Ready. Set. Go?

Navigating DEAC Readiness Assessment Process

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…or after submitting the SER!

The Key to Everything Readiness: A Strong SER

Readiness Assessment

What it is:

- A safeguard established in order to preclude a waste of resources in situations where an application for accreditation is unlikely to be successful.

- Intentionally less rigid and comprehensive than the accreditation evaluation.

- Designed to determine whether, based on the totality of the information the institution provides to the independent reviewer, the institution meets a range of baseline eligibility requirements and appears 'ready enough' to successfully proceed through a full accreditation evaluation.

- A unique, helpful resource in preparing to undergo the more comprehensive on-site visit.

- Entrance into a new domain of public awareness. If deemed ready, the institution is listed on the DEAC website as an "Institution to be considered."

INSTITUTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED AT THE ACCREDITING COMMISSION MEETING

The DEAC publishes a list of the institutions scheduled for consideration at its next Commission meeting on its website. Accredited institutions, governmental and non-governmental agencies, industry members, the general public and other interested parties are invited to submit written comments pertaining to any school included on the Accrediting Commission's list. Comments should include information that will assist the Commission in making a decision regarding the accreditation action pending for an institution. Any comments received will be forwarded to the institution, which will then have an opportunity to submit a response to those comments. Comments concerning the institutions listed below should be submitted as soon as possible; the Accrediting Commission meets in January and June.

Applicants for Initial Accreditation

The following institutions have submitted applications for initial accreditation to the Distance Education Accrediting Commission. Initial applicants are publicly announced by DEAC in its publications and on the DEAC website once an applicant has completed a successful Readiness Assessment. DEAC does not have a candidacy status and advises institutions not to publicize the fact that they have applied for DEAC accreditation so that students will not be misled into enrolling based on the impression that the institution will become accredited. The following institutions have submitted applications for their initial grant of accreditation:
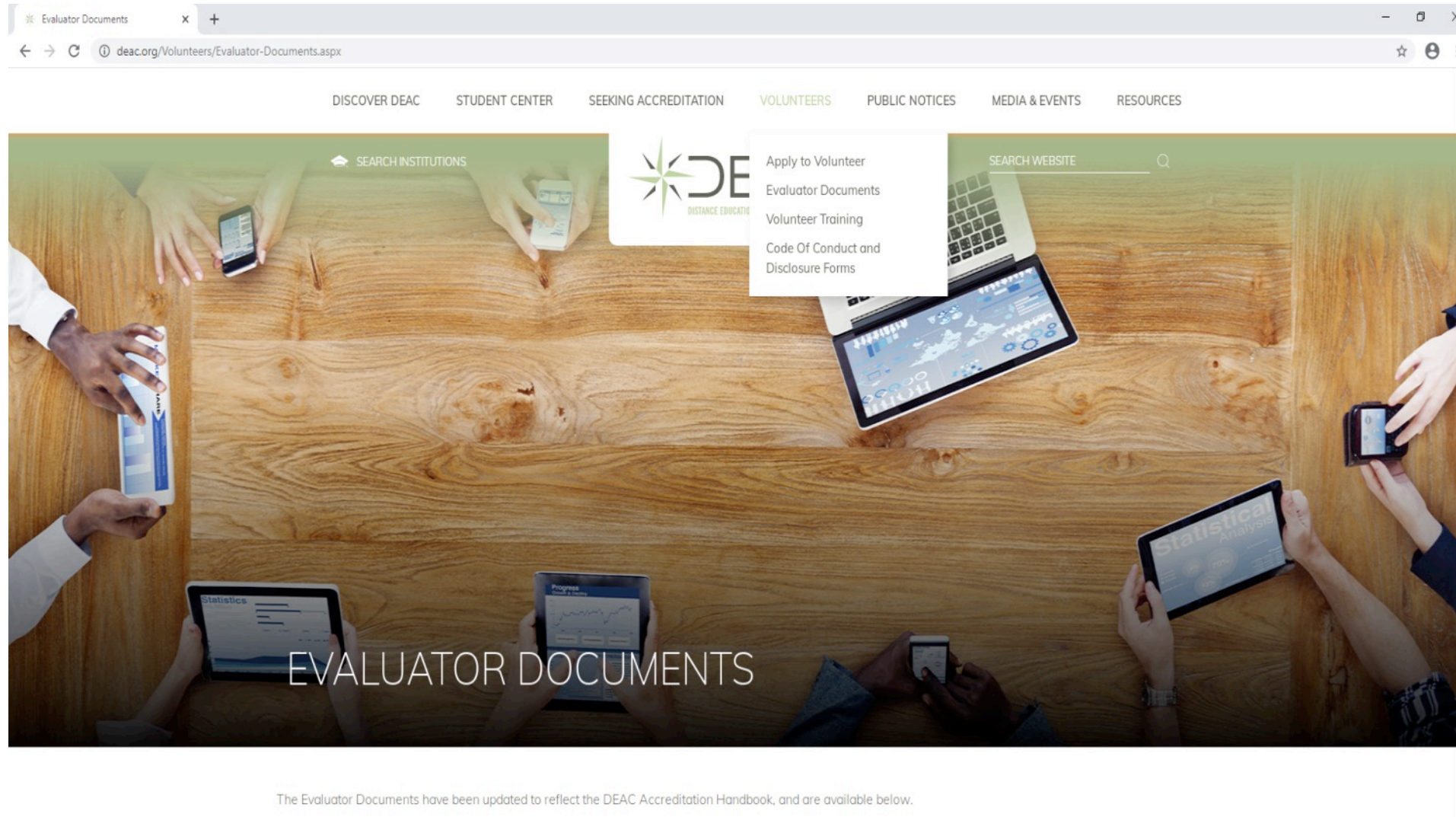
Readiness Assessment

What it is <u>not</u>:

- ▶ A contentious process, designed to imply or assert that the applicant institution is an inadequate provider of education.

- ▶ A purely quantitative calculation based on the number of boxes that may be checked off on a given checklist.

- ▶ A guarantee that accreditation will be granted. The readiness assessment report does not cover all aspects or issues that will be addressed during an on-site visit.

- ▶ A consultation service. While the report may provide suggestions and outline required actions, it is an evaluation.

What/Who Determines Readiness?

- Readiness Assessment Compliance Assessment and Report Template

Readiness Assessment Evaluators

As a peer review organization, DEAC enlists the services of a dedicated group of vetted, trained volunteers for all levels of institutional review.

► The readiness assessment evaluator pool is a smaller group of reviewers:

❖ Well-versed in DEAC processes and policies at the institutional and curricular levels

❖ Experienced educators, experts in their fields, subject specialists, and even former commission members

❖ Open to innovation and prepared to look at unique approaches to instructional delivery and subject fields

❖ No conflict of interest with the institution

❖ Anonymous

❖ Paid an honorarium

DEAC Readiness Assessment Fees

Initial Accreditation	
Type of Fee	Fee Amount
1st Offsite Readiness Assessment	$3,000 (Due with submission of SER)
2nd Offsite Readiness Assessment	$3,000 (Due with submission of revised SER)
3rd On-Site Readiness Assessment	$3,500 – Includes virtual on-site visit (Institution will be invoiced once the visit date is set)

Link to fees page is found on the DEAC Accreditation Handbook webpage

The Process – Ready

Within 60 days from the date DEAC accepts the application

- The Institution submits its SER + Exhibits+ fee payment.

Over the next 12 weeks, DEAC

- Identifies and appoints an evaluator.
- Sends and checks Conflict of Interest documents.
- Compiles and sends review materials via Dropbox to the evaluator.
- Receives the Readiness Assessment Report back from the evaluator and sends to institution.

If Deemed Ready, the institution:

- Receives the evaluator's report and a letter indicating that they are ready to continue with the accreditation process.
- Has 90 days to submit requested curriculum for review.
- Submits its revised SER and Exhibits to DEAC Staff 6 weeks prior to the on-site visit .
- Prepares for its on-site evaluation (scheduled for 6-9 months from notice of readiness).
- Note: Accreditation decisions are made by the Commission at its January and June meetings.

The Process – Not Ready

If Deemed Not Ready, the institution:

- Receives the evaluator's report and a letter indicating that they are not ready to continue with the accreditation process.
- Has 4 weeks from the date of the letter to notify DEAC of the decision to continue with a second readiness assessment or to withdraw the application.
- If continuing: has 6 months from the date of the letter to revise and submit its SER and Exhibits, incorporating the evaluator's comments and addressing any required actions + fee payment

If Deemed Not Ready after the 2nd submission, the institution:

- Receives the evaluator's 2nd report and a letter indicating that they are still not ready to continue with the accreditation process.
- Has 4 weeks from the date of the letter to notify DEAC of the decision to continue with a third readiness assessment or to withdraw the application.
- Has another 6 months from the date of the letter to revise and submit its SER and Exhibits incorporating the evaluator's comments and addressing any required actions.
- Upon receipt of the 3rd submission, a virtual readiness assessment on-site visit is scheduled + fee payment.

If Deemed Not Ready after the 3rd submission and virtual on-site visit, the institution:

- Can re-apply for accreditation after at least one-year.

Common Obstacles

- Submitting an incomplete Self-Study Report
- Not supplying the required documentation (exhibits)
- Insufficient evidence supporting SER responses
- Not using updated forms
- Missing the submission deadlines
- Not submitting payments

Navigation Coordinates: Progress

DEAC provides the maps to navigate this process.

▶ Follow the guidance provided the DEAC Self Evaluation Resource Document (Seeking Accreditation-Applications and Reports prompt)

▶ Review the Readiness Assessment Compliance Assessment Form and Report Template. This is the exact report sent to the institution. (Volunteer-Evaluator Documents prompt)

▶ Keep in mind that the readiness assessment is a 'paper' review, based solely off of the written responses and documentation in the SER.

▶ Pay attention to the comments, required actions, and suggestions provided in the readiness assessment report.

▶ Reach out to DEAC Staff if you have questions

The Readiness Assessment Report

▶ Readiness assessment evaluators use the report template to review initial applicant institutions and determine, based on compliance with all 12 of DEAC Accreditation Standards, whether they are "Deemed Ready" or "Deemed Not Ready" to undergo a comprehensive on-site visit.

▶ The questions on the report template are designed to assist the evaluator in determining whether the institution substantially meets the DEAC Accreditation Standards.

▶ The evaluator details the assessment by marking the appropriate response check box and by including corresponding comments (including SER/Exhibit references) in the Notes section of the form following each standard.

▶ The evaluator provides this evidenced feedback to the institution to assist in strengthening its documentation, processes, and procedures in advance of the curricular review and comprehensive on-site visit.

▶ The evaluator assesses whether DEAC Accreditation Standards are "Evident, Emerging, or Not Evident" based on a focused review of the documents submitted.

Readiness Designations

DEAC accreditation standards are "Evident," "Emerging," or "not Evident" based on a focused review of the documents submitted by the initial applicant institution.

DEAC Standards Compliance Findings Guidelines:

- **DEAC Standard is Evident:** The institution demonstrates compliance with the intent of the DEAC accreditation standard or core component.

- **DEAC Standard is Emerging:** The institution demonstrates compliance with some, but not all, of the elements contained in the DEAC accreditation standard or core component.

- **DEAC Standard is Not Evident:** The institution did not demonstrate compliance with the majority of the elements contained in the DEAC accreditation standard or core component.

For any "DEAC Standard is Emerging" or "DEAC Standard is Not Evident" ratings, the readiness assessment evaluator will provide feedback and corresponding evidence in the "Comments" section to support each finding. The evaluator also provides a "Required Action" that instructs the institution on what they need to provide or address in order to demonstrate compliance with the identified standard.

Example from Readiness Assessment Report

Standard I: Institutional Mission

A. Description of Mission: The institution's mission communicates its purpose and its commitment to providing quality distance educational offerings and is appropriate to the level of study offered. The mission establishes the institution's identity within the educational community and guides the development of educational offerings.

Questions	Yes	No	N/A
Did the institution present its mission statement?	☐	☐	☐
Did the institution describe how its mission guides the development of educational offerings?	☐	☐	☐
Does the mission communicate the institution's purpose and its commitment to providing quality distance educational offerings?	☐	☐	☐
Is the institution's mission appropriate to the level of study offered?	☐	☐	☐
Does the mission establish the institution's identity within the educational community?	☐	☐	☐
Standard I.A. – Standard is Evident, Emerging, Not Evident, or Not Applicable	Choose a finding.		

Comments: Provide comments to support the finding based on the institution's responses and evidence included the Self-Evaluation Report.

Required Actions: Provide the required actions necessary for the institution to demonstrate compliance with the DEAC Accreditation Standard. Each required action must correspond to an identified DEAC Accreditation Standard or core component. The initial applicant institution uses this feedback to strengthen its documentation, processes, and procedures.

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

What's Next?

Review the readiness assessment report thoroughly.

- ▶ If ready:
    - ▶ Celebrate, but there is more work to be done - the readiness assessment is not a guarantee of accreditation
    - ▶ Prepare for curriculum review
    - ▶ Prepare for the on-site visit

- ▶ If not ready:
    - ▶ Consider the report as valuable feedback, it is not a statement on the quality of the institution or its people
    - ▶ Prepare responses to the required actions, collect any missing documentation, revise the SER and exhibits as indicated

- ▶ Regardless:
    - ▶ Know that DEAC is here for you

Questions?

Thank you!

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