institution;
- Having attended the institution as a student;
- Having financial interest (including holding stocks, etc.) in the institution or a business or enterprise that competes with DEAC;
- Having a close personal friend or family member at the institution; or
- Having accepted gifts, entertainment or other favors from individuals or entities (see below).

Other situations may create the appearance of a conflict, or present a duality of interests in connection with a person who has influence over the activities or finances of the DEAC.

CONTINUING EDUCATION UNITS (CEU)

A measurement of participation in non-credit professional development activities.

CORRESPONDENCE EDUCATION

Education provided through one or more courses in which the institution provides instructional materials and examinations by mail or electronic transmission to students who are separated from the instructor. Interaction between the instructor and the student is not regular and substantive, and it is primarily initiated by the student. Correspondence courses are typically self-paced. Correspondence education is not distance education for the purposes of participating in Federal Student Assistance Title IV funding programs.

COURSE

A learning experience of defined scope and duration, with intended learning outcomes, as described in a catalog or syllabus.

CREDIT HOURS

Semester and quarter hours are equivalent to the commonly accepted and traditionally defined units of academic measurement. Academic degrees 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 credit².

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.

CURRICULUM

Lessons, outcomes, and academic content taught in a specific course of study or academic program.

DEGREE

A title conferred on students by an institution on completion of a program of study.

DIPLOMA

A document bearing record of graduation from or of a degree conferred by an educational institution.

DISTANCE EDUCATION

The U.S. Department of Education defines distance education within the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 34 § 600.2. as follows:

Education that uses one or more of the technologies listed in paragraphs (1) through (4) of this definition to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor or instructors, and to support regular and substantive interaction between

the students and the instructor or instructors, either synchronously or asynchronously.

The technologies that may be used to offer distance education include —

- 1. The internet;*
- 2. One-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices;*
- 3. Audio conferencing; or*
- 4. Other media used in a course in conjunction with any of the technologies listed in paragraphs (1) through (3) of this definition.*

For purposes of this definition, an instructor is an individual responsible for delivering course content and who meets the qualifications for instruction established by the institution's accrediting agency.

For purposes of this definition, substantive interaction is engaging students in teaching, learning, and assessment, consistent with the content under discussion, and also includes at least two of the following—

- 1. Providing direct instruction;*
 - 2. Assessing or providing feedback on a student's coursework;*
 - 3. Providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency;*
 - 4. Facilitating a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency;*
- or,*
- 5. Other instructional activities approved by the institution's or program's accrediting agency.*

An institution ensures regular interaction between a student and an instructor or instructors by, prior to the student's completion of a course or competency—

- 1. Providing the opportunity for substantive interactions with the student on a predictable and regular basis commensurate with the length of time and the amount of content in the course or competency; and*
- 2. Monitoring the student's academic engagement and success and ensuring that an instructor is responsible for promptly and proactively engaging in substantive interaction with the student when needed, on the basis of such monitoring, or upon request by the student.*

DIVISION

Any name used by an institution to advertise its various courses or programs. A "division" is owned and operated by the parent institution and is not a separate legal entity.

DROP OUT

A student who withdraws or ceases attendance at an institution.

EDUCATIONAL OFFERINGS

Academic or vocational courses or programs.

EDUCATIONAL RECORDS

Records that contain information directly related to a student and are maintained by an educational institution in accordance with applicable state and federal rules and regulations.

ELECTRONIC SIGNATURE

Symbols or other data in digital form attached to an electronically transmitted document as verification of the sender's intent to sign the document.

ENROLLMENT AGREEMENT (APPLICATION, CONTRACT)

Any agreement or other similar contractual document that creates or evidences an obligation binding a student to purchase educational offerings from an institution.

EXHIBITS

The required data, evidence, documents, and other items that are included as part of the Self-Evaluation Report and reviewed during initial and renewal of accreditation.

FACULTY

Instructional staff of an institution responsible for the design, delivery, and assessment of academic programs. The use of "faculty" does not typically include administrators, counselors, or other campus educators, (e.g., admissions representatives, student service personnel). Full-time faculty members are those whose primary employment obligation is to teaching and research at the institution. Part-time or adjunct faculty members may have continuing contracts and be involved in program development and review, governance, and other matters; or they may be assigned a specific number of courses with few or no other responsibilities to the institution. The institution is responsible for having clear policies on faculty roles and responsibilities.

FICE CODE

The six-digit institutional identifier that is assigned to each higher education (two-year or above) institution by the Federal Interagency Committee on Education and is used in all Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) reports.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

At a minimum, the financial statements (audited or reviewed) must be comparative, include a letter of financial statement validation, CPA Opinion or Review Report, and also include the following

FOR-PROFIT INSTITUTIONS:

- Balance Sheet: reflecting assets, liabilities, and equity;
- Income Statement: reflecting revenues, expenses, and net income (loss);
- Statement of Cash Flows: reflecting the sources and uses of cash;
- Statement of Changes in Shareholders' Equity: showing activity in shareholders' equity for the periods presented; and

- Explanatory Notes: reflects all of the disclosures or footnotes required by generally accepted accounting principles.

NONPROFIT INSTITUTIONS:

- Statement of Financial Position: reflecting assets, liabilities, and net assets;
- Statement of Activities: reflecting revenues, expenses, and change in net assets;
- Statement of Cash Flows: reflecting the sources and uses of cash;
- Explanatory Notes: reflects all of the disclosures or footnotes required by generally accepted accounting principles.

FIRST PROFESSIONAL DEGREE

A degree that signifies both completion of the academic requirement for beginning practice in a given profession and a level of professional skill beyond that normally required for a bachelor's degree. This degree usually is based on a program requiring at least two academic years of work before entrance and a total of at least six academic years of work to complete the degree program, including both prior required college work and the professional program itself. By the National Center for Education Statistics definition, "First Professional degrees are awarded in the fields of dentistry (D.D.S. or D.M.D.), medicine (M.D.), optometry (O.D.), osteopathic medicine (D.O.), pharmacy (D.Pharm.), pediatric medicine (D.P.M.), veterinary medicine (D.V.M.), chiropractic (D.C. or D.C.M.), law (LL.B. or J.D.) and theological professionals (M.Div. or M.H.L.)."

GOOD CAUSE

The Commission may, in its sole discretion and upon written request of an institution providing detailed grounds for its request, agree to extend the Deferral Period or Show Cause Remediation Period, as applicable, for good cause shown. An institution requesting an extension must provide evidence, in its request, that it has made substantial, good faith progress toward compliance with the requirements of the deferral notice or show cause directive and that granting the extension will not impose an unreasonable burden on or otherwise cause harm to students. A "good cause" extension may be allowed, for example, when an institution needs additional time to more fully document the scope and permanence of its compliance with DEAC accreditation standards or to establish an extended history of such compliance. A decision to grant a "good cause" extension may be made contingent on the institution's submission of interim reports on progress and related data. When the Commission grants a "good cause" extension, the time allowed for institutional compliance may exceed the permissible compliance times published in federal regulations. If the result of a "good cause" extension results in a Show Cause Remediation Period longer than that authorized by federal regulation, the Commission notifies the U.S. Secretary of Education of its decision and the reason for the same. A decision by the Commission not to grant a "good cause" extension is not appealable.

GRADING CRITERIA

A set of criteria and standards linked to outcomes that are used to assess a student's performance on assignments, assessments, or examinations. Rubrics are used by faculty in fairly and consistently measuring student performance.

GRADUATE

A student who has satisfied the prescribed requirements and been awarded a certificate, diploma, or degree.

GRADUATION

The act of successful completion of all program requirements resulting in receipt of a diploma or degree from an institution.

HYBRID COURSE

Instruction that combines face-to-face teaching and learning activities with distance education.

IN-RESIDENCE COMPONENT

Instruction that requires in-person delivery of curriculum, learning of certain manual skills, technical proficiency with specialized equipment, access to resources or the application of certain techniques under professional supervision. In-residence components must not exceed 49% of a DEAC-approved program.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

Intellectual property rights are the rights given to persons over the creations of their minds. They usually give the creator an exclusive right over the use of his/her creation for a certain period of time. There are four types of intellectual property: patents, trademarks, copyrights, and trade secrets. For DEAC's purposes, institutions should have a policy on intellectual property rights as it relates to the creation of its courses/programs (including lectures, audio and visual materials, and pictorial or graphic works), websites, and software and databases. The institution's published policy should resolve any questions about who owns the copyright(s). The policy should be inclusive of faculty, staff, and students.

INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

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 planning 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 contributes to this process by measuring course/program-level effectiveness through students' achievement of learning outcomes. Data and results gathered from the institutional effectiveness planning process are used to inform strategic planning that is monitored annually and reviewed and revised during regular intervals.

INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

A collection of institutional metrics and data useful for analysis, planning, improvement, and accreditation review.

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

Resources that make up the curriculum, such as textbooks, computer applications, links, kits, supplies used throughout an academic or vocational course or program.

INTERNATIONAL CONTRACT

A formal agreement between a U.S. entity and a non-U.S. entity. For DEAC purposes, whenever any major function of an institution (training sites, recruiting, instruction, marketing, administrative functions) is performed outside the United States, or when campuses or coordinating offices are opened in another country, an institution must have a formal contract with the non-U.S. entity. Also, when the institution contracts with foreign agents or educational entities, including formal articulation agreements, the DEAC institution must submit to the Commission in writing a complete description of the international program and activities and must submit its contracts for review

INTERNATIONAL HANDBOOK OF UNIVERSITIES

A handbook published by the International Association of Universities, which lists institutions that are accepted as foreign equivalents to U.S. institutions accredited by agencies recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education and/or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).

(The International Handbook of Universities. 29th ed. IAU ISBN: 978-92-9002-207-7. Cham Switzerland: International Association of Universities; November 2019. Palgrave Macmillan <https://doi.org/10.1057/978-3-319-76971-4> (eBook))

JOB PLACEMENT

An alumni service offered by an institution in which assistance is provided to graduates in finding opportunities for a new career position. Placement is further defined to describe when a graduate obtains employment as a direct result of the training, skills, or education the graduate received from the institution. The employment must be for a reasonable period of time, based on published program outcomes, and be considered sustainable (e.g., not a single day of employment). The employment must be directly related to the program from which the individual graduated, align with a majority of the educational and training outcomes of the program completed, and be a paid position.

LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (LMS)

A platform or software application for the administration and management of online distance education courses, activities, and resources.

LIBRARY RESOURCES

An accessible collection of texts, literary materials, reference books, manuscripts, periodicals, videos, and audio materials that are maintained or provided by an institution. The “library” can include both print and non-print materials and generally make use of a variety of dispersed electronic digital databases. The accredited degree-awarding

institution is expected to have—or to provide learners ready access to—a reasonably rich array of supplemental information resources that are related to and enhance the content of the subject matter offered to students.

MAIN FACILITY

A geographic location that houses the headquarters of an institution. The institution provides evidence it is approved in the state for the activity that it conducts at the location.

MISSION

An institution’s formally adopted statement of its fundamental reasons for existence, its shared purposes and values, and the students that it aims to serve. The mission is central to decisions about priorities and strategic initiatives and provides a context for DEAC decisions about quality and accreditation.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU)

A bilateral or multilateral agreement between two or more parties. It expresses a convergence of wills between the parties, indicating an intended common line of action. It is often used in cases where parties either do not imply a legal commitment or in situations where the parties cannot create a legally enforceable agreement. In private U.S. law, MOU is a common synonym for a letter of intent.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

A process for determining and addressing needs or “gaps” between current conditions and desired conditions, often used for improvement in individuals, education/training, organizations, or communities (e.g. expected career or learning outcomes). An institution should complete a “needs assessment” before developing a new program. The curriculum development team should research and compare similar in-residence and distance education programs. The needs assessment should assess industry trends, knowledge, and competencies required for the field of study, professional organizations related to the field, obstacles to success in the field, the demand and pay for the field, adaptability of the topic to distance education, and availability of job opportunities, if applicable.

OBJECTIVES

Inputs that describe what the institution teaches students as a result of the curriculum offered. They describe the intended results of instruction planned by the institution. Data collected as a result of objectives communicates to all stakeholders the level of curriculum rigor being taught and assessed.

ON-SITE EVALUATORS

Individuals who are trained by DEAC to serve on an on-site team or as a reader/reviewer of Self-Evaluation Reports, exhibits, or other documents requested by DEAC. On-site evaluators may represent the public or serve at a DEAC-accredited institutions as presidents, provosts, deans, directors, or faculty but may also be subject matter experts in education.

OPE ID

Identification number used by the United States Department of Education Office of Postsecondary Education to identify institutions that have Program Participation Agreements so that their students are eligible to participate in Federal Student Assistance programs under Title IV regulations. This is a six-digit number followed by a two-digit suffix used to identify branches, additional locations, and other entities that are part of the eligible institution.

OUTCOME

Outputs demonstrated by students as a result of the curriculum offered. They reflect the actual achieved results of what was learned and provide evidence that intended learning was achieved. Data collected as a result of outcomes communicate to all stakeholders the level of student learning achieved.

PRIOR LEARNING

Learning that has occurred outside the classroom. In some cases, credit may be awarded for prior learning through various means of assessment. An institution offering credit for prior learning assessment publishes and follows evaluation standards consistent with CAEL's Ten Standards for Assessing Learning. Prior learning assessment is performed by qualified individuals with experience in prior learning evaluation.

PROCTOR

A person who administers or supervises the testing process. The proctor verifies that the person taking the examination is who he/she says he/she is by reviewing appropriate documentation (i.e., driver's license or government-issued identification with photo).

PROFESSIONAL DOCTORAL DEGREE

A post-master's graduate-level degree that prepares individuals through internships, practical application of training, and/or specialized certifications for professional practice (such as the Doctor of Business Administration), as opposed to research methodologies that are associated with academic doctoral degrees (such as the Doctor of Philosophy).

PROGRAM GOAL

A short, concise, general statement of the overall purpose of a program. A program goal should point towards some long-term effect, change, or purpose. It is usually not phrased in quantified terms. It should be sufficiently "definite" that it points clearly to the program.

READING LEVEL

The level of a person's reading comprehension as assessed by a standardized test or that equivalent level at which a program of study is written.

RECRUITING PERSONNEL

Any administrators, staff, faculty, or contractors who enroll prospective students.

REMEDIAL INSTRUCTION

Instruction designed and delivered to assist students in order to achieve expected competencies in core academic skills such as literacy and numeracy.

RESEARCH

Collection, analysis, and publication of data, studies, or other findings in order to expand a field of knowledge or its application.

RUBRIC

A tool for scoring student work or performances, typically in the form of a table or matrix, with criteria that describe the dimensions of the outcome and levels of performance. The work or performance may be given an overall score (holistic scoring), or criteria may be scored individually (analytic scoring). Rubrics are also used to communicate expectations to students.

SELF-EVALUATION

The process of self-evaluation provides a institution an opportunity to critically reflect on its operations, processes, and procedures at regular intervals and 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.

SELF-EVALUATION REPORT

The Self-Evaluation Report is a guide that institutions use to communicate how their policies and procedures meet or exceed DEAC accreditation standards.

SHOW CAUSE DIRECTIVE

The Commission may direct the institution to Show Cause as to why its accreditation should not be withdrawn when substantive questions and concerns are raised regarding a DEAC-accredited institution's compliance with DEAC's accreditation standards or procedures. The issuance of a Show Cause directive is not an adverse action but a statement of serious concern by the Commission. The burden of proof rests with the institution to demonstrate that it is meeting DEAC's accreditation standards and procedures. Notice of the Show Cause directive is provided to federal and state agencies with jurisdiction over the institution and to the public.

SOUND PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING

Theory and research-based fundamentals designed to promote effective learning strategies.

SPECIAL VISIT

A focused visit that may be requested by the Commission to follow up on a specific area of concern.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

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 institutions' 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.

STUDENT INTEGRITY

Involves the enforcement of specific, published rules concerning academic honesty (student cheating, plagiarism, or dishonesty in any form) and personal conduct that is above reproach. Student integrity is best promoted by the implementation of a published honor code or honor system, which is a set of rules or principles governing an academic community based on a set of ideals that constitute honorable behavior within that community. The use of an honor code depends on the idea that people (at least within the community) can be trusted to act honorably. Those who are in violation of the honor code can be subject to various sanctions, including academic dismissal and expulsion from the institution. Student honor codes require all students to agree to them, and they often require students to report any violations of the code of which they have personal knowledge. A DEAC institution promotes an academic environment suitable for distance or online delivery where students are encouraged to act with professional, academic, and personal integrity. The institution must hold students personally accountable for upholding the institution's stated expectations for conduct.

STUDENT SATISFACTION

Evidence that documents students are satisfied with the instructional and educational services provided.

STUDENT SERVICES

Resources provided for students by an institution. These services are designed to proactively support students to perform to their potential, motivate students to study, or respond to students' questions of a nonacademic nature.

SUBJECT SPECIALIST

A person whose background, education, training, experience, occupation, and/or profession qualifies him/her as a reliable authority or expert in a specific field of study and who is appointed by DEAC to evaluate distance education courses/programs in terms of the published standards for accredited institutions.

SYNCHRONOUS

Instructional communication or interaction that exists or occurs at the same time.

TEACH-OUT PLAN

Institutions develop a formal plan, approved by the Commission, that enables currently enrolled students to complete their educational offerings at either the same or another institution. During a "teach-out," students are entitled to receive all instruction, services,

and materials consistent with the signed enrollment agreement or other similar contractual document.

TERMINAL DEGREE

The highest academic or professional degree awarded in a specific field of study. Generally, doctoral degrees and master's degrees in specialized fields are considered terminal degrees.

TOTAL COURSE PRICE

Includes tuition, fees, educational services and instruction, any other services (such as proctored examinations or placement); any required books, kits, and equipment; any optional or required resident training; and charges applied to all students, such as application fees, registration fees, and finance charges. Institutions will use Total Course Price in preparing enrollment agreements, calculating refund amounts, and collecting student accounts.

TRANSCRIPT

An official copy of a student's educational record at an educational institution. It usually lists all courses taken, final grades received, credits (and honors) earned, and degrees or certificates awarded, including corresponding dates of enrollment and completion.