



# DISTANCE EDUCATION ACCREDITING COMMISSION

## CALL FOR COMMENT ON *ACCREDITATION HANDBOOK* REORGANIZATION

APRIL 13, 2015 – JUNE 12, 2015

Dear DEAC Colleagues:

I am pleased to present you with the opportunity to comment on the reorganization of the DEAC *Accreditation Handbook*. Consistent with the principles of continuous improvement and self-examination that DEAC expects of its accredited institutions, over the past year DEAC has engaged in an extensive effort to review all of its accreditation standards, policies and procedures. While DEAC's accreditation standards are notable for setting appropriate levels of specificity with respect to distance education capacity or performance, the overarching goal of this effort is to center the accreditation standards more visibly on institutional effectiveness and improvement. In addition, the *Accreditation Handbook* will more clearly address how DEAC-accredited institutions provide evidence about the achievement of students and will better emphasize student learning outcomes as a more visible and integral part of the accreditation process.

This Call for Comment is meant to gather *initial feedback* on the overall reorganization of the *Accreditation Handbook*. Over the next sixty days, DEAC encourages its institutions to review and comment on the reorganization. The DEAC will review these comments at its June 2015 Commission Meeting. After considering the written comments, the DEAC will conduct further review with a second comment period during the July-August timeframe.

As you review the Accreditation Handbook, please keep in mind that the primary objectives of the reorganization project were to

1. identify and resolve redundancies;
2. clarify language to more clearly express compliance requirements where needed;
3. consolidate requirements that address a specific institutional area or function but were spread across accreditation standards, procedures and policies; and
4. combine the accreditation standards and the business standards into one comprehensive set of accreditation standards.

Attached in the documents that follow are additional instructions for reviewing and submitting comments, due by **June 12, 2015**. And, as many of you know, we are going to review the project in detail at the Annual Conference in Chicago. Please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions you may have. Finally, I wish to thank Susan Chiaramonte for her exceptional efforts keeping this project organized and continuously moving forward. We are grateful for her fine work and commitment to DEAC.

Sincerely,

Leah K. Matthews  
Executive Director



## Accreditation Handbook Review Guide

Thank you for participating in DEAC's call for public comment on the proposed Accreditation Handbook draft. This version is the culmination of a 10 month collaborative effort to meet the evolving needs of DEAC member institutions, the Commission, the Staff, prospective institutions, and the public.

The proposed Accreditation Handbook draft encompasses the reorganization and revisions necessary to provide the framework and support institutions need in offering innovative solutions within an increasing regulatory environment. The Accreditation Handbook has been streamlined to adapt to the changing education landscape and position DEAC as a leader in distance education accreditation.

As you read through the proposed Accreditation Handbook draft, please use the following as a guide to navigate through the document. An Accreditation Handbook presentation is planned for the upcoming 89<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in Chicago, Illinois and we look forward to seeing you there. The call for public will commence on Monday, April 13<sup>th</sup> and continue for 60 days. Please submit all comments and feedback using only the Reorganized Accreditation Handbook Call-for-Comment Form. Email the completed form to [call4comment@deac.org](mailto:call4comment@deac.org).

**Note:** If printing, the document orientation is landscape.

Below is the color/symbol legend for **Part I: Introduction** and **Part II: Processes and Procedures**.

Accreditation Handbook: Black
Policies: Green
New Content/Additions: Purple
Strikethrough: Proposed Deletion
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# Accreditation Handbook

January 2016  
23<sup>rd</sup> Edition

Policies, Procedures, and Standards of the  
Distance Education Accrediting Commission

DEAC Accreditation Handbook

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Price: \$50

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Since 1995, the DEAC Accreditation Handbook has been updated annually in January.

Downloadable PDF files of all documents contained with the DEAC Accreditation Handbook can be found on DEAC's website. The PDF files and website copy are DEAC's official policies and procedures, and they take precedence over information in this printed edition. Please refer to the Update Sheet. Special Templates for the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and other forms may be downloaded from the website (<http://www.deac.org/Seeking-Accreditation/The-DEAC-Accrediting-Handbook.aspx>).

Accredited institutions must be in full compliance by XX-XX-XXXX with any revisions or additions to the 23<sup>rd</sup> Edition of the DEAC Accreditation Handbook.

The independent Distance Education Accrediting Commission is listed by the United States Department of Education as a "nationally recognized accrediting agency." DEAC is also a recognized member of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). The United States Department of Education and CHEA recognition is for postsecondary program purposes only.



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### **The Color/Symbol Legend for Parts I and II**

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## **PART I: INTRODUCTION**

### **ABOUT DEAC**

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Accreditation in education began over a century ago. The movement started as a public reaction to the extreme differences between educational institutions that initially appeared to be similar. Accrediting bodies were voluntarily organized by educators to develop and implement common policies and standards to measure educational quality. From its inception, accreditation has been a non-governmental, completely voluntary, peer group method of identifying educational institutions or programs which meet published standards of quality. A variety of regional, national, and professional accrediting organizations came into being in the early 1900s in response to the public's demand for reliable indicators of institutional quality. The Distance Education Accrediting Commission (DEAC) was founded in 1926 as an association under the name "National Home Study Council" to promote education quality and ethical business practices for correspondence education programs. In 1955, the Accrediting Commission was established. It created and implemented accreditation standards and procedures to examine and approve distance learning institutions. In 1959, the Accrediting Commission received its first grant of federal recognition and was listed by the U.S. Commissioner (now Secretary) of Education as a nationally recognized accreditor. In 1994, the name of the organization changed from the National Home Study Council to the Distance Education and Training Council, and in 2015, was changed to the Distance Education Accrediting Commission. [Accreditation Handbook – Page 3]

#### **VISION**

The Distance Education Accrediting Commission is the preeminent accrediting organization for distance education delivered worldwide that sets high standards for academic quality inspiring excellence in teaching, learning, and student outcomes through voluntary assessment and peer review.



## MISSION

Assuring students high quality distance education through accreditation, peer review, and institutional improvement.

## PURPOSE OF THE ACCREDITATION HANDBOOK

DEAC has prepared this Accreditation Handbook as a compilation of its processes, procedures, and standards. It is intended to assist institutions in understanding and preparing for evaluation by DEAC. Institutions should use it as they organize and conduct their self-evaluations, as they evaluate their readiness to meet the rigors inherent in voluntary accreditation, and as they work to maintain the standards of DEAC. Finally, this Accreditation Handbook offers guidance to newly established distance education institutions seeking to build or refine their policies and practices, whether or not they apply for DEAC accreditation. Evaluator's Rating Forms, Guide to Self-Evaluation, Applications, and Report Forms are found on DEAC's website at [www.deac.org](http://www.deac.org). Please note: Institutions should always check the website for the most up-to-date versions of these documents. The website copy take precedence over the information in this print version. [Accreditation Handbook – Page 2]

## WHAT IS DISTANCE EDUCATION?

Distance education, also known as online education, correspondence education, or Internet-based learning, is designed for learners who live at a distance from residential educational providers and/or institutions. Distance education has evolved in recent years to also include an increasing number of adult-learners who may be within reasonable proximity to a residential campus, but because of work and personal responsibilities are unable to regularly attend a physical campus. Additionally, these adult-learners consider themselves to be self-starters and more independent students who thrive in an environment which provides a balance between flexibility and structure.

Distance education has a rich history dating back to the early 18<sup>th</sup> century when its predominant medium of instruction was printed materials which were mailed to individual students and allowed for little to no interaction with faculty members. Distance education today has taken advantage of technological innovations and has become a multi-faceted avenue for providing instruction through various mediums to meet the learning needs of a diverse, growing student population. Educational institutions can reach across borders and extend globally to build strong learner communities through the use of technological tools such as social media outlets, podcasts, various forms of asynchronous and synchronous communication, and videoconferencing. Advancements within the field of distance education has provided an increasing population of students the opportunity to earn degrees and gain knowledge and skills in various subject areas.

For institutions participating in Title IV Federal Financial Aid programs, the U.S. Department of Education defines distance education as “education that uses one or more of the technologies listed in paragraphs (1) through (4) to deliver instruction to students who are

separated from the instructor and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor, either synchronously or asynchronously (see CFR 34, § 602.3). The technologies may 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 communication devices;
- 3) Audio-conferencing; or
- 4) Video cassettes, DVDs, and CD-ROMs, if the cassettes, DVDs, or CD-ROMs are used in a course in conjunction with any of the technologies listed in paragraphs (1) through (3).”

Based on this definition by the U.S. Department of Education, institutions who deliver instruction through correspondence education are not eligible to participate in federal student aid. Correspondence education is defined by the U.S. Department of Education “means:

- 1) Education provided through one or more courses by an institution under which the institution provides instructional materials, by mail or electronic transmission, including examinations on the materials, to students who are separated from the instructor;
- 2) Interaction between the instructor and the student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student;
- 3) Correspondence courses are typically self-pace; and
- 4) Correspondence education is not distance education.”

*DEAC limits eligibility to participate in Title IV programs to degree and/or non-degree granting distance education institutions that demonstrate substantive interaction between the students and instructor/faculty. DEAC’s scope of accreditation extends to both distance education and correspondence education institutions.*

For the purposes of the *DEAC Accreditation Handbook*, the term “distance education” is used throughout whether educational delivery is via correspondence, competency, or online. [Accreditation Handbook – Page 5-6]

## WHY BECOME ACCREDITED?

Accreditation, at its basic definition, means value. It communicates a level of value to students, institutions, the public, government, and other industry professionals. Accreditation provides assurances that a program has met established standards necessary to produce graduates who have achieved stated learning outcomes and are ready to enter the global marketplace. Students who graduate from accredited institutions have greater opportunities for employment, continued education, and mobility.

Generally, accreditation in other countries is controlled by the government and is oftentimes required. By contrast, accreditation in the United States is a voluntary, peer-review process and is carried out by non-governmental, non-profit organizations. The peer-review process allows institutions to be reviewed by other working individuals in the industry who understand the needs and demands from a shared educational perspective. Additionally, the peer-review process provides checks and balances from within the industry to allow institutions to have an opportunity to meet students' educational goals by using a variety of resources while ensuring quality programs.

## WHAT IS DEAC ACCREDITATION AND IT'S BENEFITS?

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Distance education is not a new idea or concept, but has been around since the early 18<sup>th</sup> century in Europe and early 19<sup>th</sup> century in the United States predominantly through print-based correspondence programs. These pioneering students who took advantage of distance education were mostly individuals living in rural or remote areas who did not have access to residential educational institutions. Another growing population of students came from members of the military. A number of correspondence education institutions saw a significant increase after World War II as returning service members continued to pursue their educational goals.

With the increasing focus on distance education, it was important that the public have confidence in the quality of education provided by institutions. Given the unique nature of distance education delivery, accreditation expectations for residential education programs were not always appropriate to effectively evaluate education quality for distance education; therefore, accrediting organizations, such as the Distance Education Accrediting Commission, formed to offer an accreditation oversight process specific to meet the unique quality assurance needs of distance education institutions.

Today, institutions offering distance education curricula use a variety of innovative technologies. Despite the various advantages provided by distance education, students and the public need assurances that the credential earned has marketplace value and that students have access to all related services necessary to support their success. DEAC accreditation standards establish education quality expectations and assess an institution's ability to integrate technology to meet the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century graduates and employers. DEAC standards are designed to accommodate the need for institutions to explore learning resources and student support services beyond those of traditional campus-based institutions. Additionally, DEAC accreditation recognizes that by meeting the unique needs of the distance learning student, course and program delivery can expand an institution's reach beyond a regional focus to a national and international presence. When accredited distance education institutions are successful students can benefit, regardless of geographic location, and organize their studies to fit within personal life commitments.

DEAC accredited institutions encompass a broad variety of educational offerings through distance education. DEAC institutions may be organized as for-profit degree granting or non-degree granting, non-profit degree and non-degree granting, faith-based institutions, and as training and educational providers that offer students more choices to meet their educational goals. Students can choose the institutions that best meet their needs while being provided assurances that the chosen program, when appropriately accredited, is

commensurate in quality to other traditional programs offered in their home state or country.

DEAC accreditation provides quality assurance to students (prospective, current, and graduates), institutions, the public, government, and industry professionals:

#### FOR STUDENTS, DEAC ACCREDITATION...

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- Provides students with confidence that the institution offering programs, ranging from high school through the professional doctoral degree and non-degree certificates, have been evaluated and meet rigorous standards established by industry professionals.
- Increases and enhances employment opportunities for students who graduate from an accredited institution and result in earning promotions and salary increases. Employers want assurances that graduates they hire are prepared and have the requisite knowledge and skills to be successful in their chosen profession.
- Goes a step further to assure that the unique methods for delivering curricula is consistent with educational industry standards. This provides students with the assurance that the education they are paying for is valuable and worth their time, money, and effort.
- Allows institutions to prepare students by supporting their achievement of knowledge, skills, and abilities to be productive individuals who contribute to their community and continue lifelong learning.

#### FOR INSTITUTIONS, DEAC ACCREDITATION...

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- Allows an institution to receive public recognition for the quality programs and services offered to students.
- Promotes the integration and continuous improvement of “best practices” in support of student achievement and institutional growth.
- Documents that an institution is true to its mission, goals, and objectives by measuring the achievement of each for purposes of continuous self-assessment.
- Allows institutions to be eligible for and apply to various professional and programmatic accreditations.
- Allows institutions the option of participating in Title IV and military programs to benefit students in need of financial assistance to realize their educational goals.
- Allows institutions to apply for approval in some states which only allow accredited institutions.

#### FOR THE PUBLIC, DEAC ACCREDITATION...

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- Provides a consistent and reliable indicator that institutions meet standards of quality and validation of credibility through a structured peer review process.

- Promotes accountability to other member institutions and various stakeholders.
- Supports and encourages the innovation and use of technology by emphasizing continuous improvement processes to assure institutions and graduates can compete in a global economy.

#### FOR GOVERNMENT AND INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS, DEAC ACCREDITATION...

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- Provides an opportunity for industry professionals to guide the educational process to reflect current and future employment needs in a changing global economy.
- Demonstrates to various federal and state regulators that accredited institutions are leaders in the field of distance education and strive to prepare a workforce equipped to contribute to the changing economic landscape.
- Provides the opportunity for member institutions to lead the change necessary in the field of education by offering students the chance to increase their knowledge and skills while meeting their personal and professional responsibilities.

#### DEAC TODAY

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The DEAC is recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education and by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) as a national institutional accrediting organization for postsecondary distance education institutions that offer programs primarily by the distance education method from the non-degree, high school, postsecondary, and higher education including the professional doctoral degree.

DEAC's goals is to assure a high standard of educational quality in the distance education institutions it accredits by requiring compliance with its published standards, policies, and procedures and by fostering continual self-improvement. DEAC is dedicated to ensuring a quality education for more than two million students who annually study at its accredited institutions.

#### RECOGNITION BY THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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DEAC initially received federal recognition in 1959 and has continually held recognition by the United States Department of Education ever since. Federal recognition aims to assure that accreditors meet expectations for institutional and program participation in federal activities, such as federal financial aid programs. Currently, the federal recognition process is largely carried out by the National Advisory Committee for Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI). The NACIQI provides recommendations to the United States Secretary of Education concerning whether accreditation standards are sufficiently rigorous and effective toward ensuring that a recognized accreditor is a reliable authority regarding the quality of the education provided by the institution it accredits. In 2012, NACIQI recommended to the Secretary of Education that DEAC receive recognition through 2017. DEAC's scope of recognition by the Secretary of Education is:

*The accreditation of postsecondary institutions in the United States that offer degree and/or non-degree programs primarily by the distance or correspondence education method up to and including the professional doctoral degree, including those institutions that are specifically certified by the agency as accredited for Title IV purposes. [DEAC Website – <http://www.deac.org/Discover-DEAC/Recognition.aspx>]*

#### **RECOGNITION BY THE COUNCIL FOR HIGHER EDUCATION ACCREDITATION (CHEA)**

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CHEA was formed in 1996 by presidents of United States colleges and universities to demonstrate higher education quality through strengthened accreditation processes. It promotes academic quality through formal recognition of higher education accrediting bodies and works to advance self-regulation in higher education through accreditation. Recognition by CHEA affirms that the standards, policies, and procedures of accrediting organizations meet the academic quality, institutional improvement, and accountability expectations CHEA has established. DEAC first received recognition by CHEA in 2001. It received its most recent grant of recognition from CHEA in 2013. DEAC's scope of recognition by CHEA is:

*The accreditation of higher learning institutions in the United States and international locations that offer programs of study that are delivered primarily by distance (51 percent or more) and award credentials at the associate, baccalaureate, master's, first professional and professional doctoral degree level. [DEAC Website – <http://www.deac.org/Discover-DEAC/Recognition.aspx>]*



## PART II: PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

### INTRODUCTION

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The Distance Education Accrediting Commission (DEAC) awards accreditation to institutions that offer quality distance education programs and meet published accreditation standards. The burden of proof in demonstrating compliance with accreditation standards rests with the institution and not with DEAC. [Accreditation Handbook – Page 20]

#### 1) ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

The institution has the burden of proof in showing that its curricula are within DEAC’s recognized scope of authority. DEAC reserves the right to limit its reviews to the kinds of institutions and types of programs that fall within its recognized scope and decline to consider institutions and programs for accreditation which fall outside DEAC’s scope, competence, or where it is felt that there is a lack of adequate standards to permit a meaningful evaluation. [Accreditation Handbook – Page 11]

Before DEAC will officially accept an institution’s initial “Application for Accreditation,” the institution must demonstrate that it meets the following eligibility criteria: [Accreditation Handbook – Page 10]

- a. A distance education institution or training provider is defined by DEAC as “an educational institution or organization whose primary purpose is providing education or training which:
  - i. Formally enrolls students and maintains student records;
  - ii. Retains qualified faculty to service students;
  - iii. Provides educationally sound and up-to-date curricula that are supported by quality instructional materials and appropriate technology;
  - iv. Provides continuous two-way communication on student work, e.g., evaluating students’ examinations, projects, and/or answering queries, with prompt feedback given to students; and
  - v. Offers courses of instruction which is studied predominantly at a distance (51% or more) from the institution or organization.” That is, distance education should be the primary method of study for the majority of students, and

distance education courses should comprise the majority of curricula offerings of the institution. [Accreditation Handbook – Page 10]

- b. The institution is properly licensed, authorized, exempted, or approved by the applicable state educational institutional authority (or its equivalent for non-U.S. institutions). The institution is in compliance with all applicable local, state, and federal requirements. Exemptions from state law are supported by state-issued documentation or in statutory language for that state. [Accreditation Handbook – Page 11] Should an accredited institution lose its state licensure in its state of domicile required for whatever reason, DEAC accreditation terminates as of the date of the loss of state licensure, subject to DEAC’s appeal procedures. [Accreditation Handbook – Page 20]
- c. At the time of the initial application, the institution has been enrolling students in the current programs for two consecutive years and under the present ownership (no new programs may be added during the two year period). [Accreditation Handbook – Page 11]
- d. The institution has clearly articulated learning goals for its academic programs and has strategies for assessment in place.
- e. The institution has a permanent physical business office at a fixed geographic location that is appropriately licensed or authorized as required by local and state regulatory authorities. DEAC does not consider a P.O. Box as a physical business office address. [Accreditation Handbook – Page 11]
- f. The applicant institution documents—through an audited or reviewed comparative financial statement that covers its two most recent fiscal years—that it is financially sound and that it can meet its financial obligations to provide instruction and service to its students. All financial statements submitted to DEAC are prepared in compliance with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP). [Accreditation Handbook – Page 11]
- g. The applicant shows that the name being used by the institution is free from any association with any activity that could damage the standing of DEAC or of the accrediting process, such as illegal actions, unethical conduct, or abuse of consumers. [Accreditation Handbook – Page 11]
- h. The institution, the institution’s owners, governing board members, officials, and administrators possess sound reputations and show a record of integrity and ethical conduct in their professional activities, business operations, and relations. The owners, governing board members, officials, and executive staff have records free from any association with any misfeasance, including, but not limited to, owning, managing or controlling any educational institutions that have entered



bankruptcy or have closed with students having been disadvantaged as a result. [Accreditation Handbook – Page 11]

- i. The institution agrees that as part of the application process, its owners, officers and managers may be subject to a background check by DEAC, which may include, but not be limited to, DEAC surveys of state educational oversight agencies, federal departments and agencies, consumer protection agencies, checks on the credit history, prior bankruptcy, criminal background, debarment from federal student aid programs, the closing of educational institutions in which they were owners, managers or principals, or the loss of accreditation or state approval to operate an educational institution. The costs of such background checks will be borne by the Applicant. [Accreditation Handbook – Page 11]
- j. The institution is free from any pending or final action brought by a state agency or recognized accrediting agency to suspend, revoke, withdraw, or terminate the institution’s legal authority to operate or to deny accreditation or reaccreditation. [Accreditation Handbook – Page 11]
- k. The institution’s “Application for Accreditation” is complete in all respects. [Accreditation Handbook – Page 11]

2) APPLICATION, SELF-EVALUATION, AND READINESS ASSESSMENT

Accreditation is a voluntary process. Institutions desiring accredited status are expected to take the initiative to go through a series of steps as outlined below. Institutions seeking accreditation or renewal of accreditation assume the burden of proof in presenting themselves as meeting all DEAC Accreditation Standards. [Accreditation Handbook – Page 13]

The steps in the DEAC accreditation process are:

a. PREPARING FOR DEAC ACCREDITATION COURSE

A key person must enroll in and successfully complete the Preparing for DEAC Accreditation tutorial to qualify as a Compliance Officer. The course is available online from DEAC’s website at [www.deac.org](http://www.deac.org). This tutorial must be completed before submitting the Application for Accreditation and before writing the Self-Evaluation Report (SER). Once the tutorial has been completed, a Certificate of Completion can be printed. DEAC will not accept an Application for Accreditation without a copy of the Certificate of Completion from an individual from the institution who has completed this course. [Accreditation Handbook – Page 13]

b. APPLICATION

To initiate the accreditation process, the Application for Accreditation and accreditation or renewal of accreditation fee (see Fees page), must be submitted to DEAC. Initial applicants must submit their Self-Evaluation Report (SER) no later

than 60 days after submitting the Application for Accreditation. Acceptance of the Application for Accreditation begins the formal process. The steps obligated in the accreditation process must be taken within 12 months after the application is accepted.

An applicant institution may not refer to its accreditation status in any manner. In doing so, it could potentially mislead the public about the institution's affiliation with DEAC. When an institution applies for initial accreditation, it must certify on its Application for Accreditation that it "agrees to not make any promotional use of its application for accreditation status prior to receiving DEAC accreditation." [Accreditation Handbook – Page 14]

**Institution Submits Students' Names:** include an excel table with the names, mailing addresses, and email addresses of no more than the first 100 students consecutively enrolled with each division of the institution beginning the first day of the 18<sup>th</sup> month preceding the date of this application. Insofar as possible, the number of the students reflects the same proportion of the enrollments for each of the institution's major course/program offerings. If the institution has less than 100 students, submit the information for all students enrolled. Only institutions that are 100% correspondence may submit the names and addresses of students on self-adhesive mailing labels. Institutions must also submit a copy of its catalog and a copy of its state license. [Accreditation Handbook – Page 14]

c. SELF-EVALUATION REPORT

The Compliance Officer and staff begin writing the institution's Self-Evaluation Report (SER). The SER is prepared in accordance with the provisions of the "Guide to Self-Evaluation." The SER provides data on all areas of an institution's operation, history, course offerings, student services, finances, etc. The SER includes a wide gathering and analysis of pertinent data on all aspects of the institution and its work. Institutions seeking renewal of accreditation must submit their Self-Evaluation Report 4-6 weeks prior to when the onsite visit is scheduled. [Accreditation Handbook – Page 13-14]

d. READINESS ASSESSMENT (INITIAL APPLICANTS ONLY)

DEAC requires all initial applicants to undergo a Readiness Assessment conducted by an independent DEAC-appointed evaluator. The Readiness Assessment allows DEAC to ascertain if the applicant's Self-Evaluation Report and Exhibits provide sufficient evidence and information for a successful onsite visit. The Readiness Assessment provides the applicant with guidance on the actions necessary for the institution to prepare for a full accreditation review. The Readiness Assessment also assures that the applicant meets a minimum level of eligibility qualification for DEAC accreditation that would justify the commitment of DEAC resources in administering a full accreditation review. [C.12. Policy on Readiness Assessment – Page 1] Initial applicants must submit one flash drive copy of its Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and Exhibits

within 60 days of the date the Application for Accreditation is accepted by DEAC. [C.12. Policy on Readiness Assessment – Page 1]

- For Readiness Assessment fee, see Fees page.
- The SER should be complete, including all of the exhibits.
- An evaluator will conduct a Readiness Assessment that includes reviewing the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and Exhibits.
- In order for the applicant to proceed in the accreditation process, the evaluator must conclude that the institution is 90% in compliance with DEAC processes, procedures, and standards. [C.12. Policy on Readiness Assessment – Page 1] The evaluator reviews the SER and writes a report stating if the institution is deemed “ready” to undergo a full onsite evaluation.
- If the institute is deemed “ready,” the next step is for the applicant to submit its curricula materials for review by a subject specialist(s).
  - The institution must update its SER in preparation for the onsite evaluation.
  - The updated SER must be submitted 6 weeks prior to the scheduled visit.
- The Director of Accreditation will work with the institution to establish a date for the onsite evaluation. [C.12. Policy on Readiness Assessment – Page 2]
- If the institution is deemed “not ready,” then it must correct the areas of concern and submit an updated SER to be reviewed again before proceeding with the accreditation process.
  - The institution must correct the areas of concern and submit an updated SER within 6 months from receiving the Readiness Assessment Report before it can move forward in the accreditation process. Resubmission fee see Fees page.
- If the institution believes that the assessment evaluator has made an incorrect assessment, the institution has the option to request another evaluation of its SER by a different evaluator. The fee for a review by a different evaluator is available on the Fees page. [C.12. Policy on Readiness Assessment – Page 2]
- If an institution is deemed “not ready” after the second Readiness Assessment, it undergoes an onsite Readiness Assessment within 6 months of the second assessment. The fee for the Readiness Assessment is available on the Fees page. The institution notifies the Director of Accreditation within 30 days of receiving its second “not ready” Readiness Assessment Report to communicate whether it intends to request a Readiness Assessment or not. If the institution opts not to undergo the onsite Readiness Evaluation, the application will expire as of the date of its second Readiness Assessment Report, and the institution may reapply after 6 months. [C.12. Policy on Readiness Assessment – Page 2]

- If after the Readiness Assessment the institution is deemed “not ready” its application is considered expired. The institution may reapply after 1 year of the date of the onsite Readiness Assessment Report. [C.12. Policy on Readiness Assessment – Page 2]

### 3) CURRICULA REVIEW

As a part of the accreditation process, the Commission engages subject specialists to conduct comprehensive evaluations of course/program materials. A curricula review takes up to 6 months. This includes the subject specialist search, the initial review by the subject specialist, and a follow-up review by the subject specialist of the institution’s response. [C.5. Policy on Course/Program Approval – Page 1] Course materials submitted as part of an institution’s application for accreditation are not returned to the institution. [Accreditation Handbook – Page 15] The institution will be invoiced per subject specialist for each course/program review, as well as for each follow-up review. All fees must be paid prior to the Commission’s consideration. [C.5. Policy on Course/Program Approval – Page 1] The subject specialist is responsible for ascertaining whether the curricula and materials offered by the distance education institution are complete, accurate, and up-to-date in relation to stated educational objectives.

While only representative courses are reviewed in-depth, the scope and sequence of the entirety of the curricula is a part of the comprehensive onsite review.

#### a. CURRICULA REVIEW FOR INSTITUTIONS SEEKING INITIAL ACCREDITATION

- i. **Degree Programs:** Once the institution is deemed “ready” to move ahead in the accreditation process, it is required to submit all degree programs offered at the institution. For each degree program, it must also submit a minimum of 50% of the courses. The representative courses should be:
  - Broadly and fairly representative of the curriculum for the entire degree program;
  - Selected from each level (i.e. 100, 200, 300, 400, 500, 600, and 700) of the degree program(s); and
  - Submitted using the following percentages based on degree program:
    - Associate’s Degree: 25% general education and 25% core courses/electives including the capstone or final program course.
    - Bachelor’s Degree: 25% general education and 25% core courses/electives including the capstone course or 50% of core courses if offering a degree completion program.
    - Master’s Degree: 25% core courses and 25% elective/concentration courses including the capstone course.
    - Doctoral Degree: 25% core courses and 25% research methodology courses including the capstone project/dissertation course.

For each degree program, the institution submits a Degree Program Report and supporting documentation. [C.5. Policy on Course/Program Approval – Page 2]

- ii. **Vocational, Avocational, and Military Programs:** Once the institution is deemed “ready” to move ahead in the accreditation process, it is required to submit all programs offered by the institution.

For each program, the institution must send a Vocational/Avocational Program Report and supporting documentation. [C.5. Policy on Course/Program Approval – Page 2]

- iii. **High School Programs:** Once a high school diploma-awarding institution is deemed “ready” to move ahead in the accreditation process, it is required to submit 50% of the courses within each diploma program representative of the following subject areas: mathematics, English, science, social studies, and electives.

For each high school diploma program, the institution must send a High School Program Report and supporting documentation. [C.5. Policy on Course/Program Approval – Page 2]

b. CURRICULA REVIEW FOR INSTITUTIONS SEEKING RENEWAL OF ACCREDITATION

- i. **Degree Programs:** An institution undergoing renewal of accreditation is required to identify 25% of all programs offered for reviewed. The programs submitted to DEAC for review must be broadly representative and include the highest enrollment of the institution’s offerings and fields of study. Any programs or courses approved in the last year are ineligible to be submitted for this review.

The institution submits 25% of the courses for each identified program. The representative courses reflect subject matter directly related to the degree program’s primary objectives (i.e. core or specialized courses) excluding general education or orientation courses. For each degree program, the institution submits a Degree Program Report and supporting documentation. [C.5. Policy on Course/Program Approval – Page 2]

- ii. **Vocational, Avocational, and Military Programs:** An institution undergoing renewal of accreditation is required to identify and submit 25% of all educational offerings in total for review. The programs submitted to DEAC for review must be broadly representative and include highest enrollment of the institution’s offerings and fields of study. Any programs or courses approved in the last year are ineligible to be submitted for this review. For each program, the institution submits a Program Report and supporting documentation. [C.5. Policy on Course/Program

Approval – Page 3]

- iii. **High School Programs:** An institution undergoing renewal of accreditation is required to submit 25% of the courses within each high school diploma program representative of the following subject areas: mathematics, English, science, social studies, and electives. Any programs or courses approved in the last year are ineligible to be submitted for this review. For each high school diploma program, the institution submits a Program Report and supporting documentation. [C.5. Policy on Course/Program Approval – Page 3]

c. RESPONSE TO THE SUBJECT SPECIALIST REVIEW

If an institution is undergoing its initial or renewal of accreditation and receives a “not met” finding on a course/program review, the institution must respond to comments of the subject specialist on any “Partially Meets” or “Does Not Meet” findings prior to the onsite evaluation. The response should be sent to DEAC at least 2 weeks prior to the onsite evaluation. The response will be forwarded to the onsite team. [Accreditation Handbook – Page 16]

4) CONSIDERATION OF THIRD PARTY INFORMATION

- a. DEAC publishes notice of the institutions to be reviewed for initial or renewal of accreditation on its website and encourages interested parties to submit written comments pertaining to such review. The Commission may also establish policies for providing notice of the schools to be reviewed for other reasons. [D.13. Third Party Comments – Page 1]
- b. Whenever information from third parties is included in the record, the institution under review will have an opportunity to respond before any accreditation decision becomes final.
- c. In considering the appropriate action, DEAC takes into account actions by other accrediting organizations that have denied accreditation or renewal of accreditation status to the institution, have placed the institution on probation, or have withdrawn/revoked the accreditation or renewal of accreditation status of the institution.
- d. If another accrediting agency places an institution on probation or withdraws/revokes the accreditation of the institution or program, DEAC will promptly review the accreditation status it has previously granted to that institution to determine whether there is cause to change that status.
- e. DEAC reviews and takes appropriate action regarding the accreditation status of any institution for which DEAC has received information from the appropriate state agency that the institution is subject to any of the following actions:

- i. An action by a state agency potentially leading to the suspension, withdrawal/revocation, or termination of the institution's legal authority to provide postsecondary education;
  - ii. An action by a state agency to suspend, withdraw/revoke, or terminate the institution's legal authority to provide postsecondary education subject to appeal. [D.13. Third Part Comments – Page 2]
- f. **Action Notwithstanding Third Party Action:** If DEAC grants initial accreditation or renewal of accreditation to an institution notwithstanding the threatened interim or final adverse actions taken against the institution by another recognized accrediting agency or state agency, DEAC will provide the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, within 30 days of its action, a thorough explanation, consistent with accreditation standards, regarding why the previous action by the accrediting agency or state does not preclude DEAC's action. [Accreditation Handbook – Page 22]

5) ONSITE EVALUATION

- a. **Function of the Onsite Team:** The onsite evaluation provides an opportunity for evaluators to meet with key staff members, faculty/instructors, principal managers, outside accountants, governing board members, and Advisory Council members and it is vital they are present or available during the evaluation. [Accreditation Handbook – Page 17] [D.6. Undergoing an Onsite Visit – Page 1]
  - The onsite evaluator's reports, including the Chair's Report, do not make recommendations to DEAC as to the overall approval or disapproval of the institution's application for accreditation. [Accreditation Handbook – Page 18]
  - Onsite evaluations conducted in relation to an initial accreditation or renewal of accreditation provide the onsite team with the opportunity to independently evaluate the information submitted in the institution's Self-Evaluation Report and gather additional facts for DEAC. [D.6. Undergoing an Onsite Visit – Page 1]
  - The onsite evaluation allows the evaluators to verify the institution is meeting its stated mission, goals, and objectives; demonstrate successful student achievement; and assure the institution's compliance with all DEAC Accreditation Standards.
- b. **Onsite Evaluators:** In selecting evaluators for onsite evaluations, the Director of Accreditation considers the nature of the institution being reviewed for compliance with DEAC Accreditation Standards, the methods of operation unique to the institution, the nature of the program(s) offered, and the expertise and past evaluation 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. [D.11. Selection and Training of Evaluators – Page 1] For doctoral degree program evaluations, the evaluator must have the appropriate doctoral degree and have practiced in the field for several years before he or she would be considered for the Degree Subject Specialist Evaluator position. [D.11. Selection and Training of Evaluators – Page 2]

- The Onsite Team is not limited in size, but generally includes:
    - a Chair;
    - an Educational Standards Evaluator;
    - a Business Standards Evaluators;
    - a Subject Specialist for each subject area (who may or may not visit the institution);
    - and an Observer for the Commission. [Accreditation Handbook – Page 16]
  - A DEAC staff observer will accompany the onsite team throughout the onsite evaluation to assure objectivity, impartiality, uniformity, adherence to established procedures, and serve as a liaison between the onsite team and the Commission.
  - The Chair of the onsite team is responsible for the completion of the onsite evaluation in accordance with the Commission’s processes and procedures and assures that each evaluator completes his/her tasks during the onsite evaluation. Each evaluator develops a comprehensive picture of the institution’s operations before the onsite evaluation by completing a thorough review of the Self-Evaluation Report and answers questions on the appropriate rating form. Information provided in the Self-Evaluation Report is verified at the time of the onsite evaluation. The Chair also informs the President/CEO that he/she can expect to receive the Chair’s Report in approximately 6 weeks after the onsite evaluation. [Accreditation Handbook – Page 18]
  - Each evaluator and subject specialist must read, sign, and abide by DEAC’s Conflict of Interest Policy, Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form, and Code of Conduct for Onsite Evaluators before reviewing any institution and its program as part of the accreditation process. [D.11. Selection and Training of Evaluators – Page 3]
- c. **Onsite Team Selection:** An onsite team is appointed to visit an institution to verify the information in the Self-Evaluation Report and to gather additional facts for the Commission. Once the evaluators are selected, their names are submitted to the institution. The institution may object, with an adequate reason, to a specific evaluator and request that another evaluator be chosen. [Accreditation Handbook – Page 16]



- d. **Observers:** Representatives from state licensing bodies and from federal agencies are notified of forthcoming visits and are invited to participate as observers during the onsite evaluation. They are encouraged (but not required) to submit written reports to the Chair at the conclusion of the onsite evaluation. [Accreditation Handbook – Page 16]

6) THE CHAIR’S REPORT, RESPONSE, AND THE COMMISSION’S DECISION

Following the onsite evaluation to the institution, the Chair of the onsite team prepares a Chair’s Report and submits it to the Director of Accreditation. The Director of Accreditation sends the Chair’s Report to the institution prior to submitting it to the Commission. The Chair’s Report describes the findings of the onsite team and comments on the institution’s demonstrated compliance with, or failure to demonstrate compliance with, the DEAC accreditation standards. [D.1. Providing the Chair’s Report – Page 1]

- a. The institution has 30 days from the receipt of the Chair’s Report to respond. In its response, the institution may add new or supporting information or correct any incorrect statements made in the Chair’s Report. Regardless of its accredited status, all applicant institutions are obligated to keep the Commission informed of any changes in management, enrollments, etc., which occur subsequent to the date of the onsite evaluation. [D.1. Providing the Chair’s Report – Page 1]

The Commission considers the Application for Accreditation (initial or renewal), Self-Evaluation Report, student surveys, any comments from third parties or outside agencies, the Chair’s Report, and the institution’s response to the Chair’s Report to make its decision. [D.1. Providing the Chair’s Report – Page 1]

- b. The Executive Director notifies the President/CEO of the institution within 30 days through an Action Letter of the Commission’s decision. The Action Letter includes a detailed written statement that identifies any deficiencies in the institution’s compliance with DEAC’s standards or conditions for initial or renewal of accreditation. The notification also advises the institution of its right to appeal an adverse decision of the Commission. [D.1. Providing the Chair’s Report – Page 1]
- c. When the Commission withdraws the accreditation of an institution, the action is not made public by the Commission until the period for requesting an appeal has expired or the appeal itself is denied. [D.1. Providing the Chair’s Report – Page 1]

7) COMMISSION ACTIONS ON INITIAL AND RENEWAL OF ACCREDITATION

The DEAC usually meets twice a year, in January and June. At its meeting, the DEAC reviews information and documentation on the various applications for initial accreditation or renewal of accreditation. The Commission reviews the Self-Evaluation Report;

the Chair’s Report; the institution’s response to the Chair’s Report; Subject Specialists’ Reports; student surveys; any complaints from the public; information gathered from other interested parties; any responses to public notices; institution’s advertisements and catalog; any communications between the institution and the Commission; and other relevant documentation. [Accreditation Handbook – Page 18]

The Commission takes one of four courses of action:

- a. **Accredit** a new applicant institution for up to 3 years, or continue an institution’s accredited status for up to 5 years. Reports of institutional enhancements of programs and services may be required. [Accreditation Handbook – Page 18]
- b. **Defer** a decision pending receipt of a Progress Report, submission of additional information and/or the results of a follow-up onsite evaluation. The maximum deferral period is 12 months (unless the Commission extends the period for “good cause” as defined below. [Accreditation Handbook – Page 18]
  - i. **Good Cause:** The maximum time period for achieving compliance with DEAC accreditation standards is 12 months. The Commission may extend this 12 month period for good cause shown. “Good cause” in this context is defined as a sufficient reason for the Commission to allow additional time for the institution to show that it has made substantial progress, but additional time is needed to more fully document experience in attaining full compliance, additional resources are shortly to become available, or there are exigent circumstances, such as illness or accident, that justify an extension of time. When a “good cause” extension is granted by the Commission, the time allowed for institutional compliance may exceed the permissible compliance times published in Federal Regulations. The Commission notifies the U.S. Secretary of Education if an extension is granted for “good cause.” [D.1.1. Actions Available to the Commission – Page 1]
  - ii. The Commission considers the following criteria when granting an extension for a good cause:
    - The length of time requested for the extension;
    - Rationale for granting or denying the extension;
    - Common sense matters such as near-term future availability of reports or data;
    - Anticipated impact of an extension on students enrolled with the institution; and
    - Limitations on a further extension to an existing extension, limits on the frequency and use of “good cause.” [D.1.1. Actions Available to the Commission – Page 1]

- iii. The Commission may also elect to monitor the progress of an institution that has received an extension for a good cause by requesting documentation on a periodic basis as to the institution's progress toward compliance with the Commission's standards or policies. [D.1.1. Actions Available to the Commission – Page 2]
  - iv. After reviewing the above considerations, the Commission will decide to grant or deny an institution's request for an extension for good cause. This Commission decision is not appealable. [D.1.1. Actions Available to the Commission – Page 1]
- c. Direct the institution to **show cause** as to why its accreditation should not be withdrawn; or [Accreditation Handbook – Page 18]
- i. **Show Cause Directive:** In cases where the Commission has reason to believe that an institution is not in compliance with accreditation standards and other requirements, the Commission may direct the institution to Show Cause as to why its accreditation should not be withdrawn. An institution that receives a Show Cause Directive will be required to demonstrate corrective action and compliance with accrediting standards, policies, or procedures. Because the issuance of a show cause directive is not an adverse action, this is not an appealable decision. However, the burden of proof rests with the institution to demonstrate that it is meeting DEAC's accreditation standards. [D.1.1. Actions Available to the Commission – Page 2]
  - ii. **Notices:** When a Show Cause Directive is issued, a written notice will be sent to the institution within 30 days of the Commission's decision which:
    - States the reasons why the Show Cause Directive was issued;
    - Identifies the standard and other accreditation requirements that the institution is believed not to be in compliance;
    - Explains the reasons and recite the evidence indicating that the institution may not be in compliance with accreditation requirements; and
    - Advises the institution of its obligations under the Show Cause Directive and the deadline for its response. [D.1.1. Actions Available to the Commission – Page 2]
  - iii. Notice of the Show Cause Directive is provided to the U.S. Secretary of Education, the appropriate state agencies or authorizing agency, and the appropriate accrediting organizations at the same time it notifies the institution of the Show Cause Directive. The Commission posts a notice on its website within 24 hours of notifying the institution.

[D.1.1. Actions Available to the Commission – Page 2]

iv. **Decision on Show Cause Directive:** Upon expiration of the time limits of submission of the Response to the Show Cause Directive or any progress report or additional requirements placed on the institution in relation to the Show Cause Directive, a decision is made on the institution's compliance with the accreditation standards or requirements noted in the directive. The Commission may:

- Vacate the Show Cause Directive, if it is determined that the response gives evidence that such removal is warranted or if the response shows compliance with the cited accreditation standards and requirements;
- Continue the Show Cause Directive, pending the receipt of additional information or further reports from the institution;
- Order a special visit in accordance with 3(e) below; or
- Withdraw accreditation, which would be subject to an appeal by the institution. [D.1.1. Actions Available to the Commission – Page 2]

v. A special visit is ordered by the Commission because of unusual circumstances or failure by the institution to meet its obligations to the Commission. The Commission's requirement for a special visit may be precipitated because:

- a serious or an unusually large number of student or other complaints e.g. "whistle-blower" complaints;
- state or Federal investigations or legal action taken against an institution;
- an institution's failure to comply with a condition of accreditation;
- reported conditions on negative financial events;
- a show cause order issued by the Commission;
- governmental complaints against the institution; or
- similar serious concerns. [C.16. Policy on Special Visits – Page 1]

If an institution refuses to agree to undergo a special visit, pay the fees for the visit in a timely manner, or observe the timelines specified by the Commission for executing the special visit as directed, it will be reported to the Commission for action, including withdrawing accreditation. [C.16. Policy on Special Visits – Page 1]

Commission ordered special visits are conducted in a timely fashion. In no case will the time frame for reporting and conducting the onsite evaluation extend beyond 12 months from the date the Commission is first made aware of any condition requiring a special visit. [C.16. Policy on Special Visits – Page 1]

- vi. The Commission will notify the institution of its decision concerning its Response to the Show Cause Directive within 30 days. In all cases, the Commission will allow the institution sufficient time to respond to any findings before any final decision regarding the institution’s accredited status is made. [D.1.1. Actions Available to the Commission – Page 3]
  - vii. The Commission will not consider substantive changes or approve any new courses or programs when an institution is under a Show Cause Directive. [D.1.1. Actions Available to the Commission – Page 3]
  - viii. At its discretion, the Commission may restrict substantive changes in conjunction with deferring action on an application for renewal of accreditation.
- d. **Deny** accreditation to an applicant, or withdraw accreditation from an accredited institution (these actions are appealable – see *Appealing the Commission’s Decision*). [Accreditation Handbook – Page 18]
- i. Prior to any final adverse action by the Commission that is based solely upon a failure to meet DEAC Standard X: Financial Responsibility, the institution has the right, for a single occasion, to provide the Commission significant financial information that was not available to the institution prior to the determination of the adverse action, so long as the information bears materially on any financial deficiencies cited by the Commission. The Commission shall determine if the financial information submitted by the institution is significant and material, and if it is found to be so, it will consider the new information prior to taking any final action. [D.1.1. Actions Available to the Commission – Page 1]
  - ii. Any determination made with respect to the significance or materiality of the new financial information submitted as set forth above, will not be subject to a separate appeal by the institution. [D.1.1. Actions Available to the Commission – Page 1]

8) APPEALING COMMISSION’S ADVERSE DECISION

a. **Request for Appeal**

- i. The institution may appeal a decision by the Commission to deny or withdraw accreditation. The request for appeal must be made using the Application for Appeal. The application must be sent with the required fees (see Fees page) to the Executive Director of the Commission within 10 days of the receipt of the Commission’s letter advising the institution of the decision to deny or withdraw accreditation. The institution’s failure to submit the application and fees within 10 days will be deemed a waiver of its right to appeal and cause the Commission’s action to become

final. [D.2. Appealing Commission's Adverse Decision – Page 1]

- ii. The institution shall file a written statement of the grounds for its request for appeal within thirty days of the receipt of the notification of the Commission's action. The institution's decision to appeal is limited to appealing the factual record that was before the Commission and to the decision which the Commission made in executing its policies and procedures [D.2. Appealing Commission's Adverse Decision – Page 1]
- iii. If the institution's appeal request is not successful, where the decision to deny or withdraw accreditation is upheld and becomes final, the institution is not eligible to re-apply for accreditation for a period of one year from the date of the final action. [D.2. Appealing Commission's Adverse Decision – Page 1]

**b. Appeals Panel**

- i. In the appeals process, the 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 does not have authority concerning the reasonableness of eligibility criteria, policies, procedures, or accreditation standards. It can affirm, amend, remand, or reverse the prior decision of the Commission as set forth below. Its role is to determine whether the Commission's action was not supported by the record or was clearly erroneous. The institution has the burden of proof in demonstrating that the action of the Commission was not supported by the record or was otherwise erroneous. [D.2. Appealing Commission's Adverse Decision – Page 1]
- ii. The Appeals Panel consists of three people appointed by the Commission: a public member, an academic, and an administrator. Potential members of an Appeals Panel will be selected from the ranks of former members of the Commission, the corps of Commission evaluators, and active staff of DEAC accredited institutions who have completed DEAC's evaluator training program. All Panelists will be given a training session on appeals procedures and will be subject to the provisions in the DEAC Conflict of Interest Policy. [D.2. Appealing Commission's Adverse Decision – Page 1]
- iii. The Appeals Panel members possess knowledge of accreditation purposes, standards, and procedures and will be constituted to meet the panel composition requirements set forth above. The candidates cannot include any current member of the Commission and cannot have a conflict of interest. The Executive Director submits a list of proposed Appeal Panel members to the institution in advance. An institution may ask in writing within 10 calendar days of receipt of the proposed panel that any person or persons be removed from the list on the basis of potential conflict of interests as defined in DEAC's Conflict of Interest Policy. If the Commission determines that a conflict

exists, the panelist will be replaced. No panel member may serve if he/she participated, in any respect, in the underlying decision by the Commission to deny or withdraw accreditation. [D.2. Appealing Commission's Adverse Decision – Page 1]

**c. Consideration and Decision of the Appeal**

- i. 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 does not have authority regarding the reasonableness of the accreditation standards, policies, and procedures. Its role is to determine whether the Commission's action was not supported by the record or was clearly erroneous. [D.2. Appealing Commission's Adverse Decision – Page 2]
- ii. The institution sets the specific grounds for its appeal in writing within the time specified above 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. [D.2. Appealing Commission's Adverse Decision – Page 2]
- iii. The Appeals Panel considers the grounds for the appeal, the institution's oral presentation, and the record that was before the Commission when it made the decision to deny accreditation or withdraw accreditation. [D.2. Appealing Commission's Adverse Decision – Page 2]

**d. Decisions Available to the Appeals Panel**

- i. **Affirm:** If the Appeals Panel determines the institution has failed to meet its burden of proof in showing that the Commission's action was not supported by the record or was clearly erroneous, it must affirm the decision of the Commission. In certain instances, the Commission's decision may be based on multiple violations of DEAC policies or procedures. A showing by the institution that there is no support in the record only as to some of the violations is not by itself sufficient to meet the institution's burden of proof. The institution must show that, in light of the entire record, the decision is not supported by the record or is clearly erroneous. [D.2. Appealing Commission's Adverse Decision – Page 2]
- ii. **Remand:** The Appeals Panel may remand a decision to the Commission when it finds that the Commission failed to consider a material fact before it in reaching its decision. A remand is a directive to the Commission that it must

reconsider its action in light of all relevant facts that were before the Commission at the time of its decision, including the specific material fact or facts that are the basis for the remand. The Appeals Panel must identify those material facts that it finds the Commission failed to consider. [D.2. Appealing Commission's Adverse Decision – Page 2]

- iii. **Amend:** If the Appeals Panel determines that although there is evidence to support it, the Commission's decision is nevertheless clearly in error, the Appeals Panel may amend the decision. A decision to amend an adverse action will set forth the specific grounds for the decision and will direct the Commission to modify its decision in accordance with the specific direction of the Appeals Panel. The Appeals Panel may in its discretion amend a decision to deny accreditation by directing the Commission to grant accreditation while directing the Commission to consider the proper length of the grant consistent with the direction of the panel, the practices of the Commission, or in accordance with other guidance from the Appeals Panel. [D.2. Appealing Commission's Adverse Decision – Page 2]
  - iv. **Reverse:** The Appeals Panel may reverse a decision of the Commission if it finds that the Commission's decision, in light of the entire record, was not supported by the record or was clearly erroneous. A decision to reverse an action of the Commission will state the specific bases for the decision to reverse. A decision to reverse a withdrawal of accreditation will direct the Commission to set aside its decision to withdraw and to reinstate the accreditation of the institution as it was before the withdrawal decision. A decision to reverse an action to deny accreditation directs the Commission to award a specific grant of accreditation for a term determined by the Appeals Panel. [D.2. Appealing Commission's Adverse Decisions – Page 3]
- e. **Hearing Procedure**
- i. The Commission shall have at least one representative present at the hearing. The Commission representative and representatives of the institution will have the opportunity to make opening and closing statements to the Appeals Panel. Such oral statement may not exceed 20 minutes in length. The institution must provide information relevant to the specific grounds for the appeal. If the institution intends to make an oral presentation, the President/CEO of the institution should make the request in writing to the Executive Director not less than 30 days prior to the date of the hearing. The names and affiliations of those appearing to make the oral presentation must be included with the request. The institution is entitled to be represented by counsel during the appeal hearing. The DEAC does not consider the Appeal hearing to be adversarial in nature. Accordingly, the institution will not have the right to examine the Commission representative. [D.2. Appealing Commission's Adverse Decisions – Page 3]



- ii. The appeal hearing may be recorded by stenographic or electronic means if requested by the institution. Recording and transcripts thereof shall be at the institution's expense, and a copy will be timely provided to the institution following the appeal hearing. [D.2. Appealing Commission's Adverse Decision – Page 3]

f. **Commission Receipt and Implementation of Appeals Panel Decisions**

- i. The written decision of the Appeals Panel is provided to the Commission within 30 days. The Commission implements the decision of the Appeals Panel to affirm, amend, or reverse the prior Commission decision within 30 days of receipt of the written decision by the Appeals Panel. The Commission notifies the institution of the decision within 30 days of implementation. [D.2. Appealing Commission's Adverse Decision – Page 3]

g. **Notification**

- i. The Commission notifies federal, state, accrediting organizations, and the public of its decision according to Notifying Agencies and the Public of Commission's Decisions. [D.2. Appealing Commission's Adverse Decision – Page 3]

9) BINDING ARBITRATION

- a. Upon being notified that its appeal did not change an adverse Commission decision, an institution has 5 business days to request arbitration, during which no public notification of the Commission action will be made, and no new students may be enrolled. When the institution remits an arbitration fee (see Fees page) established by the Commission, an arbitrator will be selected by the Commission from candidates recommended by the American Arbitration Association. Early resolution of such disputes being in the public good, the parties shall make every effort to expedite the arbitration. [D.2. Appealing Commission's Adverse Decision – Page 4]
- b. The analytic framework used for the arbitration is developed by the federal courts, particularly the circuit courts, and selected excerpts are cited in an appendix to this procedure. Courts have described their role as not one of making a de novo review, but of determining whether the accrediting association's decision was arbitrary or capricious. In like manner, the arbitration should make this determination, assessing whether the association confined its action to the contours of due process and fundamental principles of fairness, while recognizing the special nature of accreditation and according deference to the rules and processes of accrediting associations. [D.2. Appealing Commission's Adverse Decision – Page 4]
- c. The arbitrator is provided with all of the information available to the Commission when it made the adverse decision, and the procedures used to reach the decision. Along with the presentation by the parties, this will allow for a thorough

consideration of whether the association's decision was arbitrary or capricious, or reached in an unfair manner. Additional discovery activity and witnesses should not be required. In an exceptional circumstance, where the arbitrator finds that additional information is essential to reaching a fair decision, limited discovery may be authorized. [D.2. Appealing Commission's Adverse Decision – Page 4]

- d. Both parties may appear before the arbitrator with legal counsel to present their position, and each may file a written brief, subject to the 15-page limit used by the U.S. Department of Education's appeals division, and up to 5 exhibits. [D.2. Appealing Commission's Adverse Decision – Page 4]
- e. The arbitrator's decision will be admissible in any subsequent proceeding where it is relevant. [D.2. Appealing Commission's Adverse Decision – Page 4]

#### 10) NOTIFICATION AND INFORMATION SHARING

The DEAC notifies federal, state, accrediting organizations, and the public of its decision. Pursuant to federal regulations regarding the recognition of other accrediting organizations, the Commission will observe this policy in keeping interested and appropriate groups informed of the accrediting actions taken by the Commission. Unless otherwise specified, the effective date of the Commission's decision is the date on the letter notifying the institution of the Commission's decision. [D.3. Notification and Information Sharing – Page 1]

- a. **Initial and Renewal of Accreditation:** The DEAC provides written notice to the U.S. Secretary of Education, the appropriate state licensing or authorizing agencies, and the appropriate accrediting organizations, at the same time it notifies the institution of the decision, but no later than 30 days after the Commission makes its decision to accredit or reaccredit an institution. [D.3. Notification and Information Sharing – Page 1]
- b. **Deny or Withdraw Accreditation:** The Commission provides written notice to the U.S. Secretary of Education, the appropriate state licensing or authorizing agencies, and the appropriate accrediting organizations, at the same time it notifies the institution of the decision, but no later than 30 days after the Commission makes a final decision to deny or withdraw accreditation. A final decision to deny or withdraw accreditation is one reached after an institution has exhausted the appeals process provided when appealing the Commission's adverse decision. [D.3. Notification and Information Sharing – Page 1]
- c. **Show Cause Directive:** The Commission provides written notice to the U.S. Secretary of Education, the appropriate state licensing or authorizing agencies, and the appropriate accrediting organizations, at the same time it notifies the institution

of the decision, but no later than 30 days after the Commission makes a decision to place an institution on Show Cause. [D.3. Notification and Information Sharing – Page 1]

- d. The Commission provides written notice to the public of any of the decisions listed above within 24 hours of its notice to the institution. [D.3. Notification and Information Sharing – Page 1]
- e. For any decisions to deny or withdraw accreditation, the Commission makes available to the U.S. Secretary of Education, the appropriate state licensing agencies, the appropriate accrediting organizations, and the public, no later than 60 days after the final decision, a brief statement summarizing the reasons for the Commission’s decision and the official comments, if any, that the affected institution makes regarding the Commission’s decision. If no official comments by the institution are provided within 14 days of notification, the Commission will document that the affected institution was offered the opportunity to provide an official comment. [D.3. Notification and Information Sharing – Page 1]
- f. **Resigning or Voluntarily Withdrawing Accreditation:** Upon receiving notification from an institution to resign or voluntarily withdraw from accreditation, the Commission provides written notice and post it on its website within 30 days to the U.S. Secretary of Education, appropriate state licensing agencies or authorizing agency, and the appropriate accrediting organizations and, upon request, the public. [D.3. Notification and Information Sharing – Page 1]
- g. **Accreditation Lapses:** If an institution decides to not renew its accreditation, the Commission provides written notice and post on its website within 30 days of the date on which the institution’s accreditation lapses to the U.S. Secretary of Education, appropriate state licensing agencies or authorizing agency, and the appropriate accrediting organizations and, upon request, the public. [D.3. Notification and Information Sharing – Page 1]
- h. The Commission submits to the U.S. Secretary of Education the name of any institution it accredits which the Commission has reason to believe is engaging in fraud and abuse, along with the Commission’s reasons for concern about the institution’s activities. The Commission informs the U.S. Secretary of Education whenever it has found significant or systemic deficiencies in the assignment of credit hours by an institution. [D.3. Notification and Information Sharing – Page 2]
- i. **Scope of Public Information:** The Commission will make available to the public and may publish in official DEAC publications, including its website and/or *DEAC Directory of Accredited Institutions*, the following information:
  - The name, address, telephone number, and website address of an accredited institution;

- The month and year accredited and month and year accreditation expires;
  - A summary list of programs offered by the institution;
  - A summary of information pertaining to an adverse action;
  - A summary of information pertaining to an action subject to appeal; and
  - The date of an institution’s voluntary withdrawal of accreditation. [D.3. Notification and Information Sharing – Page 2]
- j. **Confidentiality of Records:** Information pertaining to the Commission’s actions is confidential and is not shared with third parties, other DEAC institutions, the media, or the public, except as authorized by an institution or as required by government regulation, judicial or administrative process, and other legal requirements. [D.3. Notification and Information Sharing – Page 2]
- k. **Sharing Information with Government Entities and Other Accrediting Organizations:** DEAC grants all reasonable special requests for accreditation information made by other accrediting organizations and government entities. Requests for information from such entities must be in writing, submitted to the Executive Director, and state the name and address of the institution for which the information is sought, the nature of the information requested, and the purposes for which the information is to be used. A decision to deny such a request is not subject to appeal. [D.3. Notification and Information Sharing – Page 2]
- l. Institutions accredited by or seeking accreditation from DEAC provide a release as part of its Application for Accreditation for purposes of eliciting information from state licensing agencies and government entities, as well as an acknowledgement of the fact that accreditation information may, at the discretion of the Commission, be shared with other accrediting organizations and government entities. [D.3. Notification and Information Sharing – Page 2]
- m. **Authorized Disclosure of Information:** When an institution requests specific confidential accreditation information to be released to third parties, the President/CEO of the institution or an institution-designated official must provide a written release on official letterhead to the Executive Director stating the precise information to be released and the party or parties to whom the information is to be provided. [D.3. Notification and Information Sharing – Page 2]
- n. DEAC provides the following information to the U.S. Department of Education:
- A copy of any annual report it prepares;
  - A copy of the *DEAC Directory of Accredited Institutions* (updated annually);

- A summary of DEAC’s major accrediting activities during the previous year (an annual data summary), if requested by the U.S. Secretary;
- Any proposed change in DEAC’s policies, procedures, or accreditation standards that might alter its—
  - Scope of recognition; or
  - Compliance with the federal criteria for recognition.
- Any actions available to the Accrediting Commission;
- The name of any institution which DEAC accredits that has been “certified” by DEAC as being “Title IV Program Eligible” under DEAC’s Policy on Institutions Participating in Title IV Programs;
- The name of any institution which DEAC accredits that DEAC has reasons to believe is failing to meet its Title IV program responsibilities or is engaged in fraud or abuse, along with DEAC’s reasons for concern about the institution; and
- If the U.S. Secretary of Education requests, information that may bear upon an accredited institution’s compliance with its Title IV program responsibilities, including the eligibility of the institution to participate in Title IV programs or a significant or systematic non-compliance in the assignment of credit hours. The U.S. Secretary of Education may ask for this information to assist the Department in resolving problems with the institution’s participation in the Title IV programs. [C.22. Policy on Information Provided to the U.S. Department of Education – Page 1]

DEAC reviews on a case-by-case basis its contact with or information or materials provided to the U.S. Department of Education and the circumstances surrounding them and will determine whether they should be considered confidential. DEAC treats a contact or request from the U.S. Department of Education for information concerning an institution as being confidential, upon the specific request of the Department. [C.22. Policy on Information Provided to the U.S. Department of Education – Page 1]

**o. Public Disclosure of Accreditation Status**

- i. DEAC specifies how an accredited institution may refer to its accreditation status. An institution may refer to its accredited status as, “Accredited by the Distance Education Accrediting Commission,” “Accredited by the DEAC,” “accredited member of DEAC,” or “DEAC Accredited.” An institution may use the term “accredited programs,” “accredited courses,” and/or “nationally accredited” when referring to its individual programs, courses, and/or institution. [D.3. Notification and Information Sharing – Page 3]
- ii. DEAC does not have a pre-accreditation or candidacy status. An applicant institution may not refer to its

accreditation status in any manner. In doing so, it could potentially mislead the public about the institution's affiliation with DEAC. When an institution applies for initial accreditation, it must certify on its Application for Accreditation that it "agrees to not make any promotional use of its application for accreditation status prior to receiving DEAC accreditation." [D.3. Notification and Information Sharing – Page 3]

iii. If DEAC is informed that an applicant institution is telling the public it is "pre-accredited" or "will be accredited," the Executive Director will notify the institution immediately and tell them to cease and desist. If the institution continues, it is counseled that it may not proceed with the accreditation process. [D.3. Notification and Information Sharing – Page 3]

p. **Correction of Misleading or Inaccurate Information:** DEAC requires that an accredited institution must correct any misleading or inaccurate information it releases. DEAC will notify the institution of the misleading or inaccurate information, and request that the institution immediately make the correction, post a notice of the correction, and document to DEAC that the correction has been made. Failure to do so within 10 days may result in an order of a Special Visit, see Policy on Special Visits. [D.3. Notification and Information Sharing – Page 3]

#### 11) INSTITUTIONS PARTICIPATING IN TITLE IV PROGRAMS

To provide direction and to protect future distance education students and their respective institutions as they seek to participate in Federal student assistance programs, the DEAC believes it is prudent to provide additional policies, standards, and guidance for its member institutions in connection with the published Federal guidelines and requirements for participation in Federal Student Assistance (FSA) Title IV programs. [C.15. Policy on Institutions Participating in Title IV Programs – Page 1]

These include limiting the percentage of revenue received from Federal student assistance programs in the first year of authorized participation, the adoption of FSA Appendix D default reduction methods at inception, and additional required controls over student loan default levels for any institution that in any published cohort year has a cohort default rate greater than 30%. The position of the DEAC regarding these additional areas of oversight provides a level of preventative action where the requirements are more stringent than the published Federal policies and provide the DEAC with additional control over institutions it accredits that elect to participate in FSA Title IV programs. [C.15. Policy on Institutions Participating in Title IV Programs – Page 1]

It is the DEAC's expectation that any DEAC-accredited institution electing to participate in Federal student assistance programs will meet all of its Federal program responsibilities under Title IV of the Higher Education Act, as amended, without exception. In cases where DEAC standards and Federal law and regulations differ, the more stringent rules will apply. [C.15. Policy on Institutions Participating in Title IV Programs – Page 1]

For each institution that participates in Federal student assistance programs, the DEAC will examine the record of the institution’s compliance with its Federal program responsibilities under Title IV, based on the most recent “official cohort default rates” published by the U.S. Department of Education; the results of its audited financial statements; and its compliance audits, any program reviews conducted, and any other information that the U.S. Department of Education may provide to DEAC. The Commission will take action, as appropriate, when any of the information suggests that the institution may be failing to meet DEAC’s standards. [C.15. Policy on Institutions Participating in Title IV Programs – Page 1]

Institutions found by either DEAC or the appropriate Federal authorities, or a relevant state authority to be in significant non-compliance with its Title IV program responsibilities or requirements will jeopardize the institution’s accredited status with DEAC. [C.15. Policy on Institutions Participating in Title IV Programs – Page 1]

- a. **Scope of Activity:** DEAC reviews only those institutions that meet all eligibility requirements ~~that offer programs that have generally accepted and understood objectives, course learning outcomes,~~ and which are offered primarily through distance study instruction. DEAC’s scope of recognition granted by the U.S. Secretary of Education extends to non-degree programs through the Professional Doctoral degree level. [C.15. Policy on Institutions Participating in Title IV Programs – Page 1]

All of the distance learning programs offered by the institution must be reviewed and approved by the DEAC. All of the distance study divisions, courses, and/or subsidiaries of the institution offering distance study instruction must be accredited by DEAC and must be included in the scope of DEAC accredited extended to the institution. The institution may elect to become a Title IV eligible institution and not participate in any Title IV programs. Any programs selected for Title IV participation must be able to meet the Federal minimum requirements for program eligibility as well as meet DEAC’s Title IV requirements ~~the requirements of this Policy~~. [C.15. Policy on Institutions Participating in Title IV Programs – Page 2]

(Note: the U.S. Department of Education considers an eligible institution to be the “sum of its eligible programs.”) [C.15. Policy on Institutions Participating in Title IV Programs – Page 2]

- b. **Eligibility:** The institution that uses, or seeks to use, accreditation by DEAC to establish eligibility to participate in Federal student assistance programs must first offer “distance education” courses defined under the formal definition established by the U.S. Department of Education. [C.15. Policy on Institutions Participating in Title IV Programs – Page 2]

For the purposes of qualifying institutions to participate in the Federal student assistance programs, any DEAC institution that intends to apply must meet all eligibility requirements, including the minimum program length requirements, expressed in weeks and academic credits, as set forth in the law and regulations for Federal student assistance program participation. [C.15. Policy on Institutions Participating in Title IV Programs – Page 2]

Any programs selected by the institution to be Title IV eligible must have existed in substantially the same length and subject matter as the institution provided during the 24 months prior to the date it applies for eligibility with the U.S. Department of Education. [C.15. Policy on Institutions Participating in Title IV Programs – Page 2]

~~The predominant mode (i.e., more than half of the instructional program) of delivering instruction must be via distance education as defined by Federal regulations.~~ [C.15. Policy on Institutions Participating in Title IV Programs – Page 2]

- c. **Licensure:** The institution that uses, or seeks to use, accreditation by DEAC to establish eligibility to participate in Federal student assistance programs must have a charter, license, or formal authority from the appropriate governmental bodies to offer all of the programs or courses it offers, when such authority is available or required. The loss of state licensure or required authority to operate will result in the contemporaneous loss of DEAC accreditation and Federal aid eligibility. [C.15. Policy on Institutions Participating in Title IV Programs – Page 2]
- d. **First Year Limit on Participation and Significant Growth Triggers:** Revenue from all Title IV Federal student assistance programs by eligible institutions may not comprise more than 50% of an institution’s total revenue during its first 12 months of eligibility for Federal student aid program participation, and not more than 75% of its revenue for the second 12 months and subsequent years of participation. “Revenue” is defined as total receipts from all of the institution’s distance education students—regardless of whether they received Federal student assistance Title IV programs funds—for tuition, books, fees, and all institutional charges, excluding refunds made. [C.15. Policy on Institutions Participating in Title IV Programs – Pages 2-3]

Students who enrolled in an institution’s programs prior to the date in which Title IV eligibility is granted and who subsequently elect to receive Title IV aid will not be included in the institution’s Title IV revenues. [C.15. Policy on Institutions Participating in Title IV Programs – Pages 2-3]

An institution that, due to its participation in the Title IV programs, experiences annual growth of more than a 50% increase in student enrollments, and/or has more than a 50% increase in annual tuition receipts in any calendar year may, at the discretion of the DEAC, be directed to undergo an onsite evaluation. [C.15. Policy on Institutions Participating in Title



IV Programs – Pages 2-3]

- e. **Reaccreditation:** Since the length of the Title IV certification extends only through the institution’s current term of accreditation, not to exceed five years; the institution must renew its compliance with Title IV programs as part of its reaccreditation. The institution must readdress the Title IV statements in its Self-Evaluation Report. During the onsite evaluation, a Title IV evaluator will verify the information provided in the Self-Evaluation Report. [C.15. Policy on Institutions Participating in Title IV Programs – Page 3]
- f. **Certification of the Institution by DEAC:** Those institutions that have, their accreditation with the DEAC as a basis to establish eligibility for FSA Title IV programs must apply to the Commission for approval of all the distance education programs offered by the institution. [C.15. Policy on Institutions Participating in Title IV Programs – Page 3]

Prior to an accredited institution filing an application to the U.S. Department of Education to be either a participating institution or a deferment institution in Title IV programs, it must inform DEAC of its intention to be evaluated and “certified” by DEAC for compliance with the provisions of this policy, and must be found in compliance with all the requirements set forth within this policy. The institution must submit the Application for Certification as an Eligible Institution in FSA Title IV Programs. Someone from the institution must also successfully complete the DEAC course entitled, *Realities and Regulations of the Title IV Aid Programs* and submit a copy of his/her “certificate of completion” with the application. [C.15. Policy on Institutions Participating in Title IV Programs – Page 3]

An accredited DEAC institution may not participate in any FSA Title IV funding program, nor may it seek to be a “deferment” institution, until and unless it is certified by DEAC. An onsite evaluation to the institution is required in all cases to be “certified” by DEAC. [C.15. Policy on Institutions Participating in Title IV Programs – Page 3]

Although institutions accredited by other accrediting organizations are free to apply to the U.S. Department of Education for FSA Title IV status directly, without first being certified by the agency, the U.S. Department of Education has held DEAC to the highest standards in enforcing the certification policy DEAC has adopted. Violation of any provisions of this policy including applying to the U.S. Department of Education without first seeking and receiving DEAC certification, may subject an institution to corrective action, a special visit, or loss of accreditation. [C.15. Policy on Institutions Participating in Title IV Programs – Page 3]

- g. **Certification Report for Title IV:** A DEAC institution may not participate in any FSA Title IV funding program or seek to be a “deferment” institution unless it is certified by DEAC. An onsite evaluation is required. Prior to the onsite

evaluation, the institution must submit an electronic copy of the Certification Report for Title IV documenting that it is in compliance with all the requirements as stated in this policy. The institution must address all the ~~following statements and provide documentation as evidence~~ statements in the report and provide evidence of compliance through documentation. [C.15. Policy on Institutions Participating in Title IV Programs – Page 3]

- h. **Academic Units of Measurement:** For Title IV purposes, DEAC is required to review the institution’s policies and procedures for determining the credit hours as defined in 34 CFR 600. DEAC must evaluate an institution’s awards for courses and programs and the application of the institution’s policies and procedures to its programs and coursework and make a reasonable determination of whether the institution’s assignment of credit hours conforms to commonly accepted practices in higher education. [C.23. Policy on Credit Hours – Page 1]

(Please note: for Title IV purposes, DEAC institutions must comply with federal requirements for credit hour or clock-to-credit hour conversions which may be different from those required by DEAC for academic purposes.) For additional guidance, read DEAC’s Critical Document (Determining Credit Hours) found on DEAC’s website.

## 12) NOTIFICATIONS

- a. **Notification Reports:** The institution informs the Commission immediately of any actions it plans to take itself—or actions taken against it by other agencies—if those actions have the capacity to affect the reputation of the Commission, the institution’s good standing with the Commission and/or its acceptance by the public. This includes the institution’s ~~satisfactory (to the Commission)~~ resolution of any complaints in a forthright, prompt, amicable, and equitable manner to the Commission’s satisfaction. An effective date is indicated for instances where prior approval of a substantive change is granted, ~~an effective date will be indicated~~. The effective date is not ~~be~~ retroactive and ~~it must be~~ is within 30 days of the Commission’s final decision of the requested substantive change (except for changes in ownership). [C.1. Policy on Substantive Change and Notifications – Page 4]
- b. DEAC ~~member~~ accredited institutions ~~should make periodic contact with the~~ DEAC staff to apprise them of governmental and media actions that may affect their institution or the Commission. [C.1. Policy on Substantive Change and Notifications – Page 4]
- c. **Review of Notification Reports:** The Commission reserves the right to order a comprehensive review of an institution at any time it has concerns that the institution is not in compliance with the DEAC Accreditation Standards, policies, and/or procedures. [C.2. Policy on Change of Mission, Goals, and Objectives – Page 2]

In all cases, DEAC will allow the institution sufficient time to respond to any findings before any final decision regarding the institution's accredited status is made. [C.2. Policy on Change of Mission, Goals, and Objectives – Page 2]

### 13) SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES

A substantive change is one that may significantly affect an institution's quality, objectives, scope, or control. Substantive changes are reviewed to assure that changes in educational offerings, teaching modalities, locations, scope of offerings, and control of the institution are made in accordance with DEAC accreditation standards. The Commission's review of the application seeks to determine whether the substantive change adversely affects the capacity of the institution to continue to meet DEAC accreditation standards. Commission approval is required before a change in the institution's scope of accreditation is granted. It is the duty of the Commission to assure that any substantive change undertaken by an accredited institution does not adversely affect the capacity to continue to meet DEAC's accreditation standards. The institution seeking a substantive change follows DEAC's process for approval. The Commission grants approvals based on evidence that the proposed changes do not adversely affect the capacity of the institution to meet DEAC's accreditation and policies. [C.1. Policy on Substantive Change and Notifications – Page 1]

The following are substantive changes.

- Any significant change in the institution's established core mission, goals, and objectives;
- Any change in the institution's name;
- Any change in the institution's legal status, form of control, or ownership;
- Any change in the institution's location of the main facility or administrative site or any addition of a facility geographically apart from the main facility;
- Any addition of courses or programs, including those that represent a significant departure from existing educational offerings or from those that were offered when the institution was last evaluated;
- Any change in method of delivery since the institution's last evaluation;
- Any contracts for educational delivery with unaccredited organization;
- Any significant change or variation of credit hours, including changing from clock hours to credit hours;
- Any new combination distance study, in-residence instruction, or training sites; and
- Any change in international activities.

The Commission monitors changes that are proposed by institutions on a continuous basis. When the Commission has ascertained that an institution has proposed to undertake a change, or an accumulation of changes that singly or in combination are seen to be so significant as to be transforming the institution, the Commission will require a comprehensive re-evaluation of the institution.

[C.1. Policy on Substantive Change and Notification – Page 2]

Proposed changes to an institution may be so substantial that the Commission may consider that the institution to which it granted accreditation has effectively closed and a new institution is proposed to open. After affording the institution the opportunity to provide information about the changes and whether sufficient continuity of the accredited institution is maintained, the Commission may act to require a total re-evaluation of the institution or to withdraw the accreditation and require the institution to re-apply for accreditation. [C.1. Policy on Substantive Change and Notification – Page 2] The Commission allows for due process by providing reasonable time for an institution to comply with its request for information and documentation. In all cases, the Commission will allow the institution sufficient time to respond to any findings before any final decision regarding the institution’s accredited status is made. [C.1. Policy on Substantive Change and Notification – Page 3]

a. CHANGE OF CORE MISSION, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES

An institution seeking to substantively ~~change or significantly~~ depart from its ~~current~~ core mission, goals, and objectives requires prior approval because the institution’s accreditation is predicated on its core mission.

- i. **Core Mission Definition:** A significant alteration in the institution’s ~~established~~ core mission, ~~goals, or objectives~~ signals a change throughout the institution ~~as it relates to its efforts to increase student enrollments and the subsequent need to increase staff and facilities. It may signal a change in course/program objectives, course/program content, admission criteria, and other significant areas of operation in order to attract a greater number of students.~~ [C.2. Policy on Change of Mission, Goals, and Objectives – Page 1]

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

- ii. **Step One:** Submit a Change of Core Mission Application Part 1 including required documentation 30 days prior to implementation. The completed application and documentation is presented to the Commission for initial approval.
- iii. **Step Two:** Once the change of core mission is fully implemented, the institution submits a Change of Core Mission Application Part 2 including required documentation.
- iv. **Step Three:** The institution receives an onsite visit 6 months after implementation of the revised core mission is complete. The institution receives a Chair’s Report and has 30 days to respond with any additional information or documentation necessary to support the substantive change.

- v. **Step Four:** The Commission reviews all documentation submitted to date and approves or denies the substantive change in accordance with accreditation standards. DEAC notifies the institution 30 days after the Commission decision and notifies the U.S. Department of Education and other relevant constituencies.

See Substantive Change Flow Chart in Part Four: Appendices for further clarification. All applications are available on DEAC’s website ([www.deac.org](http://www.deac.org)).

b. CHANGE OF NAME

- i. An institution seeking to change its name is required to obtain approval from the Commission before implementing the new name. The Commission determines whether the proposed new name will have an adverse effect on public perception of the institution or the institution’s capacity to meet DEAC accreditation standards. Institutions seeking a change of name to include “university” or “college” must have DEAC approval as a degree-granting institution. [Adapted from C.2. Policy on Change of Mission, Goals, and Objectives – Page 1]

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

- ii. **Step One:** Submit a Change of Name or Adding a Division Application Part I including required documentation 30 days prior to implementation. The completed application and documentation is presented to the Commission for initial approval.
- iii. **Step Two:** Once the change of name or addition of a new division is implemented, the institution submits a Change of Name or Adding a Division Application Part 2 including required documentation.
- vi. **Step Three:** The Commission reviews all documentation submitted to date and approves or denies the substantive change in accordance with accreditation standards. DEAC notifies the institution 30 days after the Commission decision and notifies the U.S. Department of Education and other relevant constituencies.

See Substantive Change Flow Chart in Part Four: Appendices for further clarification. All applications are available on DEAC’s website ([www.deac.org](http://www.deac.org)).

c. CHANGE IN LEGAL STATUS, FORM OF CONTROL, OR OWNERSHIP OF INSTITUTION

- i. **Change in Legal Status Definition:** A “change in legal status” is 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 non-profit institution. When an institution changes its legal status as is defined as 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 non-profit, or from an S Corporation to an LLC. [C.3. Policy on Change of Ownership, Control, Legal Status – Page 1, Underline – Page 6]
- ii. **Control Definition:** “Control” is the ability to direct or cause the direction of the actions of an institution. Examples of change of “form of control” are: the sale of all or 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 owning an institution that becomes a subsidiary of another corporation with a different ownership. When an institution changes its form of control as defined as the ability to direct or cause the direction of the actions of an institution, it is essentially changing ownership. [C.3. Policy on Change of Ownership, Control, Legal Status – Page 1, Underline – Page 6]
- iii. **Change of Ownership Definition:** A “change of ownership” is any transaction or combination of transactions that would result in a change in the control of an accredited institution. [C.3. Policy on Change of Ownership, Control, Legal Status – Page 1]
- iv. Accreditation does not automatically transfer to an institution when all or a majority share of its interests are sold, or when an institution is sold or changes its legal status. If the new ownership **desires** to continue the institution’s accreditation, it must notify the Commission before the change is made. ~~and the proposed new ownership/control/legal status must be approved by DEAC.~~ [C.3. Policy on Change of Ownership, Control, Legal Status – Page 1] ~~When a change of legal status, control, or ownership is contemplated, the new owner or board must take immediate steps to obtain DEAC approval.~~ Failure to obtain approval results in withdrawal of institutional accreditation as of the date the change of legal status, control, or ownership occurs. [C.3. Policy on Change of Ownership, Control, Legal Status – Page 2]
- v. The institution’s proposed new owners, governing board members, and administrators possess sound reputations and show a record of integrity and ethical conduct in their professional activities, business operations, and relations.

The proposed new owners, board members, officials, and executive staff are free from any association with misfeasance including, ~~but not limited to,~~ owning, managing, or controlling any educational institutions that have entered into bankruptcy or closed resulting in students being disadvantaged. ~~with students having been disadvantaged as a result.~~ [C.3. Policy on Change of Ownership, Control, Legal Status – Page 1]

- vi. A proposed transfer of ownership is approved based on the new owners, governing board members, and administrators demonstrating possessing the capacity to own and operate a DEAC accredited institution. The new ownership's financial condition includes sufficient resources to continue sound institutional operations in fulfillment of all commitments to enrolled students. The financial stability allows the institution to remain in compliance with DEAC accreditation standards. [Adapted from C.3. Policy on Change of Ownership, Control, Legal Status – Page 4]
- vii. ~~In the case where~~ An institution is authorized and is participating in Title IV Federal Student Aid programs, assumes the responsibility of assuring timely notification and ~~timely~~ submission of reports to DEAC ~~in order~~ to facilitate a seamless transfer of ownership and continuation of institutional eligibility. ~~where continuation of Federal eligibility is contingent upon uninterrupted accreditation,~~ The Change of Legal Status, Control, or Ownership Application Part 2 requires copies of filings and submissions to the U.S. Department of Education be included ~~in the Change of Legal Status, Control, or Ownership Application Part II~~ along with any correspondence received from the Department. ~~Please note that~~ The U.S. Department of Education has time-sensitive regulations regarding change of legal status, control, or ownership for institutions participating in federal student aid programs. [C.3. Policy on Change of Ownership, Control, Legal Status – Page 2]

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

- viii. Step One: Submit a Change of Legal Status, Control, or Ownership Application Part 1 including required documentation 30 days prior to the proposed change. The completed application and documentation is presented to the Commission for initial approval.
- ix. Step Two: Once the change of legal status, control, or ownership is implemented, the institution submits a Change of Legal Status, Control, or Ownership Application Part 2 including required documentation. Institution provides DEAC notification and additional documentation within 10 days after closing.
- x. Step Three: The institution receives an onsite visit 6 months after the change of legal status, control, or ownership

is complete. The institution receives a Chair’s Report and has 30 days to respond with any additional information or documentation necessary to support the substantive change.

- xi. **Step Four:** The Commission reviews all documentation submitted to date and approves or denies the substantive change in accordance with accreditation standards. DEAC notifies the institution 30 days after the Commission decision and notifies the U.S. Department of Education and other relevant constituencies.

See Substantive Change Flow Chart in Part Four: Appendices for further clarification. All applications are available on DEAC’s website (www.deac.org).

d. CHANGE IN LOCATION

An institution seeking a change in location (however close to the original site) is required to obtain prior approval from the Commission. [C.4. Policy on Change of Location or New Administrative Site – Page 1]

- i. **Location Definition:** A “**location**” is a geographic location that houses the headquarters of an institution. The institution provides evidence that is approved in the state for the activity that it conducts at the new location. [C.4. Policy on Change of Location or New Administrative Site – Page 1]

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

- ii. **Step One:** Submit a Change in Location Application Part 1 including required documentation 30 days prior to the change.
- iii. **Step Two:** Once the change in location is complete, the institution submits a Change in Location Application Part 2 including required documentation.
- iv. **Step Three:** The institution receives an onsite visit 6 months after the change in location is complete. The institution receives a Chair’s Report and has 30 days to respond with any additional information or documentation necessary to support the substantive change.



- v. **Step Four:** The Commission reviews all documentation submitted to date and approves or denies the substantive change in accordance with accreditation standards. DEAC notifies the institution 30 days after the Commission decision and notifies the U.S. Department of Education and other relevant constituencies.

See Substantive Change Flow Chart in Part Four: Appendices for further clarification. All applications are available on DEAC’s website (www.deac.org).

e. **NEW ADMINISTRATIVE SITE**

- i. **Administrative Site Definition:** An “**administrative site**” is a separate office located geographically apart from the main headquarters’ location, which typically provide an offsite 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. For DEAC purposes, administrative sites are not listed in DEAC’s Directory of Accredited Institutions. The institution provides evidence that it is approved in the state for the activity that it conducts at the administrative site. [C.4. Policy on Change of Location or New Administrative Site – Page 1]

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

- ii. **Step One:** Submit a New Administrative Site Application Part 1 including required documentation 30 days prior to the change.
- iii. **Step Two:** Once the new administrative site is implemented, the institution submits a New Administrative Site Application Part 2 including required documentation.
- iv. **Step Three:** The institution receives an onsite visit 6 months after the new administrative site is implemented. The institution receives a Chair’s Report and has 30 days to respond with any additional information or documentation necessary to support the substantive change.
- v. **Step Four:** The Commission reviews all documentation submitted to date and approves or denies the substantive change in accordance with accreditation standards. DEAC notifies the institution 30 days after the Commission decision and notifies the U.S. Department of Education and other relevant constituencies.

See Substantive Change Flow Chart in Part Four: Appendices for further clarification. All applications are available on DEAC’s website (www.deac.org).

f. CHANGE IN EDUCATIONAL OFFERINGS

i. The following are considered substantive changes to educational offerings:

- Adding or replacing 25% of new or revised content within educational offerings, including the addition of concentrations;
- Changing the method of delivery;
- Acquiring courses or programs from an unaccredited organization or publisher (does not apply to DEAC accredited or AQC approved courses/programs);
- Contracting for educational delivery;
- Changing program type offered since the last onsite evaluation; and
- Changing program level offered since the last onsite evaluation.

ii. An institution seeking to improve or expand its educational offerings to students may contract with other institutions or organizations to provide additional components to enhance students' educational experience. An institution may contract for up to 50% of its educational delivery with an organization offering unaccredited courses and follows DEAC's approval process below.

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

iii. Step One: Submit a Change in Educational Offerings including additional curricula documentation listed below, as applicable.

- Adding or replacing 25% or more of new or revised content within educational offerings, including the addition of a concentration as defined above
  - The institution submits all new courses for review.
- Changing the method of delivery
  - The institution provides access to 1 completed program. (Please note: Changes in method of delivery as applicable to specific courses are non-substantive changes and only requires DEAC notification.)
- Acquiring courses/programs from an unaccredited organization or publisher
  - The institution submits 25% of core courses for the program.
- Contracting for educational delivery
  - The institution submits all contracted courses.

- \*Changing program type
  - The institution submits 25% of completed core courses for the proposed program.
- \*Changing program level
  - The institution submits 25% of completed core courses for the proposed program.

\*Requires an onsite visit 6 months to 1 year after implementation of the new program and enrolling students.

- iv. **Step Two:** The institution's Change in Educational Offerings Application and course/program documentation are submitted to an off-site subject specialist for review. The institution receives an off-site subject specialist report and has 90 days to respond to any partially meets or does not meets standards.
- v. **Step Three:** For change in program type or level only – the institution receives an onsite visit 6 months to 1 year after implementing the program and enrolling students. The institution receives a Chair's Report and has 30 days to respond with any additional information or documentation necessary to support the substantive change.
- vi. **Step Four:** The Commission reviews all documentation submitted to date and approves or denies the substantive change in accordance with accreditation standards. DEAC notifies the institution 30 days after the Commission decision and notifies the U.S. Department of Education and other relevant constituencies.

See Substantive Change Flow Chart in Part Four: Appendices for further clarification. All applications are available on DEAC's website (www.deac.org).

g. ACADEMIC UNITS OF MEASUREMENT

Institutions may define their programs in terms of credit hours or clock hours and thereby adopt a common classification system that is understood and recognized by the higher education community. [C.23. Policy on Credit Hours – Page 1]

- i. **Significant Increase in Clock or Credit Hours:** The alteration of a course or program that represents significant modification in the objectives or content of an approved course or program is considered a substantive change. As a general rule, this means any increase in courses or programs in clock or credit hours, from the original date of course/program approval, the date of approval of a previous substantive change to the course/program, or the most recent grant of accreditation, in the clock or credit hours of an existing course/program.

- ii. Changing from Clock to Credit Hours: An institution changing from clock to credit hours is a substantive change.

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

- iii. Step One: Submit a Change of Academic Units of Measurement Application including additional course/program documentation listed below.
- The institution submits 25% of courses reflecting the revised academic units of measurement.
- iv. Step Two: The institution's Change of Academic Units of Measurement Application and course/program documentation are submitted to an off-site subject specialist for review. The institution receives an off-site subject specialist report and has 90 days to respond to any partially meets or does not meets standards.
- v. Step Three: The Commission reviews all documentation submitted to date and approves or denies the substantive change in accordance with accreditation standards. DEAC notifies the institution 30 days after the Commission decision and notifies the U.S. Department of Education and other relevant constituencies.

See Substantive Change Flow Chart in Part Four: Appendices for further clarification. All applications are available on DEAC's website ([www.deac.org](http://www.deac.org)).

h. APPROVAL OF NEW COMBINATION DISTANCE STUDY IN-RESIDENCE PROGRAMS OR TRAINING SITES

- i. This policy applies to an institution when:
- It adds a new in-residence or training site;
  - An optional in-residence or training component becomes mandatory; or
  - It adds a new distance study component to an existing approved in-residence or training site.
- [C.7. Policy on Approval of New Combination Distance Study-Resident Programs or Training Site – Page 1]
- ii. **New Combination Distance Study-Resident Programs:** This policy addresses the use of blended learning courses or programs which require a student to complete both a distance study and an onsite or resident study component

for successful course completion. This is sometimes referred to as a “hybrid program.” The approval process has two steps, distance study portion and training site.

The institution must document that it is properly authorized by the applicable state authority (or its equivalent for non-U.S. institutions) to offer the new Combination Distance Study-Resident Program. Students *may not* be enrolled in the course until approval for the distance study course has been extended.

The Commission reserves the right to order a comprehensive review of an institution at any time it has concerns that the institution is not in compliance with the DEAC’s standards, policies, and/or procedures. [C.7. Policy on Approval of New Combination Distance Study-Resident Programs or Training Sites – Page 1]

- iii. **Approval by DEAC of Distance Study:** The distance study portion of the course/program must be evaluated and approved before students may be enrolled. The institution must submit the distance study portion in accordance with the Policy on Course/Program Approval and the Proposed Training Site Report. [C.7. Policy on Approval of New Combination Distance Study-Resident Programs or Training Sites – Page 1]

The institution will receive a copy of the subject specialist’s report, and it will have a chance to respond to any “Does Not Meet” findings before the Commission reviews the documents. The Commission will review the Subject Specialist’s Report, the institution’s *Proposed Training Site Report*, and the institution’s response to the Subject Specialist’s Report before giving approval to the distance study portion and the resident portion. The institution will be notified in writing within **30 days** of the Commission’s actions. [C.7. Policy on Approval of New Combination Distance Study-Resident Programs or Training Sites – Page 2]

- iv. **Approval of the Training Site:** Within **30 days** of when students begin attending the resident training site, the institution must submit a copy of its *Revised Training Site Report* to the Director of Accreditation. Upon receipt of the *Revised Training Site Report*, the Director of Accreditation will schedule an onsite evaluation to the training site to take place within *6 months after the first students begin attending the resident training site*. A fee will be charged for the onsite evaluation (see Fees page). [C.7. Policy on Approval of New Combination Distance Study-Resident Programs or Training Sites – Page 2]

All new sites must be visited and individually approved by the Commission. Failure by the accredited institution to notify the Commission in a timely way of a new training site may bring a full review of the entire institution. [C.7. Policy on Approval of New Combination Distance Study-Resident Programs or Training Sites – Page 3]

After the onsite evaluation to the new training site, the institution will receive a copy of the Chair's Report and will be given the opportunity to comment on its factual elements in accordance with normal Commission procedures. The established procedure for the training site approval is:

- Receipt of Chair's Report in the Commission's office;
- Transmittal of the Chair's Report to the institution;
- The institution's response to the Chair's Report;
- The Commission reviews the Revised Training Site Report, Subject Specialist's Report, Chair's Report, the institution's response to the Chair's Report, and takes appropriate action, and

A formal letter stating the Commission's actions will be sent in 30 days of its final decision. [C.7. Policy on Approval of New Combination Distance Study-Resident Programs or Training Sites – Page 3]

- v. **Failure to Pay Fees or Submit Report:** All fees must be paid prior to the onsite evaluation. If an institution fails to submit its *Revised Training Site Report* or pay the fee, enrollments in the course/program (including the onsite training portion) will be suspended, and the institution must refund all money received from students within **30 days**. If the resident training site is subsequently approved, previously enrolled distance study students will be afforded the opportunity to resume and complete their distance study courses and must be afforded the opportunity to attend resident training, within **60 days** of completing their distance study training, free of charge. [C.7. Policy on Approval of New Combination Distance Study-Resident Programs or Training Sites – Page 4]

All training sites must be revisited as part of an institution's renewal of accreditation. [C.7. Policy on Approval of New Combination Distance Study-Resident Programs or Training Sites – Page 4]

i. ENGAGING IN INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

An institution seeking to add active international functions ~~perform major institution functions~~ (e.g., training sites, recruiting, instruction, marketing, business) outside the United States, open ~~or when~~ branch campuses or coordinating offices ~~are opened~~ in another country, or contract ~~when the institution contracts~~ with foreign agents or educational entities, including formal articulation agreements, is required to obtain prior approval from the Commission. [C.17. Policy on International Activities – Page 1]

- i. An accredited institution offering educational programs outside of their home country obtains all appropriate external approvals where required, including system administration, government bodies, and DEAC. The institution

documents the accepted legal basis for its operation in the host country or country of origin and meets legal requirements of the host country or country of origin.

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

- ii. **Step One:** Submit an International Activities Application Part 1 including required documentation 30 days prior to the engaging in international activities. The completed application and documentation is presented to the Commission for initial approval.
- iii. **Step Two:** Once engagement in international activities is established, the institution submits an International Activities Application Part 2 including required documentation.
- iv. **Step Three:** The institution receives an onsite visit in the host country or country of origin 1 year after engaging in international activities. An onsite visit is required in each of the countries where an institution is offering programs, providing instruction or tutorial services where recruiting of students, and other services for these programs are either conducted by an agency or individual formally contracted by the institution or results in an articulation agreement with an institution or entity in that country. The institution receives a Chair's Report and has 30 days to respond with any additional information or documentation necessary to support the substantive change. [C.17. policy on International Activities – Page 3]
- v. **Step Four:** The Commission reviews all documentation submitted to date and approves or denies the substantive change in accordance with accreditation standards. DEAC notifies the institution 30 days after the Commission decision and notifies the U.S. Department of Education and other relevant constituencies.

See Substantive Change Flow Chart in Part Four: Appendices for further clarification. All applications are available on DEAC's website ([www.deac.org](http://www.deac.org)).

#### 14) NON-SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES

Non-substantive changes are those changes that require the institution to notify DEAC, but do not require prior approval. The following are non-substantive changes.

- a. **Change of President/Chief Executive Officer:** When an institution makes a change in its President/CEO, as defined as the replacement of the senior level executive of the institution since the last accreditation evaluation, it must notify the

Commission as soon as possible. The institution must submit a Letter of Notice to the Director of Accreditation. The letter must provide a full explanation as to when the change of President/CEO is being made, why it is being made, and how the change will affect the institution's capacity to continue to meet all DEAC Accreditation Standards. [C.1. Policy on Substantive Change and Notification – Page 3]

The institution provides documentation on the qualifications of the new President/CEO and a summary of the job description. The institution agrees that as part of the Change of President/CEO, the new President/CEO may be subject to a background check by DEAC, which may include, but not limited to, DEAC surveys of state educational oversight agencies, federal departments and agencies, consumer protection agencies, checks on the credit history, prior bankruptcy, criminal background, debarment from Federal Student Aid Programs, the closing of educational institutions in which they were managers or principals, or the loss of accreditation or state approval to operate an educational institution. [C.1. Policy on Substantive Change and Notification – Page 3]

Additional consideration may be required if the background of the proposed new management raises questions concerning compliance with DEAC Standard IV Part One as to his/her qualifications. [C.1. Policy on Substantive Change and Notification – Page 4]

- b. **Course/Program Name or Title Revision:** An institution changing the name/title of a program, name/title or course code of a degree course within an already approved program, or the title of a vocational/avocational program, the institution submits a letter to the Director of Accreditation outlining the change, the reason for the change, and certifies that these are the only revisions to the course or program. [C.5. Policy on Course/Program Approval – Page 8]
- c. **Changing General Education Requirements or Eliminating a Major Thesis Requirement ~~or Altering Program Proctoring Requirements~~:** An institution changing general education requirements or eliminating a major thesis requirement, ~~or altering program proctoring requirements~~ submits a letter to the Director of Accreditation outlining the change, the reason for the change, and certifies that these are the only revisions to the course or program.
- d. **Acquiring Courses from an Approved AQC Provider or DEAC Accredited Institution:** An institution that enters into an agreement to incorporate or offer courses from an AQC provider or DEAC accredited institution submits a letter to the Director of Accreditation listing the acquired courses, the courses that will be replaced, the reason for the change, the faculty responsible for reviewing and providing instruction, and certifies that these are the only revisions to the course or program.



- e. **Discontinuing Courses/Programs:** If an institution decides to discontinue a course or program, it submits a letter to the Director of Accreditation explain the reasons for the change. [C.5. Policy on Course/Program Approval – Page 10] Programs being discontinued requires the inclusion of a program teach-out plan and the number of currently enrolled students.
- f. **Division Identity:** A “**division**” of a DEAC institution typically refers to any name used by an institution to advertise its various courses or programs. A “division” is owned and operated by the parent institution and it not a separate legal entity. For example, the distance education institution advertises its degree-granting programs under the name “Distance Education University” and its vocational courses under “Distance Education Institute” and its high school programs under “Distance Education High School.” Another example is the company, Distance Education Company, offers several programs and advertising each program by a different name; such as Distance Education Career School or Distance Education Photography School. DEAC requires that any separately advertised division be listed in the DEAC Directory of Accredited Institutions. [C.25. Policy on Change of Name or Adding New Division – Page 1] Institutions seeking to implement a division must notify the Commission in writing and provide a complete description of how the institution will disclose the division as part of the broader educational offerings.
- g. **Closure of an Administrative Site:** When an institution decides to close an administrative site submits a letter to the Director of Accreditation at least 30 days prior to the closure. The letter provides the following information:
- Name, address, and telephone number of the site;
  - The date and reason(s) for closing the administrative site;
  - Personnel names, titles, and job descriptions affected by the closing;
  - Information explaining what duties were carried out at the administrative site and where those duties will be carried out in the future;
  - Information on any significant changes in courses/programs or educational services, student support services, etc. resulting from the closure of the administrative site.
  - Information on changes to any advertising and promotional materials (including website) resulting from the closure of the administrative site.
  - If any official documents were kept at the administrative site, explain when and where the records will be transferred.
  - Evidence that the institution has properly notified the appropriate licensing, authorizing, or approving state educational agency concerning the closure of the administrative site. [C.4. Policy on Change of Location or New Administrative Site – Page 5]

## 15) TEACH-OUT PLANS

- a. Institutions submit a comprehensive, written teach-out plan for its enrolled students for DEAC approval when any of the following events occur ~~in a timely manner for DEAC approval a comprehensive, written plan for the teach-out of its enrolled students when any of the following events takes place:~~ [C.27. Policy on Teach-Out Plans – Page 1]
- The U.S. Department of Education has notified the Commission of an action against the institution pursuant to Federal Regulations, Section 487 (f) [20 USC 1099 b];
  - The Commission has withdrawn accreditation from an institution;
  - The Commission has directed the institution to Show Cause as to why its accreditation should not be withdrawn;
  - A State licensing or authorizing agency notifies DEAC that an institution’s license or legal authorization has been or will be revoked;
  - The institution has notified the Commission that it intends to cease operations; or
  - The Commission has made a determination that an institution appears to lack sufficient resources to sustain effective operation in meeting its obligations to students or enters bankruptcy. [C.27. Policy on Teach-Out Plans – Page 1]
- b. **Teach-Out Plan:** At a minimum, the proposed teach-out plan must assure that all students who enrolled in the institution receive all of the training or education under the terms of their contracts, to include receiving all learning materials and student services on a timely basis. [C.27. Policy on Teach-Out Plans – Page 1]

Two approaches to teach-out plans:

- The institution plans to teach-out its own students; or
- An executed teach-out agreement with one or more appropriately accredited institutions currently offering programs similar to those offered at the closing institution. [C.27. Policy on Teach-Out Plans – Page 1]

Minimum components for any teach-out approach include:

- A listing, by name and student number, of all students in each program and their estimated completion/graduation dates, the status of unearned tuition, all current refunds due and account balances;
- Arrangements for disposition of all student records, including educational, accounting, and financial aid records, in an accessible location and in accordance with applicable legal requirements in the event the institution closes;
- Instructions on how curricula and learning management software may be accessed to conduct a teach-out;

- An explanation, accompanied by appropriate supporting documentation and timelines, of how the closing institution will notify students in the event of closure, and, if applicable, how the closing institution will notify the students of the teach-out;
- For institution's offering hybrid programs (distance study and required face-to-face instruction) an explanation and evidence as to how the teach-out institution has the capacity to provide the students with instruction and services without requiring the students to move or travel substantial distances from the closing institution, and the adequacy of the teach-out institution's facilities and equipment.
- A statement which evidences that state regulations regarding any student protection funds and/or bonds are followed, if applicable;
- A statement that describes any additional charges/fees and notification to students about the charges/fees; and
- A description of what financial resources will be used to make student refunds or fund the teach-out. [C.27. Policy on Teach-Out Plans – Pages 1-2]

DEAC reviews any teach-out plan that includes a program accredited by another recognized accrediting agency and will notify that accrediting agency of any approval or rejection. [C.27. Policy on Teach-Out Plans – Page 2]

- c. **Teach-Out Agreement:** DEAC approves teach-out agreements only if the agreement is consistent with DEAC standards and the criteria listed below and provides for the equitable treatment of students. The teach-out institution must have the necessary experience, resources, and support services to provide an educational program of acceptable quality and that is reasonably similar in content and structure to that provided by the institution that is ceasing operations. The teach-out institution must also be able to remain stable, carry out its mission, and meet all obligations to existing students. [C.27. Policy on Teach-Out Plans – Page 2]
- d. When a DEAC institution enters into a teach-out agreement voluntarily or at the DEAC's direction, the agreement must be approved by DEAC prior to implementation. In such cases, the institution must provide documentation to demonstrate that the educational programs provided by the teach-out institution are of acceptable quality. [C.27. Policy on Teach-Out Plans – Page 2]

The following elements are considered in approving teach-out agreements:

- The agreement is with one or more institutions accredited by an agency that is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and/or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). The institution is state licensed, and the institution currently offers programs similar to those at the closing institution.

- The agreement states that the student will be provided access to all the program of instruction, without additional cost, for which the student originally contracted and paid, but did not receive due to the [pending] closure of the institution. For hybrid programs, the teach-out institution must be near the closing institution so as to not require students to move or travel substantial distances.
  - The agreement clarifies the financial responsibilities of all parties, including the assumption of any liabilities for tuition refunds and appropriate notification to students in a timely manner of additional charges/fees, if any.
  - The agreement states whether, upon completion of the program, the student will receive a diploma, certificate, or degree from the teach-out institution, or whether the diploma or certificate will be awarded by the closing institution.
  - The agreement indicates whether students who have already enrolled, but who had not yet started their program of study at the closing institution, or who are on a leave of absence from the closing institution will be entitled to begin training or re-enroll at the teach-out institution.
  - The agreement states that the closing institution will provide the teach-out institution with copies of the following records for the students being taught out:
    - Enrollment agreements
    - Financial aid transcripts
    - Study/progress records
    - Academic transcripts
    - Student account records
    - Any relevant curricula materials
  - The agreement requires that the teach-out institution maintain records and documents for the students being taught out, and that the teach-out institution will report back to DEAC on a periodic basis the status of the teach-out.
  - The agreement provides for appropriate notification to the Commission, federal, and state authorities.
  - The agreement complies with applicable federal and state laws. [C.27. Policy on Teach-Out Plans – Pages 2-3]
- e. **Closure without Teach-Out Plan/Agreement:** If a DEAC accredited institution closes without a teach-out plan/agreement or an institution refuses to provide a teach-out plan, DEAC will work with the U.S. Department of Education and the appropriate state agency, to the extent feasible, to assist students in finding reasonable opportunities to complete their education without additional charges. [C.27. Policy on Teach-Out Plans – Page 3]

## 16) ANNUAL REPORTS

- a. **Maintaining Accreditation:** In order for an institution to maintain its eligibility for accreditation on an ongoing basis, it must be in continuous compliance with all accrediting standards, policies, and eligibility requirements. This means, among other things, that an institution must: be in continuous operation in terms of educating ~~or training bona fide~~ students in accordance with its primary mission and objectives; fulfill all DEAC reporting requirements in a timely manner; ~~maintain any applicable state license or approval in its state of domicile~~; maintain compliance with all applicable local, state, and federal requirements; and pay all DEAC dues and fees, as well as onsite evaluation fees as required, on a timely basis. [Accreditation Handbook – Page 20]
- b. Annual Reports: Each year, DEAC requires the submission of an Annual Report by each institution holding accreditation status as of December 31<sup>st</sup> of any given year. The Annual Report and all accompanying documentation is due to DEAC in accordance with established formats and timelines. The Commission monitors institutional enrollment growth through the data submitted in an institution’s Annual Report. When the Commission determines that an institution has undergone significant enrollment growth, the Commission may require the submission of additional information.

## 17) COMPLAINTS (ACCREDITED INSTITUTIONS, ACTIVE APPLICANTS, AND DEAC)

- a. **DEAC Complaints:** Complaints that reasonably allege instances of non-compliance with DEAC accreditation standards against accredited institutions, active applicants, and DEAC Evaluators, Commissioners, and Staff are investigated in a fair and timely manner. [Adapted from C.20. Policy on Complaints – Page 1]

DEAC’s “Online Complaint System” enables individuals to file a complaint directly using the DEAC website. The complaint form ~~may be~~ is found at [www.deac.org/Student-Center/Complaint-Process.aspx](http://www.deac.org/Student-Center/Complaint-Process.aspx). All complaints should be submitted using this form. For those who cannot access the Internet, written complaints will be accepted provided they include the complainant’s name and contact information and a release from the complainant(s) to the institution. Where circumstances warrant, the complainant may remain anonymous to the institution, but all identifying information must be given to DEAC. [C.20. Policy on Complaints – Pages 1-2]

Written complaints must contain the following: the basis of any allegation of non-compliance with DEAC standards and policies; all relevant names and dates and a brief description of the actions forming the basis of the complaint; copies of any available documents or materials that support the allegations; a release authorizing DEAC to forward a copy of the complaint, including identification of the complaint(s) to the institution. In cases of anonymous complaints or where the complainant requests for his/her name to be kept confidential, DEAC considers how to proceed and whether the

anonymous complaint sets forth reasonable and credible information that an institution may be in violation of DEAC's standards and whether the complainant's identify is not necessary to investigate. [C.20. Policy on Complaints – Page 2]

b. **Definition of Complaint:** A complaint is defined as notification to DEAC by any person or entity (including, but not limited to, any student, any faculty or staff of an accredited institution, any member of the general public, any representative of a federal, state, or local government, and any member of any other institution or organization) that sets forth reasonable and credible information that:

- An accredited institution;
- An applicant institution; or
- The Evaluators, Commissioners, or DEAC Staff are not in compliance with one or more of DEAC's accreditation standards. [C.20. Policy on Complaints – Page 2]

Where issues of educational services, student services, or tuition are concerned, a student complainant must have exhausted all efforts to resolve his/her complaint with the institution before considering filing a complaint with DEAC. Where issues of educational quality or compliance with DEAC standards or policies are not central to the complaint, the DEAC will refer the complaint and/or the complainant to the appropriate federal or state agency or private entity with jurisdiction over the subject matter of the complaint and may provide a copy to the institution. [C.20. Policy on Complaints – Page 2]

DEAC will not intervene on behalf of individuals in cases of a personnel action, nor will it review an institution's internal administrative decisions in such matters as admissions decisions, academic honesty, assignment of grades and similar matters unless the context of an allegation suggests that unethical or unprofessional conduct or action may have occurred that might call into question the institution's compliance with a DEAC standard or policy. [C.20. Policy on Complaints – Page 2]

Further, DEAC will not intervene on behalf of individuals in cases where the situation giving rise to the complaint had occurred so long ago that investigating and ascertaining the facts might prove to be problematic. The Executive Director will exercise professional judgment in determining which cases meet these criteria. In addition, if, for any reason, DEAC suspects any type of unethical behavior, including fraud and abuse, by an applicant or accredited institution, DEAC reserves the right to investigate the allegations. DEAC is obligated under Federal regulations [CF 602.27(a)(6)] to report to the U.S. Secretary of Education any institution it has reason to believe is failing to meet its Title IV program responsibilities or is engaged in fraud and abuse. [C.20. Policy on Complaints – Page 2]

- c. **Records of Complaints:** DEAC maintains records of all complaints. Complaints received against accredited institutions and the manner of their resolution are kept for two accreditation cycles (8-10 years). Complaints received against initial applicants are kept for a period of three years. DEAC provides summaries of these files to visiting examining committees when they conduct onsite visits. DEAC also considers these summary files when it acts on an institution's application for initial reaccreditation or renewal of accreditation. The complaints are analyzed according to how the institution handles them or how they were resolved. [C.20. Policy on Complaints – Page 3]

In addition, all other complaint files are tabulated and summarized and presented at each meeting of DEAC. The summary provides an analysis of any complaints unresolved, categories of complaints by nature and source, and any other information the Commission desires regarding the record of complaints received by the DEAC. [C.20. Policy on Complaints – Page 3]

- d. **Complaints against Accredited Institutions:** When DEAC accredits an institution, it expects the institution to remain in compliance with all of the DEAC standards for accreditation throughout the accreditation period granted. Therefore, one of the principal concerns of the DEAC when it receives a complaint about an accredited institution is whether the institution is in compliance with the published standards and policies. The burden of proof rests with the institution to prove that it is meeting DEAC's published standards and policies, at all times, to include proving compliance after accreditation is awarded. Another concern of DEAC is the methods, policies, philosophy, and procedures of the institution for handling complaints on an ongoing basis. DEAC expects its accredited institutions to have operational procedures in place for fairly and promptly resolving complaints so that they do *not* become a matter for concern by outside agencies. DEAC will consider a complaint even if the institution is involved in litigation with DEAC or other third parties. Therefore, in investigating a specific complaint against an accredited institution, DEAC also examines whether or not the institution has effective methods for handling student problems on a routine basis. In so doing, DEAC looks to see if the institution's procedures are equitable, consistently applied, and effective in resolving problems. [C.20. Policy on Complaints – Page 3]

Finally, DEAC is concerned about the frequency and pattern of complaints about an accredited institution. DEAC expects the institution to monitor all complaints it receives, and expects the institution to take steps to assure that similar complaints do not become repetitive or routine. [C.20. Policy on Complaints – Page 3]

- e. **Action:** When DEAC receives a complaint against an applicant or accredited institution, the DEAC's procedure for handling the complaint consists of the following steps:
- After receipt of the complaint, the Commission staff will send a letter or e-mail to the complainant acknowledging receipt of the complaint and explaining the process the DEAC will follow in investigating the complaint.

- DEAC staff will conduct an initial review of the complaint to determine whether the complaint sets forth information or allegations that reasonably suggest that an institution may not be in compliance with DEAC's standards, policies, and procedures. If additional information or clarification is required, the Executive Director (acting on behalf of the Commission) will send a request to the complainant. If the requested information is not received within **15 days**, the complaint may be considered abandoned and may not be investigated by DEAC.
- If the Executive Director determines after the initial review of the complaint that the information or allegations do not reasonably demonstrate that an institution is out of compliance with DEAC standards, policies, or procedures, the complaint may be considered closed and not investigated by DEAC. (10/11)
- If the Executive Director determines after the initial review of the complaint that the information or allegations reasonably suggest or does not provide enough information to ascertain that an institution may not be in compliance with DEAC standards, policies, and procedures, the Executive Director will notify the institution that a complaint has been filed. The notice will summarize the allegations, identify the DEAC standards, policies, or procedures that were allegedly violated, and provide a copy of the original complaint to the institution. The institution will be given **30 days** to provide a response, except for:
  - In cases of advertising violations, DEAC staff forwards a copy of the advertisement to the institution, citing the standard that may have been violated. The institution is required a response within **15 days**.
  - If a news article or media broadcast carries a negative report on a DEAC accredited institution, the institution is required to respond to the statement(s) within **15 days**.
  - In cases when the complaints are from students concerning administrative services, student services, educational services, or tuition, the institution will be required to respond directly to the student within **15 days** to address his/her concerns.
- The Executive Director will review the complaint and the institution's response for compliance with the accrediting standards, policies, and procedures.
- If the Executive Director concludes that the allegations do not establish there has been a violation of standards, policies, or procedures, he/she will consider the complaint closed, and no further action is required.
- If the Executive Director concludes that the allegations may establish a violation of DEAC standards, policies, and/or procedures, he/she may take one of the following actions:
  - Postpone the final action on the complaint for a period not to exceed 60 days if there is evidence that the institution is making progress in rectifying the situation. In the case of postponement of action, the complainant will be kept informed of the status of the complaint and its final action. NOTE: The failure of the institution to rectify the situation by the end of the 60 day period and will be referred to the Commission for consideration and action.
  - Notify the institution that, on the basis of the information provided, the DEAC has determined that the



institution is failing to meet the DEAC standards and that the DEAC is taking appropriate action. Such action may include requiring the institution to take specific corrective action and report back to the Commission and/or conducting a Special Visit to the institution on an announced or unannounced basis. If circumstances warrant, the Commission may initiate action, including a show cause proceeding, that may result in the termination of the institution's accreditation. If appropriate, it may also include referring the matter to Federal, State, or local agencies for review and possible action.

- In all instances, the Executive Director will send a letter to the complainant and the institution regarding the final disposition of the complaint, and a record of the complaint will be kept on file at the DEAC office subject to DEAC's document retention policies. [C.20. Policy on Complaints – Pages 3-5]

**Note:** The failure of the institution to provide either a response to the complaint or any additional information as requested by the Executive Director within the specified time frames will be considered a violation of the DEAC's policy on complaints and will be referred to DEAC for consideration and action.

An adverse action against an institution arising from a complaint will not be taken until the institution has had an opportunity to respond to the complaint within the time frames set forth by DEAC. [C.20. Policy on Complaints – Page 5]

- f. **Complaints about Applicant Institutions:** DEAC posts on its website and publishes a list of applicant institutions and encourages third-party comments. DEAC's Third Party Comments addresses receiving, processing, reviewing, and acting on third-party comments. If a complaint (as defined above) is received about an applicant institution, the procedures followed for handling the complaint are the same as for handling a complaint about an accredited institution (see above). [C.20. Policy on Complaints – Page 5]

## 18) UNETHICAL BEHAVIOR

- a. If, for any reason, DEAC suspects any type of unethical behavior, including fraud and abuse, by an applicant or accredited institution, DEAC reserves the right to investigate the allegations.
- b. DEAC is obligated under Federal regulations [CF 602.27(a)(6)] to report to the U.S. Secretary of Education any institution it has reason to believe is failing to meet its Title IV program responsibilities or is engaged in fraud and abuse. [Accreditation Handbook – Page 12]

### The Color/Symbol Legend for Part III

Introduction/Impact Statements: Black

Standards: Blue

Policies: Green

New Content/Additions: Purple

~~Strikethrough~~: Proposed Deletion

Underline: Proposed Addition



## **PART III: ACCREDITATION STANDARDS, CORE COMPONENTS, AND IMPACT STATEMENTS**

DEAC's 11 accreditation standards foster improvement and assure quality of distance education institutions. Accredited institutions demonstrate their commitment to delivering quality educational offerings through a culture of continuous improvement. These 11 standards guide institutions in their efforts to serve students and the public through their published mission, goals, and objectives.

Part Three of the Accreditation Handbook provides an introduction to each standard, core components, and impact statements. The introduction summarizes the core components of each standard. Core components apply to all institutions regardless of educational offerings. Additional standards applicable to specific levels of study are provided following the related core components. Impact statements are not standards, but indicate the characteristics exemplified by institutions that meet or exceed the standards.

## 1) STANDARD I: INSTITUTION MISSION, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES

### INTRODUCTION

Institutions establish and communicate a clear, shared purpose, and direction for enhancing student achievement and institutional effectiveness through the publication of their mission, goals, and objectives. Institutions demonstrate a commitment to providing quality distance education programs that meet the needs of students and provides a foundation for institutional sustainability. Standards and policies are applied with respect to the institution’s mission, including those with faith-based or religious missions, assuring that educational offerings are of sufficient quality to achieve the stated mission, goals, and objectives. This section identifies **three (3) core components** of Standard I.

### CORE COMPONENTS

#### a. DESCRIPTION OF MISSION, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES

The institution’s mission statement includes its general purpose, commitment to providing quality distance education programs, and is supported by measurable goals and objectives appropriate to the level of study offered. [Accreditation Standards – Page 1] The institution’s educational offerings are appropriate to its mission, goals, and objectives. The educational offerings are in a profession or subject area in which the institution has demonstrated strength. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 2]

#### b. REVIEW AND PUBLICATION OF THE MISSION STATEMENT

Faculty, staff, administrators, and other stakeholders regularly review the mission statement, goals, and objectives. The mission statement, goals, and objectives are widely promulgated and readily accessible to students, faculty, staff, and other stakeholders. [Accreditation Standards – Page 1]

#### c. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MISSION, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES

The institution effectively carries out its mission, attains its goals and objectives, and shares appropriate information on student achievement with relevant groups (e.g., Advisory Councils, faculty, staff, students, and the public). [Accreditation Standards – Page 1]

### IMPACT STATEMENT

A DEAC accredited institution demonstrates a commitment to its mission, goals, and objectives in its strategic planning activities. The institution regularly engages multiple constituencies in establishing and reviewing measurable goals and objectives for student learning and institutional growth that are aligned with the institution’s mission. These measurable goals, objectives, and key

indicators gathered by the institution as part of strategic planning, serve as the focus for assessing overall student achievement and institutional effectiveness.

## 2) STANDARD II: INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

### INTRODUCTION

A fundamental attribute of accreditation is a culture of continuous self-improvement and institutional effectiveness planning through strong leadership and the development of specific strategic initiatives. This is accomplished through the implementation of an improvement feedback loop that results in administrative and academic enhancements. Institutions demonstrate the implementation of a strategic planning process that facilitates continuous improvement for institutional growth and educational sustainability as well as financial soundness. This section identifies **three (3) core components** of Standard II.

### CORE COMPONENTS

#### a. INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS PLANNING

An institutional effectiveness plan is designed and implemented to identify internal and external trends and patterns, optimize opportunities, address challenges, reflect on achievements, identify financial resources, and maintain quality. The plan encompasses service to students, professional growth of its instructors/faculty and staff, provides for long-term quality and growth of the institution, maximizes the use of appropriate technology, and assures adequate fiscal financial resources necessary to achieve strategic goals and objectives. The institution analyzes collected data on a systematic and consistent basis. [Accreditation Standards – Page 8] [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 19]

#### b. ACADEMIC QUALITY ASSESSMENT

For each major group of programs or major subject matter disciplines it offers, the institution implements an Advisory Council that includes members not otherwise employed or contracted at the institution consisting of practitioners in the field and employers in the field for which the program prepares students. The institution convenes an Advisory Council at least annually to provide advice on the current level of skills, knowledge, and abilities individuals need for entry into the occupation. The Advisory Council provides the institution with recommendations on the adequacy of educational program objectives, curricula, and course materials as a part of the institution's effectiveness planning program. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 2]

c. STRATEGIC PLANNING

Sound institutional research procedures and techniques are used to measure how effectively the stated institutional mission, goals, and objectives are achieved. The institution's self-initiated efforts are used to improve operations, educational offerings, and services. [Accreditation Standards – Page 8] [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 19]

IMPACT STATEMENT

A DEAC accredited institution demonstrates a commitment to its students and educational quality by implementing a collaborative and ongoing process for improvement through its institutional effectiveness and strategic planning activities. Self-assessment involves gathering feedback from external stakeholders (e.g., academic advisory councils, students, employers). The institution demonstrates how improvement efforts are the direct result of the evaluation of data obtained from the processes and procedures outlined within strategic planning and outcomes assessment programs.

### 3) STANDARD III: PROGRAM OBJECTIVES, CURRICULA, AND MATERIALS

INTRODUCTION

Program objectives reflect the appropriate program level and rigor and communicates the skills students will acquire upon successful completion of the program. The effective design of program objectives, curricula, and supplemental materials result in cohesive and comprehensive educational programs and evaluation methods of student learning that are clearly connected to the stated objectives. Institutions demonstrate clear, up-to-date, and well-organized program objectives, curricula, and instructional materials and provide access to appropriate learning resources. Institutions present evidence that all programs conform to commonly accepted education practices. This section identifies **nine (9) core components** of Standard III.

CORE COMPONENTS

a. DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Program objectives are clearly defined, simply stated, and indicate the benefits for students who are reasonably capable of completing the program. Program objectives are linked to learning outcomes as identified by the institution and are consistent with the curricula offered. [Accreditation Standards – Page 1]

b. APPROPRIATE PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The program objectives are measurable and reasonably attainable through distance education. Appropriate program objectives clearly communicate the knowledge, skills, and abilities students will obtain upon completion of the academic program. Program objectives reflect the level of student achievement expected that promotes critical thinking, ethical

reasoning, social responsibility, global citizenship, civic engagement, or lifelong learning as applicable to programs offered. [Accreditation Standards – Page 1]

i. DEGREE PROGRAMS

All required academic or professional activities such as, program learning objectives, course learning outcomes, research projects, supervised clinical practice, field work, applied research exercises, thesis, dissertations, are clearly stated. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 3]

ii. If required, capstone projects are consistent with accepted academic and professional standards based on commonly accepted higher education practices and any applicable relevant professional organizations. Capstone project learning outcomes are clearly stated. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 3]

iii. DOCTORAL DEGREES

Doctoral degree programs’ learning objectives and outcomes are advanced, focused, and scholarly, providing the breadth and depth of learning indicative of advanced degrees. Professional doctoral degrees prepare scholars to become leaders in their field of study through the pursuit and contribution of contemporary research that is applied, practical, or project-oriented and is focused on the application of knowledge to a profession.

Doctoral degree programs’ learning activities include, as appropriate, seminars, professional meetings, residency requirements, discussions with colleagues, participation in sustained synchronous or asynchronous online conferences at predetermined points throughout the program, access to library services, and access to online chat rooms with fellow students, faculty, and relevant professionals.

The Professional Doctoral degree program requires students to work with a supervisory dissertation/research project committee that is knowledgeable in methods of graduate-level study and research in the subject area being studied. Doctoral degree program curricula includes the history and development of the field of study and its foundational theoretical principles. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 3]

c. CURRICULA DELIVERY

All curricula and instructional materials are appropriately designed and presented for distance education. Online materials sufficiently support the curriculum and are delivered using readily available, reliable technology. [Accreditation Standards – Page 2]

d. COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULA AND INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

The curricula and instructional materials are sufficiently comprehensive for students to achieve the stated program objectives and its content is supported by reliable research and practice. The organization and presentation of the curricula and instructional materials are designed using sound principles of learning and grounded in distance education instructional design principles. The curricula and instructional materials are accurate and reflect current knowledge and practice. Effective procedures are continuously used to keep curricula and instructional materials up-to-date and reviews are conducted and documented on a periodic basis. Instructions and suggestions on how to study and how to use the instructional materials are made available to assist students to learn effectively and efficiently. [Accreditation Standards – Page 2]

- i. The institution determines if the courses in a program require any prerequisites. The institution also determines if courses are offered in a prescribed sequence to maximize students' achievement of the program objectives.
- ii. GENERAL EDUCATION FOR DEGREE GRANTING  
General education courses place an emphasis on principles and theory not associated with a particular occupation or profession. General education courses encompass written and oral communication; quantitative principles, natural and physical sciences; social and behavioral sciences; and humanities and fine arts that are designed to develop essential academic skills for enhanced and continued learning. General education courses convey broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develop skills and attitudes that advance professional attainment and contribute to civic engagement.
- iii. ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE  
Associate's degrees are awarded in academic or professional subjects whether for terminal career or technical programs. Institutions design and offer programs in a way that appropriately balances distinct types of education and training and includes a comprehensive curriculum with appropriate coursework to achieve the program objectives. Associate's degree programs are a minimum of 60 semester credit hours or 90 quarter credit hours. General education courses comprise a minimum of 25% of the credits required for successful completion of an associate's degree program.
- iv. BACHELOR'S DEGREE  
Bachelor's degree programs are designed and offered in a way that appropriately balances distinct types and levels of education and training and must include a comprehensive curriculum with appropriate coursework to achieve the program objectives. Bachelor's degree programs are a minimum of 120 semester credit hours or 180 quarter credit

hours. General education courses comprise a minimum of 25% of the credits required for successful completion of a bachelor's degree program.

v. MASTER'S DEGREE

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

vi. FIRST PROFESSIONAL DEGREE

First Professional Degree programs signify both completion of the academic requirement for beginning practice in a given profession and a level of professional skills beyond what is normally required for a Bachelor's degree. This degree is usually 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. Graduates should be competent in their basic discipline and be able to develop and evaluate new theories and carry out research. Generally no major research project is required. Typically, there is demonstrated learning outcomes comparable to those achieved during a minimum of 50 semester credit hours or their equivalent beyond the Bachelor's degree. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Pages 6-7]

vii. PROFESSIONAL DOCTORAL DEGREE

The Professional Doctoral Degree is a practice-oriented degree that signifies completion of advanced academic requirements in a given field comparable to those required at other appropriately accredited institutions offering similar degrees. Typically, an institution designs learning outcomes comparable to those achieved during a minimum of 60 graduate-level semester credit hours or their equivalent beyond the master's degree, of which a maximum of 15 credit hours may be earned for the dissertation or final research project. The program of study requires doctoral candidates' to demonstrate the ability to conduct, interpret, and apply the results of appropriate research in the field of study. If an institution's entrance requirement is a first professional degree in the same discipline, the number of graduate-level semester credit hours may be reduced to conform to standard practice in the discipline, but may not be less than 90 total graduate semester hours after the bachelor's degree. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 7]



A Dissertations requiring basic, original, or applied research—or a research project—are required of all students. Faculty advisors, in consultation with other faculty or practitioners, approve applied research topics and/or supervised clinical practice or fieldwork if required by the field of study. All dissertation topics and research projects are approved by a dissertation/research project committee appointed by the institution.

Doctoral candidates' final project or dissertation are orally defended in person or at a distance to a dissertation/research committee. Doctoral degrees are only awarded following final project or dissertation approval by a majority of the dissertation/research committee.

A professional doctoral degree program must be completed in no fewer than two years from the date of initial enrollment and no more than ten years from the date of initial enrollment. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 7]

DEAC accredits the following professional doctoral degrees recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.

- Doctor of Business Administration (DBA)
- Doctor of Education (Ed.D.)
- Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT)
- Doctor of Occupational Therapy (DOT)
- Doctor of Arts (specified fields) (DA)
- Doctor of Science (specified fields) (DSc)
- Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.)
- Doctor of Public Administration (DPA)

If the final research project or dissertation involves human research, the institution must require prior formal review and approval for all research involving humans through an institutional review board (IRB), which has been designated to approve, monitor, and review all research involving human subjects. The IRB should ensure that the subjects are not placed at undue risk, and that they have voluntarily agreed to participate and have received appropriate informed consent. The IRB must meet all federal regulations and the institution must be able to demonstrate they are in compliance including providing evidence that all IRB members have had appropriate training. (Title 45 Code of Federal Regulations Part 46). [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 4]

e. CURRICULA DEVELOPMENT

Qualified persons competent in distance education instructional practices and in their subjects or fields develop curricula content and prepare instructional materials. [Accreditation Standards – Page 2]

f. ACADEMIC UNITS OF MEASUREMENT

The institution documents policies and procedures used to define the chosen academic unit of measurement. Academic units are measured by either clock hours or credit hours. [C.23. Policy on Credit Hours – Page 1]

i. CLOCK HOURS

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

ii. CREDIT HOURS

A credit hour is defined as an amount of work represented by intended learning outcomes and verified through evidence of student achievement for academic activities. The institution documents its implementation and application of policies and procedures for determining credit hours awarded for its courses and programs. The assignment of credit hours must conform to commonly accepted practices in higher education documented by a comparison with other appropriately accredited institutions. [Adapted from C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 1, Paragraph 5]

iii. CREDIT HOUR DEFINITION

Semester and quarter hours shall be equivalent to the commonly accepted and traditionally defined units of academic measurement in accredited institutions. Academic degree or academic credit-bearing distance learning courses are measured by the learning outcomes normally achieved through 45 hours of student work for one semester credit<sup>1</sup> or 30 hours of student work for one quarter credit<sup>2</sup>. This formula is typically referred to as a Carnegie unit and is used by the American Council on Education in its Credit Recommendation Evaluative Criteria.

*<sup>1</sup>one credit/semester hour is 15 hours of academic engagement and 30 hours of preparation*

*<sup>2</sup>one quarter hour credit is 10 hours of academic engagement and 20 hours of preparation*

Student work includes direct or indirect faculty instruction. Academic engagement may include, but is not limited to, submitting an academic assignment, listening to class lectures or webinars (synchronous or asynchronous),

taking an exam, an interactive tutorial, or computer-assisted instruction; attending a study group that is assigned by the institution; contributing to an academic online discussion; initiating contact with a faculty member to ask a question about the academic subject studied in the course and laboratory work, externship or internship. Preparation is typically homework, such as reading and study time, and completing assignments and projects. Therefore, a 3 credit hour course would require 135 hours (45 hours of academic engagement and 90 hours of preparation). [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 6]

iv. DOCUMENTING CREDIT HOURS

The institution provides evidence it has adequate guidance during the development of a course/program to substantiate the credit hours assigned. The institution cites other research or studies done in order to document its definitions or formulas for verifying student work. [C.23. Policy on Credit Hours – Page 3]

Institutions are accountable for demonstrating that each course and each program has the appropriate amount of work for students to achieve the level of competency (i.e., learning outcomes) defined by institutionally established course/program objectives. [C.23. Policy on Credit Hours – Page 1] The institution measures and documents the amount of time it takes the average student to achieve learning outcomes, and specifies the academic engagement and preparation time. [C.23. Policy on Credit Hours – Page 3]

All student work is documented in the curricula materials and syllabi, including a reasonable approximation of time required for the student to complete the assignments. Evaluation of a student's work is identified as a grading criterion and weighted appropriately in the determination of a final course grade. [C.23. Policy on Credit Hours – Page 2]

g. EDUCATIONAL MEDIA AND LEARNING RESOURCES

Learning resources for faculty and students are available and appropriate to the level and scope of program offerings. Program designers and/or faculty/instructors effectively use appropriate teaching aids and learning resources, including educational media and supplemental instructional aids when creating programs and teaching students. The institution provides faculty and students with access to learning resources and libraries that are appropriate for the achievement of program learning outcomes. [Accreditation Standards – Page 2]

i. UNDERGRADUATE DEGREES

Resources are systematically and regularly evaluated to assure they meet students' needs and support the institution's programs and objectives. A variety of educational materials are selected, acquired, organized, and

maintained to fulfill the institution's mission and support all educational offerings. Faculty are involved in the selection of resources. Additional allocation of resources is reflective of educational offerings to support increases in student enrollment and to assure continued access to appropriate educational media and learning materials. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Pages 7-8]

ii. GRADUATE DEGREES

In addition to the forgoing Students are provided access to library resources sufficient for research at the (postgraduate) doctoral level. The institution provides and encourages the use of library services, and if required, research and laboratory facilities, at a distance or through arrangements with local institutions. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 8]

h. EXAMINATIONS AND OTHER ASSESSMENTS

Examinations and other assessment techniques provide adequate evidence of the achievement of stated learning objectives and outcomes. [Accreditation Standards – Page 2] The institution implements evaluation criteria that it uses to assist in grading student attainment of the learning objectives.

i. UNDERGRADUATE DEGREES

Student achievement is assessed by multiple means of evaluation (e.g., student presentations, group projects, essays, research papers, participation in threaded discussions, supervised practica, externships, or proctored examinations). The institution affirms that the student who takes the examination is the same person who enrolled in the program and that the examination results will reflect the student's own knowledge and competence in accordance with stated educational objectives and learning outcomes. Proctors use valid government-issued photo identification to confirm student identity. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 5]

ii. MASTER'S DEGREES

Student achievement is assessed by a culminating experience required for program completion (e.g., capstone experience, comprehensive examination, research project, or master's thesis).

iii. DOCTORAL DEGREES

The institution requires qualifying and comprehensive examinations. ~~The qualifying examination must be given by the end of the equivalent of one year of full-time enrollment in the program.~~ The comprehensive examination is given when all coursework is completed and prior to commencing work on the dissertation or final research project. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 5]

i. STUDENT INTEGRITY AND ACADEMIC HONESTY

The institution publishes clear, specific, policies related to student integrity and academic honesty. [Accreditation Standards – Page 3]

IMPACT STATEMENT

A DEAC accredited institution demonstrates a commitment to delivering quality distance education by implementing curricula based on clear and measurable objectives for student learning that provides opportunities for all students to acquire the requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The curriculum is up-to-date, well organized, and adheres to sound principles of instructional design appropriate to the method of instruction. The institution documents achievement of program objectives through assessment methods that are relevant and appropriate to the level of instruction offered and prepared by appropriately qualified academic personnel. The institution supplements curricula and provides students access to appropriate educational media and learning resources to allow for more in-depth study and research.

**4) STANDARD IV: EDUCATIONAL AND STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES**

INTRODUCTION

Effective institutions demonstrate attention and active involvement when addressing students' educational needs and goals throughout all phases of an academic program. Institutions demonstrate proactive procedures are in place to adequately respond to students' inquires and educational needs, individual differences, and encourage program completion. Institutions implement appropriate assessment procedures using published grading policies and a fair, consistent marking system. Institutions demonstrate that students' records are adequately and securely maintained. Institutions provide adequate support services to assist students including relevant counseling services and a published complaint policy. Institutions offer comprehensive supplemental services to ensure students' have access to the support for successful program completion. This section identifies **eleven (11) core components** of Standard IV.

CORE COMPONENTS

a. APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY

The institution uses appropriate and readily accessible technology to optimize interaction between the institution and the learner that enhances instructional and educational services. [Accreditation Standards – Page 3] Training and support for the technology used to deliver the academic program is provided for students, faculty, and involved practitioners. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 4]

- b. STUDENT INQUIRIES AND SUBMISSIONS  
The institution publishes all available methods students can use to submit inquiries and assignments. The institution responds promptly and thoroughly to all student inquiries. [Accreditation Standards – Page 3]
- c. INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES  
Academic advising and guidance are provided to assist students in achieving institutional and program requirements, program objectives, individual course learning outcomes, and their educational goals. [Accreditation Standards – Page 3]
- d. ENCOURAGEMENT OF STUDENTS  
The institution's policies and procedures optimize interaction between the institution and students. [Accreditation Standards – Page 3] The interaction proactively promotes student completion and success.
- e. SATISFACTORY STUDENT PROGRESS  
The institution implements a satisfactory academic progress policy and discloses this policy to students. [Accreditation Standards – Page 3] All standards for measuring satisfactory academic progress include qualitative and quantitative standards to evaluate student progress. Action is taken by the institution if students fail to meet the institution's minimum standards of progress. [C.23. Policy on Credit Hours – Page 1]
- f. IN-RESIDENCE INSTRUCTION  
In-residence instruction supplements electronically delivered, online, or other distance study method as required to achieve the stated institutional and program objectives and intended student learning outcomes based on the program requirements as determined by the institution. [Accreditation Standards – Page 3] The institution discloses to prospective students that the program is a combination of distance education and in-residence instruction and that completion of both is a requirement to earn the degree. The in-residence component of any degree or non-degree program cannot comprise more than 49% of the total academic units of measurement required. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 4] In-residence instruction includes externships and internships as required by the institution based on educational offerings.
- g. GRADING POLICIES  
Student performance is measured using published grading policies that include prompt return of accurately, fairly, and consistently graded assessments by the instructor/faculty or qualified staff member and may also include academic advising. The institution publishes its assignment marking system, course extension policy, and information on issuance and completion of incomplete grades, and applies them with fairness and consistency. [Accreditation Standards – Page 2]

Students are informed of their academic progress and standing in the program at regular intervals and ongoing basis. [Accreditation Standards – Page 4]

h. STUDENT RECORDS

Accurate student records are securely and confidentially maintained. Policies and procedures for keeping records on students' academic progress are in accordance with applicable professional requirements and state laws. Transcripts are readily accessible and maintained permanently in either print or electronic form. [Accreditation Standards – Page 4]

i. CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY

The institution implements policies to protect student confidentiality and privacy as required by applicable federal and state laws. [Business Standards – Page 4]

j. STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

The institution provides support services designed for the students enrolled, such as financial aid guidance, ~~counseling~~ advising services, employment assistance, and/or alumni services. Appropriate academic support services are readily available on request. Any career services and/or alumni services are offered as published. [Accreditation Standards – Page 4]

i. DOCTORAL ADVISING

The institution assigns students a faculty advisor according to its published policies. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 11] Institutions employ a sufficient number of student services staff qualified to support doctoral level students. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 9]

k. STUDENT COMPLAINTS

The institution implements policies and procedures for responding to, addressing, and readdressing, as appropriate, student complaints. ~~Complaints include those made with good reason to believe that the institution is not in compliance with DEAC accreditation standards.~~ [Accreditation Standards – Page 4]

i. INSTITUTIONAL COMPLAINTS

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

- ii. At a minimum, the institution’s policy instructs students how to file a complaint or grievance and the maximum time for resolution. The institution’s complaint policy and procedure is available to all students. The institution defines what it considers to be a student complaint.
- iii. The institution reviews in a timely, fair, and equitable manner any complaint it receives from students. When the complaint concerns a faculty member or administrator, the institution may not complete its review and make a final decision regarding a complaint unless, and in accordance with its published procedures, it assures that the faculty member or administrator has sufficient opportunity to provide a response to the complaint. The institution takes any follow-up action including enforcement action, if necessary based on the results of its review.
- iv. The institution’s complaint policy states how complaints can be filed with state agencies and its accrediting organization, as appropriate. [C.20. Policy on Complaints – Page 1]

#### IMPACT STATEMENT

A DEAC accredited institution places emphasis on supporting the instructional needs of its students including documenting how instructional and non-instructional staff regularly engage to monitor students’ progress through and completion of the course/program. Prompt responses are returned to students by an appropriately qualified faculty or staff member at the institution. The needs of individual students are anticipated and appropriate guidance is provided when accommodations are necessary. Institutions optimize interaction with students and incorporate those interactions into the continuous improvement of instructional materials and educational support services. Institutions maintain accurate, secure, and readily accessible records that are available to students. Institutional learning assessment procedures are guided by clearly published grading policies that encourage prompt return of all assignments and assessments. Supplemental student support services, relevant to the needs of the student population, are readily available. A clearly articulated process to address student complaints is implemented and the institution utilizes data gathered from this process to observe patterns and trends that are reviewed and incorporated into ongoing institutional improvement efforts.

### **5) STANDARD V: STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND SATISFACTION**

#### INTRODUCTION

Institutions implement a comprehensive assessment process to monitor student satisfaction and achievement of learning outcomes. Institutions’ outcomes assessment plan monitors, documents, and uses the results to improve learning outcomes, institutional and program effectiveness. This section identifies **five (5) core components** of Standard V.



## CORE COMPONENTS

### a. STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

The institution evaluates student achievement using indicators it determines are appropriate relative to its mission, goals, objectives, and educational offerings. [Accreditation Standards – Page 4] [C.14. Policy on Student Achievement and Satisfaction – Pages 1-2]

### b. EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

The institution evaluates student achievement by collecting data from outcomes assessment procedures using direct and indirect measures. The institution demonstrates how the evaluation of student achievement drives quality improvement activities. Student opinions are systematically sought as one basis for evaluating and improving curricula, instructional materials, method of delivery, and student services. [C.14. Policy on Student Achievement and Satisfaction – Pages 2-4]

### c. OUTCOMES BENCHMARKING

The institution maintains a systematic and ongoing process for assessing student learning and achievement via distance education, analyzes the data, and documents that the results meet appropriate internal and external benchmarked standards. [C.14. Policy on Student Achievement and Satisfaction – Page 5]

### d. STUDENT SATISFACTION

The institution regularly collects evidence that students are satisfied with the instructional and educational services provided. [Accreditation Standards – Page 4] [C.14. Policy on Student Achievement and Satisfaction – Page 6]

### e. PERFORMANCE DISCLOSURES

The institution routinely discloses on its website reliable, current, and accurate information on its performance, including student achievement, as determined by the institution. [Business Standards – Page 2]

## IMPACT STATEMENT

A DEAC accredited institution demonstrates a commitment to its students and educational programs by implementing a comprehensive assessment system based on clearly defined and measurable program and course learning outcomes. The assessment system is used to track student satisfaction, persistence, and the achievement of student learning outcomes in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the curricula and instruction offered by the institution and to improve student learning. The data received from these evaluations provide timely, accurate, qualitative, and quantitative information that is meaningful and used by faculty, administrators, and various stakeholders to better understand institutional effectiveness and the results of improvement efforts.

## 6) STANDARD VI: ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP AND FACULTY QUALIFICATIONS

### INTRODUCTION

Institutions demonstrate effective leadership and a shared purpose through qualified and experienced administrators, faculty, and staff who are responsible for institutional operations. Institutions demonstrate that qualified individuals are serving in all relevant roles and contributing to the educational process. The Chief Academic Officer and/or Educational Director should be appropriately qualified by education and experience to maintain overall administrative responsibilities for all educational programs. The institution demonstrates that the appropriate number of instructors/faculty are employed and qualified by education and experience to facilitate individualized instructional service to each student. The institution encourages continued professional development for all administrators, department heads, instructors/faculty, and staff that is monitored on a regular basis for the benefit of the institution and its students. Institutions document procedures ensuring the hiring of qualified individuals. Institutions demonstrate a commitment and collaboration between administrators, faculty, and staff to providing quality distance education programs for continued growth. This section identifies **five (5) core components** of Standard VI.

### CORE COMPONENTS

#### a. ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP

The institution demonstrates appropriate academic leadership capacity and infrastructure to support the effective delivery of distance education. [Accreditation Standards – Page 5] Academic leadership possesses the background, knowledge, ethics, and experience necessary to guide the instructional activities of the institution.

#### b. CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER OR EDUCATIONAL DIRECTOR

The institution designates a chief academic officer, educational director, or other similar oversight position. This individual possesses the overall administrative responsibilities for the educational program(s); the educational, editorial, and research activities within the departmental subject fields; faculty/instructors; and informs marketing decisions. [Accreditation Standards – Page 5]

Within the context of the institution’s mission, goals, and objectives:

- i. The CAO or educational director has appropriate academic administrative experience and competence necessary to lead and manage academic programs in a distance education environment.
- ii. The CAO or educational director possesses academic credentials that are appropriate for the leadership,

supervision, and oversight of faculty, curriculum design, and student achievement expectations.

iii. DOCTORAL DEGREES

The institution has an administrator for doctoral degree programs. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 9] The administrator possesses previous higher education administrative capacity and distance learning knowledge to lead doctoral programs. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 8] Doctoral degree administrators possess the appropriate terminal degree in a subject area relevant to the degree program being offered. The degree was earned from an appropriately accredited institution. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 9]

c. DISSERTATION SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE

- i. A supervisory dissertation/research project committee, of at least three faculty members, is formed for each student. All committee members demonstrate appropriate scholarship, experience, or practice in the subject area. In lieu of a dissertation, doctoral degree programs may require a project if the type of project is consistent with accepted higher education practices. The dissertation/research project committee includes at least two members who earned their doctoral degrees from appropriately accredited institutions other than the awarding institution. The committee members are qualified in the subject area of the student’s dissertation or project. At least one member of the dissertation/research project committee is a member of the awarding institution’s faculty. When students reach the point of dissertation or defending their research projects, students may have the option of nominating their dissertation members or major professors; however, the institution makes the final decision. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 9]
- ii. A dissertation or project manual is required and includes guidelines that pertain to the preparation for and writing the dissertation, for conducting research, and for reporting the results. The program provides a pattern of scheduled student interactions with faculty and other resource persons throughout the program. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 8]

d. INSTRUCTORS, FACULTY, AND STAFF

Faculty/instructors are qualified and appropriately credentialed to teach the subject at the assigned level. The institution employs a sufficient number of qualified faculty/instructors to provide individualized instructional service to each student. The institution maintains faculty/instructors’ resumes and official transcripts on file. Faculty/instructors are carefully screened for appointment and are properly and continuously trained on institution policies, learner needs, instructional approaches and techniques, and the use of instructional technology. The institution uses clear, consistent procedures to

evaluate faculty performance. [Accreditation Standards – Page 5] The size of the faculty is appropriate for the level of enrollment. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 11]

- i. HIGH SCHOOL  
The institution provides evidence that all instructors/faculty are qualified and appropriately credentialed to teach the subject and level within the high school program offered. [C.30. Policy on High School Programs – Page 3]
- ii. NON-DEGREE  
Instructors teaching technically or practice-oriented courses have practical experience in the field and possess current licenses and/or certifications, as applicable. [Accreditation Standards – Page 5]
- iii. POSTSECONDARY  
Faculty possess earned credentials awarded by appropriately accredited institutions. In judging faculty competence, consideration is given to the academic preparation and experience of each faculty and instructor’s comparability based on accepted higher education practices. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 10] Faculty teaching courses that are part of a degree in a specialized field possess the appropriate credential in the subject being taught and demonstrate expertise in the subject field. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 11]
- iv. UNDERGRADUATE DEGREES  
Faculty teaching undergraduate degree program courses possess, at a minimum, a degree at least one level above that of the program they are teaching and demonstrate expertise in the subject field of the discipline. Faculty teaching undergraduate level general education courses at the undergraduate level must possess a Master’s degree in the assigned general education subject field or have a Master’s degree and 18 semester credit hours in the general education subject field. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 11]
- v. MASTER’S DEGREES  
Master’s program faculty have earned a doctoral/terminal degree relevant to the program being offered. Faculty are assigned responsibilities based on their area(s) of expertise. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 11]
- vi. EXCEPTIONAL CASES FOR NON-DEGREE THROUGH MASTER’S DEGREE PROGRAMS  
In exceptional cases, an earned degree in a relevant field at the same level of the program taught, in addition to outstanding professional experience and demonstrated contributions to the teaching discipline program may be presented. The institution ~~must~~ justifies and documents in the faculty member’s file the academic and professional

preparation he or she has to teach the course(s), and what course(s) is/are being taught. Exceptional cases must be a justifiable minority and represent a small percentage of the total assigned faculty of the program. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 11]

vii. FIRST PROFESSIONAL DEGREES

All teaching faculty and involved practitioners possess a First Professional or higher degree earned at an appropriately accredited institution in a related subject field and possess specialized knowledge and skills in the subject area. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 11]

viii. PROFESSIONAL DOCTORAL DEGREES

All teaching faculty possess terminal degrees (e.g., professional doctoral degree or Ph.D.) earned at an appropriately accredited institution in a related subject field. The institution has a dedicated Dean or other academic officer with credentials appropriate to the degree(s) being offered prior to enrolling students. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 11]

e. PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

The institution demonstrates a commitment to faculty and staff professional development. Faculty and staff are encouraged to become members of professional organizations, to review and apply relevant research, to pursue continuing education or training in their respective fields, and to enhance their skills in developing and using electronically delivered, online, or other forms of distance study. Faculty and administrators are provided access to a collection of professional educational materials to keep abreast of current trends, developments, techniques, research, and experimentation. [Accreditation Standards – Page 5]

IMPACT STATEMENT

A DEAC accredited institution demonstrates effective operations by establishing policies and procedures for delineating the roles and responsibilities for owners, governing board officials, and administrators for short and long term sustainability of institutional leadership. The institution employs appropriately qualified academic personnel to oversee the delivery of educational programs. Academic officers and department heads maintain responsibility for the accuracy of statements made regarding all academic matters. Instructional staff/faculty are sufficient in number and degree qualifications to guide enrolled students through all phases of the learning process. Institutions maintain timely and accurate records of the qualifications of academic personnel including documentation of initial and ongoing professional development as a component for all positions. Institutions document the success of academic personnel through clear, consistent procedures designed to evaluate performance.

## 7) STANDARD VII: ADVERTISING, PROMOTIONAL LITERATURE, AND RECRUITMENT PERSONNEL

### INTRODUCTION

All advertising and promotion is current, ethical, and accurately reflects institutional information that allows prospective students to make informed decisions without undue pressure. Institutions' recruitment efforts should focus on those prospective students who are likely to be successful and meet their educational goals through the academic programs offered by the institution. Recruitment involves any institutional personnel who engages in activities to attract or enroll students. Institutions demonstrate ethical business practices in all advertising and recruitment of prospective students. This section identifies **three (3) core components** of Standard VII.

### CORE COMPONENTS

#### a. ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION

The institution conforms to ethical practices in all advertising and promotion to prospective students. All advertisements, website, and promotional literature are truthful, accurate, clear, and readily accessible to the public and affirmatively discloses that programs are offered via distance education and appropriately discloses any occupational opportunities as applicable. All promotional literature, catalogs, enrollment agreements, manuals, and websites list the institution's full name and physical address. At a minimum, all advertisements include the institution's city, state, and web address. The institution complies with the Catalog Disclosures Check List. [Business Standards – Pages 1-2]

- i. All advertisements and promotional literature accurately reflect the programs and services offered by the institution. The word “guarantee” is never used in advertisements. The word “free” is never used to describe any item, service, or materials regularly included as part of the institution's curricula offerings. Advertisements do not imply that employment is being offered and should be appropriately published under a section identified for education, training, or instruction. [Business Standards – Pages 1-2]
- ii. The institution's website testimonials and endorsements are truthful and within a four year timeframe from the date of publication, except for those historical in nature. A signed student consent form for each published testimonial is maintained on file. The institution's website discloses all program requirements, course descriptions, tuition and related costs, program schedules, course delivery method, and its catalog prior to the collection of any personal student contact information. The institution does not use other institutions as triggers for their own sponsored links on Internet search engines. [Business Standards – Pages 1-2]

- iii. Institutions disclose on its catalog, website, and enrollment agreements that the acceptance of earned credits is determined by the receiving institution. [Business Standards – Pages 1-2]
  - iv. All institutions meet applicable Catalog, Website, and Enrollment Agreement Disclosures Check Lists based on educational offerings. [Business Standards – Pages 1-2]
  - v. Any incentives offered to prospective and current students to enroll do not exceed a nominal value of \$100 annually. [Business Standards – Pages 1-2]
  - vi. The institution permanently archives its catalogs [Policy C.9, p. 18].
- b. INSTITUTION AND COURSE ACCREDITED-STATUS RECOGNITION  
The institution publishes and accurately reflects its accredited status. The institution uses the official DEAC accreditation logo and statement of accreditation in its advertisements, promotional literature, letterheads, and website. The institution states its accredited status in its catalog and on its website. DEAC’s name, address, telephone number, and web address is published in the institution’s catalog. An institution refers to its accredited status as follows: [Business Standards – Pages 2-3]
- Accredited by the Distance Education Accrediting Commission
  - Accredited member of DEAC
  - DEAC Accredited
- Accredited institutions may also use the following terms when referring to its individual programs, courses, and institution:
- Accredited programs
  - Accredited courses
  - Nationally Accredited
- i. The accredited institution only refers to DEAC’s recognition by the U.S. Department of Education as, “The Distance Education Accrediting Commission is listed by the U.S. Department of Education as a nationally recognized accrediting agency.” [Business Standards – Pages 2-3]

- ii. The accredited institution only refers to DEAC’s recognition by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) as, “The Distance Education Accrediting Commission is a recognized member of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).” [Business Standards – Pages 2-3]
  - iii. The accredited institution publicly corrects any misleading or inaccurate information it releases on its accreditation status, contents of its onsite team reports from accreditation-related visits, and/or actions taken by the Distance Education Accrediting Commission with respect to the institution. [Business Standards – Pages 2-3]
  - iv. All courses and programs are approved by DEAC before the institution advertises or enrolls students in them. The institution uses the term “College” or “University” in its name only if it offers academic degree programs. [Business Standards – Pages 2-3]
- c. CONTROL OF STUDENT RECRUITMENT PERSONNEL  
The institution demonstrates ethical processes and procedures are followed throughout the recruitment of prospective students. Recruitment personnel consists of any administrators, staff, faculty, or contractors who enroll prospective students. Minimum ethical practices and procedures are identified below. [Business Standards – Pages 4-5]
- i. The institution has full responsibility for the actions, statements, and conduct of its student recruitment personnel. The institution maintains appropriate records, licensures, registrations, signed employment contract, and DEAC Code of Ethics as applicable for all recruitment personnel. The institution demonstrates it adequately trains its student recruitment personnel and provides them with accurate information concerning employment and remuneration. Recruitment personnel is provided with a sales manual or appropriate materials covering applicable procedures, policies, and presentations. The institution demonstrates it routinely monitors its student recruitment personnel or independent organizations who provide prospective applicant names to assure they are in compliance with all state, federal, and DEAC recruitment practices. [Business Standards – Pages 4-5]
  - ii. All student recruitment personnel, including telemarketing staff, conform to applicable federal and state laws, do not use any title that indicates special qualifications for career guidance, advising, or registration, and do not place advertisements without the appropriate written authorization from the institution. [Business Standards – Pages 4-5]
  - iii. If an institution provides incentives for making referrals, the incentive must not exceed a value of \$100 per year. [Business Standards – Pages 4-5]



### IMPACT STATEMENT

A DEAC accredited institution adheres to high ethical standards throughout all advertising and recruitment practices. The institution ensures that students are not subjected to undue pressure throughout the recruitment process. Students are provided with and have access to accurate and current information to support students in making appropriate educational decisions that meets their academic goals. The institution appropriately represents its mission, programs, and accreditation through accurate and consistent publication.

## **8) STANDARD VIII: ADMISSION PRACTICES AND ENROLLMENT AGREEMENTS**

### INTRODUCTION

Institutions are responsible for establishing admissions criteria requiring documentation that applicants possess the ability to be successful in the distance education environment. Admissions criteria provide institutions an initial indicator of an applicant's ability to perform the level of work required by the educational offerings. Institutions' admissions criteria reflect the mission, goals, objectives, and student population served by the educational offerings. All admission practices and enrollment agreements meet established standards and ethically disclose all parties' obligations. This section identifies **seven (7) core components** of Standard IX.

### CORE COMPONENTS

#### a. ADMISSIONS DISCLOSURES

Admissions policies and procedures are designed to assure the institution enrolls only those students who are reasonably capable of successfully completing and benefiting from the educational offering. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 12]

The institution informs each applicant, prior to admission, of the admissions criteria, the nature of the education provided, and the demands of the educational offerings. The institution requires students to affirm receipt of the catalog and other institutional documents disclosing the rights, responsibilities, and obligations of both the student and the institution prior to granting admission.

The institution admits students regardless of race, gender, age, religion, or national origin. Institutions reasonably accommodate applicants and students with disabilities to the extent required by applicable law. [Business Standards – Page 4]

Official transcripts required for admission are received within one enrollment period not to exceed 12 semester credit hours or the student is withdrawn from the program. [Business Standards – Page 4]

b. STUDENT IDENTITY VERIFICATION

Admissions procedures initiate a student identity authentication process to verify that the student who participates in and completes coursework and assessments is the same student who is awarded credit. [Accreditation Standards – Page 3] An institution meets this requirement if using a secure login and passcode, proctored examinations, or other secure technology.

c. COMPULSORY AGE STUDENTS

An institution enrolling students under the compulsory school age obtain permission from responsible parties to assure the pursuit of the educational offerings is not detrimental to any compulsory schooling. [Business Standards – Page 4]

d. ADMISSIONS CRITERIA

The institution's admissions criteria aligns with its mission and student population served. The institution establishes qualifications that an applicant possesses prior to enrollment in order to successfully complete the educational offerings. The institution consistently and fairly applies its admission requirements. If an institution enrolls a student who does not meet the admissions criteria, the institution documents the basis for the admission decision. [Business Standards – Page 4]

- i. Transcripts not in English are evaluated by an appropriate third party and translated into English or evaluated by a trained transcript evaluator fluent in the language on the transcript. In this case, the evaluator possesses expertise in the educational practices of the country of origin and includes an English translation of the review. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 14]
- ii. The institution's admissions criteria discloses procedures for verifying appropriate language proficiencies. The institution verifies English language proficiency for applicants whose native language is not English and have not earned a degree from an appropriately accredited institution where English is the principal language of instruction. Verification procedures align with DEAC's Exhibit for English Language Proficiency Assessment [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Pages 13-14]
- iii. UNDERGRADUATE DEGREES  
The institution obtains official documentation that applicants possess a high school diploma or its recognized equivalent at the time of admission. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 12]

The institution may implement a self-certification policy. At a minimum, the policy must:

- Obtain a signed statement from the applicant attesting to a high school diploma or its recognized equivalent and reason(s) why the applicant cannot provide the requisite credential;
- Require applicants to provide the institution name, city, state, and year of graduation in the self-certification statement;
- Routinely audit records of self-certificate statements submitted by applicants; and
- Document such practices are necessary to be consistent with the institution's mission.

iv. MASTER'S DEGREES

The institution obtains official documentation that applicants possess a Bachelor's degree earned from an appropriately accredited institution at the time of admission. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 13]

v. FIRST PROFESSIONAL DEGREES

The institution obtains documentation that applicants possess a Bachelor's or Master's degree earned from an appropriately accredited institution at the time of admission. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 13]

vi. PROFESSIONAL DOCTORAL DEGREES

The institution obtains documentation that applicants possess a Bachelor's or Master's degree earned from an appropriately accredited institution and relevant academic experience at the time of admission. At a minimum, the institution verifies applicants have completed 30 graduate-level credit hours prior to admission. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 13]

Additional information on admissions best practices for distance education institutions is found in Part Four: Appendices.

e. ADMISSION ACCEPTANCE AND DENIAL

The institution informs applicants of acceptance into the program. [Business Standards – Page 4] The institution communicates to the applicant and documents the basis for any denial of admission.

f. TRANSFER CREDITS

The institution implements a fair and equitable transfer credit policy that is published in the catalog. The steps for requesting transfer credit are clear and disclose the documentation required for review. Students are able to appeal transfer

credit decisions by published procedures. Transfer credit requests are not denied based solely on the source of accreditation of the credit-granting institution. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 16]

Credit awarded for experiential or equivalent learning, including challenge and test-out credits, cannot exceed one-fourth of the credits required for an undergraduate degree or master's degree. Institutions maintain official documentation of the bases for decisions to award credit for experiential or equivalent learning. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 14]

An institution seeking to offer credit for Prior learning assessment has published evaluation standards consistent with CAEL's Ten Standards for Assessing Learning. Prior learning assessment is carried out by qualified individuals with experience in the evaluation function. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 15]

i. HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMS

A maximum of 75% of the credits required for a high school program may be awarded for transfer credit. [C.30. Policy on High School Programs – Page 3]

ii. UNDERGRADUATE DEGREES

A maximum of 75% of the credits required for a degree program may be awarded for transfer credit or a combination of transfer credit and experiential or equivalent credit (including challenge/test-out credits). Courses accepted for transfer credit are relevant to the program of study and equivalent in both content and degree level. Credit awarded for experiential or equivalent learning cannot exceed one-fourth of the credits required for a degree. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 14]

iii. MASTER'S DEGREES

A maximum of 50% of the credits required for a Master's degree program may be awarded through transfer credit. Courses accepted for transfer credit are relevant to the program of study and equivalent in both content and degree level. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 14]

iv. FIRST PROFESSIONAL DEGREES

A maximum of 50% of the credits required for a First Professional degree program may be awarded through transfer credit. Courses accepted for transfer credit are relevant to the program of study and equivalent in both content and degree level. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 15]

v. PROFESSIONAL DOCTORAL DEGREES

A maximum of 15% (or 9 semester credit hours for a 60 semester credit hour degree program) of the credits required for a Professional Doctoral degree program may be awarded through transfer credit. Courses accepted for transfer credit are relevant to the program of study and equivalent in both content and degree level. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 15]

g. ENROLLMENT AGREEMENTS

The institution's enrollment agreements/documents clearly identify the course or program and assures each applicant is fully informed of the rights, responsibilities, and obligations of both the student and the institution prior to applicant signature. [Business Standards – Page 3] The institution complies with the Enrollment Agreements Disclosures Check List.

- i. The institution requires students to affirm receipt of the tuition refund policy and discloses the rights, responsibilities, and obligations of both the student and the institution prior to accepting the enrollment agreement. The terms of the tuition refund policy are published on the institution's enrollment agreement, catalog, and website. [Business Standards – Page 3]
- ii. Enrollment agreements are not binding until it has been submitted by the student and accepted by the institution. A copy of the accepted enrollment agreement is made available to the student within 10 days of acceptance and maintained as a part of the student's record. [Business Standards – Page 3]
- iii. DOCTORAL DEGREE PROGRAMS  
The institution uses an enrollment agreement unique to the First Professional and Professional doctoral degree programs. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 17]

IMPACT STATEMENT

A DEAC accredited institution demonstrates a commitment to ethical enrollment practices through fair and transparent admission policies. The institution implements appropriate procedures to ensure enrolled students possess the capacity to successfully complete and benefit from the academic program. The institution discloses all admission, tuition, and refund information and makes every effort to ensure students fully understand the obligations of both the institution and the student. The institution's enrollment agreements are available for students to review and provides the scope and nature of the course or program being offered.

## 9) STANDARD IX: REQUIRED DISCLOSURES, CANCELLATIONS, AND REFUND POLICIES

### INTRODUCTION

Institutions establish equitable tuition, cancellation, refund, and collection policies and procedures. All tuition costs and instructional fees, including textbooks, are readily available to students. Tuition and refund policies are disclosed on all enrollment agreements. Collection procedures are conducted ethically and consideration is given to retain student's good will. Institutions' tuition, refund, and collection policies are administered consistently and fairly. This section identifies **five (5) core components** of Standard VIII.

### CORE COMPONENTS

#### a. REQUIRED DISCLOSURES

All costs relative to the education provided by the institution are disclosed to the prospective student [on an enrollment agreement or similar contractual document] before enrollment. Costs must include tuition, educational services, textbooks, and instructional materials and any specific fees associated with enrollment such as application and registration fees, and fees for required services such as student authentication, proctoring, technology access, and library services.

- i. The costs for optional services, such as expedited shipment of materials, experiential portfolio assessment, or other special services such as dissertation binding are clearly disclosed to prospective students as not subject to refund after the five (5) calendar day student-right-to-cancel enrollment.
- ii. The institution's disclosure of its refund policy must include a sample refund calculation that describes the calculation methodology using clear and conspicuous language. Student acknowledgement of the refund policy is obtained and documented on the enrollment agreement or similar contractual document prior to enrollment.  
[Business Standards – Page 5]

#### b. CANCELLATIONS

Student notification of cancellation may be conveyed to the institution in any manner. A student has five (5) calendar days after signing an enrollment agreement or similar contractual document to cancel enrollment and receive a full refund of all monies paid to the institution.

- i. A student requesting cancellation more than 5 calendar days after signing an enrollment agreement, but prior to beginning a course or program is entitled to a refund of all monies paid minus:

- an application/transfer credit evaluation fee of up to \$75 and
  - a one-time registration fee per program of no more than 20% of the tuition and not to exceed more than \$200.
- ii. Upon cancellation, a student whose costs for education are paid in full, but not eligible for a refund is entitled to receive all materials, including kits and equipment.
  - iii. If promissory notes or enrollment agreements are sold to third parties, the institution ensures that it and any third parties comply with DEAC cancellation policies. [Business Standards – Page 5]

c. REFUNDS

Each institution must have and implement a fair and equitable refund policy in compliance with state requirements, or in the absence of such requirements, in accordance with DEAC’s refund policy standards below and disclosed on the enrollment agreement or similar contractual document.

Any money due a student must be refunded within 30 days of a cancellation request, regardless if materials have been returned.

i. FLEXIBLE TIME SCHEDULE REFUND POLICY

Institutions that implement the Flexible Time Schedule Refund Policy must clearly disclose the curriculum benchmarks in terms of assignments submitted for grading that indicate completion at 10%, 25%, and 50% intervals.

When a student cancels after completing at least one lesson assignment but less than 50% of the graded assignments, the institution may retain the application fee and one-time registration fee of no more than 20% of the tuition not to exceed \$200, plus a percentage of tuition paid by the student in accordance with the following schedule:

Percentage Completed by the Student	Percentage of Tuition Returned to the Student Minus the Application and/or Registration Fee	Percentage of Tuition Retained by the Institution
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Up to 10%	90%	10%
>10% - 25%	75%	25%
>25% - 50%	50%	50%
>50% - 100%	0%	100%

ii. TIME-BASED TERM REFUND POLICY

A Time-Based Term has beginning and ending dates for no more than 16 weeks in length.

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

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

When a student cancels enrollment the institution may retain the application fee and a one-time registration fee of no more than 20% of the tuition not to exceed \$200, plus a percentage of tuition paid by the student in accordance with the following refund schedule:

<b>Length of Term</b>	<b>Percentage of Tuition Returned to the Student Minus the Application and/or Registration Fee AFTER</b>	
1-6 weeks	1 <sup>st</sup> week	70%
	2 <sup>nd</sup> week	40%
	3 <sup>rd</sup> week	20%
	4 <sup>th</sup> week	0%
7-10 weeks	1 <sup>st</sup> week	80%
	2 <sup>nd</sup> week	60%
	3 <sup>rd</sup> week	40%
	4 <sup>th</sup> week	20%
	5 <sup>th</sup> week	0%



11-16 weeks	1 <sup>st</sup> week	80%
	2 <sup>nd</sup> week	70%
	3 <sup>rd</sup> week	60%
	4 <sup>th</sup> week	50%
	5 <sup>th</sup> week	40%
	6 <sup>th</sup> week	30%
	7 <sup>th</sup> week	20%
	8 <sup>th</sup> week	10%
	9 <sup>th</sup> week	0%

iii. REFUND POLICY FOR IN-RESIDENCE COURSES/PROGRAMS

For a course/program that includes mandatory in-residence training, the costs for the distance study portion and the costs for the in-residence portion must be separately stated on the enrollment agreement.

The distance study portion of the combination course/program must use the refund policy stated in IX.c.i. or IX.c.ii. above. If mandatory in-residence portion of the course/program is more than 6 weeks, the institution may use the time-based refund policy in IX.c.ii. If the in-residence portion is less than 6 weeks, the institution may use the flexible time schedule refund policy in IX.c.i.

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

<b>Percentage Completed by the Student</b>	<b>Percentage of Tuition Returned to the Student Minus the Application and/or Registration Fee</b>	<b>Percentage of Tuition Retained by the Institution</b>
Up to 10%	90%	10%
>10% - 25%	75%	25%
>25% - 50%	50%	50%
>50% - 100%	0%	100%

Courses with optional in-residence training, seminars, and other training sessions are subject to the refund policy above. [Business Standards – Pages 5-8]

d. DISCOUNTS

Discounted costs are permitted for well-defined groups for specific and bona fide purposes.

Discounted costs must indicate the actual reduction in the costs that would otherwise be charged by the institution. Institutions that offer discounts must demonstrate that students are enrolled in non-discounted courses or programs for a reasonably substantial period of time during each calendar year. Institutions offering discounts must calculate refunds based on discounted costs. [Business Standards – Page 8]

Institutions that offer discounts must demonstrate that:

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

e. COLLECTIONS

Collection procedures used by the institution or third parties reflect sound and ethical business practices. [Business Standards – Page 9] Tuition collection practices and procedures are fair, encourage students’ progress, and seeks to retain their good will. Collection practices consider the comparable rights and interests of the students and institution. [Accreditation Standards – Page 7]

IMPACT STATEMENT

A DEAC accredited institution discloses its tuition, cancellation, refund, and collection policies and procedures prior to student enrollment. All cancellation and refunds are processed promptly upon notification by the student in any manner. The institution maintains student good will throughout the collections process and assures students are aware of the responsibilities and obligations of both the institution and student.

## 10) STANDARD X: GOVERNANCE AND FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

### INTRODUCTION

Institutions' governance structure demonstrates financial capability and stability to meet accreditation standards on a continuous basis. Institutions possess adequate management, administrative capacity, financial resources, and strategic planning providing assurances it can meet its mission, goals, and objectives and fulfill its obligations to students. Institutions retain qualified and knowledgeable financial leadership to ensure continued growth and sustainability. This section identifies **nine (9) core components** of Standard X.

### CORE COMPONENTS

#### a. OWNERS, GOVERNING BOARD MEMBERS, OFFICIALS, AND ADMINISTRATORS

The owners, governing board members, officials, and administrators possess appropriate qualifications and experience for their positions and ability to oversee institutional operations. The governing board members, officials, and administrators are knowledgeable and experienced in one or more aspects of educational administration, finance, teaching/learning, and distance study. The institution's policies clearly delineate the duties and responsibilities of governing board members, officials, and administrators. Individuals in leadership and managerial positions are qualified by education and experience. [Accreditation Standards – Page 5]

#### b. REPUTATION OF INSTITUTION, OWNERS, GOVERNING BOARD MEMBERS, OFFICIALS, AND ADMINISTRATORS

The institution and its owners, governing board members, officials, and administrators possess sound reputations, a record of integrity, and ethical conduct in their professional activities, business operations, and relations. [Accreditation Standards – Page 5]

#### c. SUCCESSION PLAN

The institution's written plan describes the process followed in the event a leadership succession is necessary. The plan identifies specific people, committees, or boards responsible to carry on the operation of the institution during the transition period. The plan includes a business continuity structure that can be implemented immediately. The plan is reviewed and revised on an annual basis. [Accreditation Standards – Page 5]

#### d. FINANCIAL PRACTICES

The institution shows it is financially responsible by complete, comparative financial statements covering its two most recent fiscal years and it has sufficient resources to meet its financial obligations to provide quality instruction and service

to its students. Financial statements are audited or reviewed and prepared “in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles” in the United States of America. The institution’s budgeting processes demonstrate that current and future budgeted operating results are sufficient to allow the institution to accomplish its mission and goals. [Accreditation Standards – Page 6]

e. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Individuals overseeing the fiscal and budgeting processes are qualified by education and experience. The institution employs adequate administrative staff for effective operations, and at least one person is qualified and able to prepare accurate financial reports in a timely manner. Internal auditing trails and controls are in place to assure finances are properly managed, monitored, and protected. Adequate safeguards prevent unauthorized access to online and onsite financial information. [Accreditation Standards – Page 6]

f. FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY AND STABILITY

The institution maintains adequate administrative staff and other resources to operate effectively as a going concern and is not exposed to undue or insurmountable risk. Any risk that exists is adequately monitored, manageable, and insured. In the event the financial operations of the institution are supported by a parent company or a third party, financial statements for the supporting entity and evidence of a continuing financial commitment is provided to demonstrate that the supporting entity possesses sufficient financial resources and commitment to provide the institution continued financial sustainability.

g. FINANCIAL REPORTING

Financial statements are prepared “in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles” in the United States of America often referred to as “GAAP,” including the accrual method of accounting. [Accreditation Standards – Page 7] [C.10. Policy on Financial Statements – Page 1] An independent CPA’s audit or review report accompanies these statements, and a written plan is provided that documents how the institution can resolve any challenges or anomalies identified in the CPA’s report. [Accreditation Standards – Page 7]

- i. The institution’s financial statements reflect sufficient liquid assets to provide for a staff and faculty of unqualified merit that characterizes a quality-focused degree-awarding college or university. Adequate funds are readily available for attracting qualified faculty, in-service training, a high level faculty to learner interactivity, faculty research, continuous improvement of curricula and services. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 19]

ii. Annually, the institution has the option of submitting one of these two types of financial statements, unless the Commission has directed that an audited statement must be submitted. [C.10. Policy on Financial Statements – Page 1]

- An **audited financial statement** containing an audit opinion by an independent, certified public accountant in accordance with standards established by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants. [C.10. Policy on Financial Statements – Page 1]
- A **reviewed financial statement** containing a review report by an independent, certified public accountant in accordance with standards established by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants. [C.10. Policy on Financial Statements – Page 1]

h. MINIMUM ACCEPTABLE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

At a minimum, the financial statements (audited or reviewed) include the following:

- Comparative Statement: displays the most recent two fiscal years of financial data, preferably in side-by-side columns.
- 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.
- Letter of financial statement validation.
- Cover letter verifying the CPA firm is qualified to perform the audit.
- CPA Opinion or Review Report

Statements must be as of the date of the institution's most recently ended fiscal year or a date otherwise specified by the Commission. [C.10. Policy on Financial Statements – Page 1]

i. DEMONSTRATED OPERATIONS

In all respects, the accredited institution documents continuous sound and ethical operations including the necessary resources to accommodate demand and assure all learners receive a quality educational experience. The applicant institution documents two continuous years of sound financial and ethical operation under the present ownership and with the current programs offered as a distance education provider. The institution's name is free from any association with activity that could damage the reputation of the DEAC accrediting process, such as illegal actions, fraud, unethical conduct, or abuse of consumers. [Accreditation Standards – Page 7] The institution offers a completely developed curriculum in which students have been enrolled for a minimum of two consecutive years under the present ownership. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 19]

i. PROFESSIONAL DOCTORAL DEGREES

The institution's allocation of resources to the advanced degree program does not detract from the other offerings of the institution. [C.9. Policy on Degree Programs – Page 19]

IMPACT STATEMENT

A DEAC accredited institution possesses experienced leadership, administrative capacity, financial and strategic planning resources to meet accreditation standards. The institution's leadership supports the mission, goals, and objectives through the implementation of collaborative and continuous improvements that provide for the delivery of high quality distance education. The institution assures that all owners, governing board officials, administrators, faculty, and staff support the mission, goals, and objectives and demonstrate a commitment to all stakeholders by developing a succession plan that is reviewed annually for continued institutional operations. Effective business practices are exhibited through fiscally responsible policies and procedures including a succession plan designed to ensure continued operations during periods of transition. The institution follows generally accepted accounting principles that guide all financial and reporting practices. The institution demonstrates adequate financial management that provides financial sustainability and stability.

**11) STANDARD XI: FACILITIES, EQUIPMENT, SUPPLIES, AND RECORD PROTECTION**

INTRODUCTION

Institutions maintain facilities, equipment, and supplies that promote and support its mission, goals, and objectives. The institution's procedures for determining budgets ensure financial resources are adequate to support the continued growth and provide a safe work environment for faculty and staff. The institution demonstrates adequate protection for all records. Institutional facilities, equipment, supplies, and record protection procedures meets standard educational, administrative, business, and legal practices. This section identifies **two (2) core components** of Standard XI.

## CORE COMPONENTS

### a. FACILITIES, EQUIPMENT, AND SUPPLIES

The institution maintains sufficient facilities, equipment, and supplies to achieve its mission and goals and support its programs and future growth. A written facilities plan exists to maintain and upgrade facilities, equipment, and supplies. The plan states the resources that are budgeted to support its goals. Buildings, workspace, and equipment comply with local fire, building, health, and safety regulations and are adequately equipped to handle the educational program(s) of the institution. [Accreditation Standards – Page 7]

### b. RECORD PROTECTION

Institutional financial and administrative records and students' educational records are maintained in a reasonably accessible place and are adequately protected as long as they are likely to be needed.

Protection may be by:

- 1) an active fire suppression system, or
  - 2) passive protection using two-hour rated files or vaults for hard copy files/records, or
  - 3) using offsite backup files for electronic files/records. [Accreditation Standards – Page 8]
- i. If maintaining documents electronically, the institution provides audit records to verify the images were properly created and validated. [C.21. Policy on Required Institutional Documents – Page 1]
  - ii. If an institution accepts digitally signed transcripts or electronically transferred verified data from an outside source, the institution documents the outside source using a system that provides registration and verification of participants, protocols for securely sending and receiving files, logging of file transmissions, and electronic notification. The outside source complies with all applicable laws and regulations governing the activities and services provided, including FERPA and other laws concerning the privacy and confidentiality of information and records. [C.21. Policy on Required Institutional Documents – Page 1]
  - iii. Other records are maintained in accordance with current educational, administrative, business, and legal practices. [Accreditation Standards – Page 8]

IMPACT STATEMENT

A DEAC accredited institution maintains sufficient physical and fiscal resources and support systems to deliver quality distance education programs that enables students to achieve their educational goals. The physical facilities promote the safety and welfare of all faculty and administrative support staff. Individuals in leadership roles are appropriately prepared by education and experience to develop written facilities plans to support the mission, growth, and sustainability of the institution. Institutions demonstrate a commitment to ethical business practices by maintaining institutional records, student records, and student privacy through commonly accepted educational and business practices.





## **PART FOUR: APPENDICES (COMING SOON)**