



DISTANCE EDUCATION ACCREDITING COMMISSION

REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION

April 5, 2022

Dear Colleagues,

The Distance Education Accrediting Commission (DEAC) has reviewed the submissions it received in response to its February 9, 2022 Call for Comment on revisions to the *Accreditation Handbook*. The revisions were developed as a part of DEAC's commitment to a regular review of its standing policies, procedures, and operations in order to improve them and to support its institutions' efforts to review and improve their operations. At a meeting held on March 28, 2022, the Commission voted to adopt and implement the changes effective immediately.

The proposed changes reflect ongoing developments in the provision of distance education, the experiences of accredited institutions, and a consideration of the new regulations governing the U.S. Department of Education's recognition of accrediting organizations for postsecondary education that became effective in July 2020. As part of this initiative, and in accordance with Section XXIV.D, Part Two of the *Accreditation Handbook*, the Commission requested comments with respect to the proposed revisions from all DEAC member institutions, other relevant constituencies, and the general public. The Commission appreciates the comments it received with respect to these changes.

Primary changes that have been implemented in Parts One and Two of the *Accreditation Handbook* include the following:

- Clarifying that DEAC's Board of Directors, which is responsible for corporate governance and oversight of DEAC, also serves as the Accrediting Commission, the body responsible for oversight and decision-making in the accreditation process. Please see primary definitional language in Part One, with conforming terminology throughout Part Two.
- Making clear that events such as governmental indictments or other enforcement activities against an institution or its principals require institutions to provide notice to DEAC of the same – Part Two, Section III (I) and Part Three, Standard X (B).
- Providing a specific time frame for receiving public and third-party comments on institutions seeking initial or renewal of accreditation from DEAC – Section VII (A & B).
- Aligning language on public notices with Department of Education requirements – Sections IX and XV (A, C, E & F).
- Providing additional clarification as to how an accreditation deferral action is distinguished from a show cause action – Section IX (B & C).
- Providing additional detail as to the procedure for special visits directed by the Commission – Section X(A).

- Expressly stating DEAC’s long-standing position that it does not allow distance education institutions to establish an “additional location” or “branch campus” as these terms are defined in 34 CFR 600.2 – Section XVIII(A).
- Clarifying and adding more detail in certain contexts to the substantive change approval process – Section XVIII.
- Streamlining the substantive change procedures for Engaging in Federal Student Assistance Title IV Programs – Section XVIII (J).
- Incorporating transfer of credit provisions within a written teach-out agreement – Section XXI (C).
- Streamlining and clarifying DEAC’s written complaint procedures, including, without limitation, the addition of a specific time frame for institutions to maintain student complaint records – Section XXII.
- Updating and streamlining the language for the process followed by DEAC in proposing and adopting revisions to DEAC accreditation standards, policies, and processes when considering comments on proposed changes to the *Accreditation Handbook* – Section XXIV.

The changes to Part Three, Accreditation Standards, *DEAC Accreditation Handbook* include:

- Reinforcing DEAC’s long-standing position that it does not use as a negative factor an institution’s religious mission-based policies, decisions, and practices as these may be reflected in the institution’s curricula, faculty, facilities, student support services, and recruiting and admissions policies. Please see the new Introduction Section, Part Three, Accreditation Standards.
- A change that corresponds to revisions in Part Two, Section XXII on written complaint procedures to establish a five-year time frame for maintaining student complaint records – Standard IV(J).
- Language to clarify the value and use of any institution-branded materials or nominal gifts offered to current or prospective students if or when institutions utilize such incentives as part of their recruitment practices – Standard VII (A)(5) & (C)(3).
- Provisions that would allow the Commission to require an institution to submit audited financial statements within a time frame specifically determined by the Commission in the event that circumstances raise serious concerns about an institution’s financial capacity and stability – Standard XI (D).

Please don’t hesitate to contact me with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,



Leah K. Matthews
Executive Director
Distance Education Accrediting Commission