

## PART THREE: ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

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### I. INSTITUTIONAL MISSION

#### INTRODUCTION

An institution’s mission communicates its purpose and solidifies its identity within the educational community. The mission reflects a commitment to providing quality distance educational offerings that meet the needs of students and relevant stakeholders. The institution develops and implements policies and procedures within the context of its mission assuring that educational offerings and administrative practices are of sufficient scope and quality to achieve the mission. In doing so, it also demonstrates compliance with the DEAC Standards. This section identifies **three (3) core components** of Standard I.

#### CORE COMPONENTS

##### A. DESCRIPTION OF THE MISSION

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

##### B. REVIEW AND PUBLICATION OF THE MISSION

The institution’s leadership, faculty, staff, administrators, and other stakeholders regularly review the mission to assure continued institutional quality and viability. The published mission statement is readily accessible to students, faculty, staff, other stakeholders, and the public.

##### C. INFORMATION ON ACHIEVEMENT OF THE MISSION

The institution identifies key indicators it uses to demonstrate that it is effectively carrying out its mission. The institution documents the achievement of its mission and shares appropriate information on this achievement with relevant groups (e.g., Advisory Councils, faculty, staff, students, and the public).

#### IMPACT STATEMENT

A DEAC-accredited institution’s mission communicates its purpose and commitment to delivering quality distance educational offerings. The mission defines the institution, identifies what it does and for whom, and is regularly reviewed by all stakeholders. The institution measures ongoing achievement of its mission. The mission guides planning for the future.

## II. INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

### INTRODUCTION

Two fundamental attributes of institutional sustainability are monitoring effectiveness and planning for the future. The institution implements a comprehensive effectiveness plan incorporating feedback loops which lead to administrative and academic enhancements. Additionally, an institution plans for future growth and financial stability through focused activities within strategic planning process. This section identifies **two (2) core components** of Standard II.

### CORE COMPONENTS

#### A. INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS PLANNING

The institution demonstrates a commitment to its educational offerings and administrative operations through processes that monitor and improve institutional effectiveness. The institution engages in sound research practices, collects and analyzes evidence about its effectiveness and develops action plans that are used to improve operations, educational offerings, and services.

#### B. STRATEGIC PLANNING

The institution has a systematic process of planning for the achievement of goals that support its mission. The institution's planning process involves all areas of the institution's operations (e.g., admissions, academic, technology, etc.) in identifying strategic initiatives and goals by evaluating external and internal trends as they affect the future. At a minimum, the strategic plan addresses finances, academics, technology, admissions, marketing, personnel, and institutional sustainability. The strategic plan is reviewed and updated annually using established metrics designed to measure achievement of strategic planning goals and objectives, and helps institutions set priorities, manage resources, and set goals for future performance.

### IMPACT STATEMENT

A DEAC-accredited institution demonstrates a commitment to its educational offerings and administrative operations by engaging in processes that monitor institutional effectiveness and strategies for the future. The institution engages in research practices, collects meaningful evidence, and implements ongoing improvements. The institution involves relevant stakeholders in the development and achievement of strategic initiatives to attain its objectives and to assure sustainability.

## III. PROGRAM OUTCOMES, CURRICULA, AND MATERIALS

### INTRODUCTION

Program learning outcomes reflect academic competencies at an appropriate level and rigor. They communicate the knowledge and skills students will acquire upon successful

completion of the program. The effective design of program outcomes, curricula, and supplemental materials results in cohesive educational offerings and evaluation methods of student learning that are clearly connected to the stated outcomes. The institution delivers clear, up-to-date, and well-organized curricula and instructional materials and provides access to appropriate learning resources. Institutions present evidence that all educational offerings conform to commonly accepted education practices. This section identifies **nine (9) core components** of Standard III.

## CORE COMPONENTS

### A. DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Program outcomes are clearly defined, simply stated, and indicate the benefits for students who are reasonably capable of completing the educational offering. Course learning outcomes are linked to program outcomes as identified by the institution and are consistent with the curricula offered.

### B. APPROPRIATE PROGRAM OUTCOMES

The program outcomes are measurable and reasonably attainable through distance education. Appropriate program outcomes clearly communicate the knowledge, skills, and abilities students will obtain upon completion of the educational offering. Program outcomes reflect the expected level of student achievement that promotes critical thinking, ethical reasoning, social responsibility, global citizenship, civic engagement, or lifelong learning, as applicable to educational offerings.

#### 1. DEGREE PROGRAMS

All required academic or professional activities, such as program outcomes, course learning outcomes, research projects, supervised clinical practice, field work, applied research exercises, theses, dissertations, are clearly stated.

2. Capstone projects, if required, are consistent with academic and professional standards based on commonly accepted higher education practices and any applicable relevant professional organizations. Capstone project learning outcomes are clearly stated.

#### 3. DOCTORAL DEGREES

The outcomes of doctoral degree programs are advanced, focused, and scholarly, providing the breadth and depth of learning indicative of advanced degrees.

- a. Professional doctoral degrees prepare scholars to become leaders in their field of study through the pursuit of and contribution to contemporary research that is applied, practical, or project-oriented and is focused on the application of knowledge to a profession.
- b. The learning activities of doctoral degree programs include, as appropriate, seminars, professional meetings, in-residence 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.

- c. The professional doctoral degree program requires students to work with a supervisory dissertation/research project committee that is knowledgeable in graduate-level study and research methods in the discipline. Doctoral degree program curricula include the history and development of the field of study and its foundational theoretical principles.

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.

D. COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULA AND INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

Curricula and instructional materials are sufficiently comprehensive for students to achieve the stated program outcomes. Their organization and content are supported by reliable research and practice. The organization and presentation of the curricula and instructional materials reflect sound principles of learning and are grounded in distance education instructional design principles. The curricula and instructional materials reflect current knowledge and practice. Curricula and instructional materials are kept 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.

1. The institution maintains an Advisory Council for each major group of programs or major subject matter disciplines it offers. The Advisory Council includes members not otherwise employed or contracted at the institution, consisting of practitioners and employers in the field for which the program prepares students. Advisory Councils
  - a. meet at least annually;
  - b. provide advice on the current level of skills, knowledge, and abilities individuals need for entry into the occupation; and
  - c. provide the institution with recommendations on the adequacy of educational program outcomes, curricula, and course materials.
2. The institution determines whether courses in a program require any prerequisites. The institution also determines whether courses are offered in a prescribed sequence to maximize student achievement of the program outcomes.
3. GENERAL EDUCATION FOR DEGREE GRANTING  
General education courses convey broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develop skills and attitudes that contribute to civic

engagement, academic achievement and professional attainment. General education courses address content not associated with a particular field of study. 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.

4. ASSOCIATE DEGREE

Associate degrees are awarded in academic or professional subjects 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 outcomes. Associate degree programs consist of a minimum of 60 semester credit hours or 90 quarter credit hours. General education courses account for a minimum of 25 percent of the credits required for successful completion of associate degree programs.

5. 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 outcomes. Bachelor's degree programs consist of a minimum of 120 semester credit hours or 180 quarter credit hours. General education courses represent a minimum of 25 percent of the credits required for successful completion of a bachelor's degree program.

6. 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 assessments. Institutions establish whether graduate courses are completed in a prescribed sequence to facilitate student achievement of program outcomes. Master's degree programs are a minimum of 30 semester credit hours or 45 quarter credit hours.

7. FIRST PROFESSIONAL DEGREE

First professional degree programs are designed to offer a required academic credential leading to entry into a specific profession. The graduate degree program identifies competencies required for successful practice in the discipline. First professional degree programs require prior undergraduate preparation appropriate to the degree offered. Graduates of the first professional degree program demonstrate competencies that enable them to evaluate theories and engage in research relevant to the field of study. Demonstrated learning outcomes are comparable to those achieved during a minimum of 50 semester credit hours, 75 quarter credit hours, or their

equivalent beyond the bachelor's degree.

8. PROFESSIONAL DOCTORAL DEGREE

Professional doctoral degree programs are designed to offer practice-oriented content leading to an advanced academic credential. Professional doctoral degree programs identify and teach competencies that support advancements in the field of study. The professional doctoral degree program graduate demonstrates the ability to conduct, interpret, and apply the results of appropriate research. Adequate oversight and advising are provided through all phases of the doctoral program, including clinical practice or fieldwork required by the field of study.

- a. Unless otherwise specified for a particular field of study (e.g. nursing, engineering), the program of study requires 60 graduate-level semester credit hours, 90 graduate-level quarter credit hours, or their equivalent beyond the master's degree with a maximum of 15 semester credit hours or 22.5 quarter credit hours for the dissertation or final research project. Professional doctoral degree programs are completed in no fewer than two years and no more than 10 years from the date of initial enrollment. A first professional degree in the same discipline may reduce the program requirements when the institution requires a minimum of 90 total graduate semester credit hours or 135 quarter credit hours after the bachelor's degree.
- b. Professional doctoral degrees require dissertations or capstone projects involving original contributions to the field of study using applied research methods. An appropriately credentialed doctoral committee approves dissertation and capstone project topics. A dissertation or capstone project manual is provided that includes guidelines on identifying, researching, writing, and presenting the selected topic. Dissertations or capstone projects are appropriately defended by doctoral candidates before a doctoral committee via distance or in person. Professional doctoral degrees are awarded upon final approval by a majority of the doctoral committee.

E. CURRICULA DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY

1. Qualified persons competent in distance education instructional design practices work with experts in subjects or fields to develop the content of all curricula and prepare instructional materials.
2. The institution describes its model for distance education delivery such as: correspondence, online or hybrid.
3. Any contracting with a third party for educational delivery is conducted in accordance with DEAC Processes and Procedures, Part Two, Section XIII F.4 and F.5, Changes in Educational Offerings.

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.

1. CLOCK HOURS

The institution documents its implementation and application of policies and procedures for determining clock hours awarded for its courses and programs. A clock hour is one instructional hour. One instructional hour is defined as 50 minutes of instruction in a 60-minute period.

2. CREDIT HOURS

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. 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.

3. CREDIT HOUR DEFINITION

Semester and quarter hours are equivalent to the commonly accepted and traditionally defined units of academic measurement. Academic degree or academic credit-bearing distance education 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>

*<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.*

4. DOCUMENTING CREDIT HOURS

The institution demonstrates that each course and program requires the appropriate amount of work needed for students to achieve the level of competency defined by institutionally established course/program outcomes. 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.

All student work is documented in the curricula materials and syllabi, including a reasonable approximation of time required for students to complete the assignments. Evaluation of student work is identified as a grading criterion and weighted appropriately in the determination of a final course grade.

#### 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, faculty, and 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,~~ **and professional support services** that are appropriate for the achievement of program learning outcomes.

##### 1. UNDERGRADUATE DEGREES

Learning resources are systematically and regularly evaluated to assure they meet student needs and support the institution's programs and mission. 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 learning resources.

##### 2. GRADUATE DEGREES

In addition to the requirements for undergraduate degrees, graduate students are provided with access to library and other learning resources that are sufficient for research at the graduate 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.

#### H. EXAMINATIONS AND OTHER ASSESSMENTS

Examinations and other assessment techniques provide adequate evidence of the achievement of stated learning outcomes. The institution establishes and enforces grading criteria that it uses to evaluate and document student attainment of learning outcomes.

##### 1. UNDERGRADUATE DEGREES

The institution assesses student achievement through multiple means of evaluation (e.g., student presentations, group projects, essays, research papers, participation in threaded discussions, supervised practica, or externships).

##### 2. MASTER'S DEGREES

The institution assesses student achievement through multiple means of evaluation, including a culminating experience required for program completion (e.g., capstone experience, comprehensive examination, research project, or master's thesis).

##### 3. FIRST PROFESSIONAL AND DOCTORAL DEGREES

The institution assesses student achievement through multiple means of evaluation, including qualifying examinations, comprehensive examinations, and dissertation or final research project. The institution requires students to successfully complete a comprehensive examination when all coursework is completed and prior to commencing work on the dissertation or final research



project.

I. STUDENT INTEGRITY AND ACADEMIC HONESTY

The institution publishes clear, specific, policies related to student integrity and academic honesty. The institution affirms that the student who takes an assessment ~~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 learning outcomes.

1. NON-DEGREE PROGRAMS

Institutions meet this requirement by using a secure login and passcode, administering proctored ~~examinations~~ assessments, or by other means of secure technology.

2. DEGREE PROGRAMS

In addition to the requirements for non-degree programs above, degree-granting institutions meet this requirement by administering proctored assessments ~~examinations~~ at appropriate intervals throughout the program of study and justifies the placement of the proctored assessments within the program. Proctors use valid government-issued photo identification or other means to confirm student identity.

- J. For any final research project, master's thesis, or dissertation that involves human research, the institution must require prior formal review and approval for all research involving human subjects 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, that they have voluntarily agreed to participate and that they have given appropriate informed consent. The IRB must meet all federal regulations and the institution must be able to demonstrate that it is in compliance, including providing evidence that all IRB members have had appropriate training. (Title 45 Code of Federal Regulations Part 46.)

IMPACT STATEMENT

A DEAC-accredited institution demonstrates a commitment to delivering quality distance education by implementing curricula that are based on clear and measurable outcomes for learning and that provide 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 outcomes through assessment methods that are relevant and appropriate to the level of educational offerings 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 in-depth study and research.

## IV. EDUCATIONAL AND STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

### INTRODUCTION

An effective institution demonstrates attention and active involvement when addressing students' educational needs and goals throughout all phases of an academic program. The institution demonstrates that proactive procedures are in place to adequately respond to students' inquiries, educational needs, and individual differences and encourage program completion. The institution implements appropriate assessment procedures using published grading policies and a fair, consistent marking system. It demonstrates that student records are adequately and securely maintained. The institution provides support services to assist students, including relevant counseling services and a published complaint policy. The institution offers comprehensive supplemental services to ensure students have access to support for successful program completion. This section identifies **ten (10) 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 student that effectively supports instructional and educational services. Students, faculty, and involved practitioners receive training and support for the technology used to deliver the educational offerings.

#### 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 using all these channels.

#### C. INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

Academic advising and instructional support are provided to assist students in achieving institutional and program requirements, program outcomes, course learning outcomes, and educational goals consistent with best educational practices and as required by applicable federal and state laws.

#### D. ENCOURAGEMENT OF STUDENTS

The institution's policies and procedures optimize interaction between the institution and students. The interaction proactively promotes student completion and success.

#### E. SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS

The institution implements and consistently applies a satisfactory academic progress policy and discloses this policy to students. Standards for measuring satisfactory academic progress include qualitative and quantitative standards used for evaluation of student progress. The institution takes appropriate action if students fail to meet the institution's minimum standards of progress. Students are informed of their academic

progress and standing in the program at regular intervals throughout their enrollment.

F. GRADING POLICIES

Student academic performance is measured using published grading policies that include prompt return of accurately, fairly, and consistently graded assessments that are supervised by a qualified instructor or faculty member. 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.

G. 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 federal and state laws and professional requirements. Transcripts are readily accessible and maintained permanently in either print or digital form.

H. CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY

The institution's policies protect student confidentiality and privacy as required by applicable federal and state laws.

I. STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

The institution provides support services designed for the students enrolled, such as financial aid guidance, advising services, employment assistance, and/or alumni services. Appropriate academic support services are readily available. Any career services and/or alumni services are offered as published in the institution's materials.

J. STUDENT COMPLAINTS

The institution has policies and procedures for receiving, responding to and addressing student complaints.

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. The institution's complaint policy states how complaints can be filed with state agencies and its accrediting organization, as appropriate.

#### 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 student progress through and completion of educational offerings. Appropriately qualified instructors or faculty members assure that prompt responses to questions and submissions are returned to students. The institution anticipates the needs of individual students and provides appropriate guidance 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 available where appropriate. A clearly articulated process to address student complaints is in place and the institution utilizes data gathered from this process to improve.

## V. **STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND SATISFACTION**

#### INTRODUCTION

The institution implements a comprehensive assessment program, to monitor student satisfaction and achievement of learning outcomes. The institution's written outcomes assessment plan documents, monitors, and analyzes data collected to improve learning outcomes and to inform institutional effectiveness activities. This section identifies **three (3) 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 and educational offerings. The institution evaluates student achievement by collecting data from outcomes assessment activities using direct and indirect measures. The institution maintains systematic and ongoing processes for assessing student learning and achievement, analyzes data, and documents that the results meet both internal and external benchmarks, including those comparable to courses or programs offered at peer DEAC-accredited institutions. The institution demonstrates and documents how the evaluation of student achievement drives quality improvement of educational offerings and support services.

**B. STUDENT SATISFACTION**

The institution systematically seeks student and alumni opinions as one basis for evaluating and improving curricula, instructional materials, method of delivery, and student services. The institution regularly collects evidence that students are satisfied with the administrative, educational, and support services provided.

**C. 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.

**IMPACT STATEMENT**

A DEAC-accredited institution demonstrates a commitment to its students and educational offerings by implementing a comprehensive assessment program based on clearly defined evidence-based and measurable program and course learning outcomes. The assessment program is used to track student satisfaction, persistence, and the achievement of 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 the institution with meaningful, timely, accurate, qualitative, and quantitative information that is used by faculty, administrators, and various stakeholders to determine institutional effectiveness and to evaluate results of improvement efforts.

**VI. ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP AND FACULTY QUALIFICATIONS****INTRODUCTION**

The institution demonstrates effective leadership and a shared purpose through qualified and experienced administrators, faculty, and staff, who are responsible for academic operations. Institutions demonstrate that qualified individuals are serving in all relevant academic roles and contributing to the educational process. The chief academic officer and/or education director is appropriately qualified by education and experience to oversee administrative responsibilities for all educational offerings. The institution demonstrates that the appropriate number of instructors/faculty are employed and qualified by education and experience to achieve educational objectives and to provide individualized instructional service to students as needed. The institution encourages and regularly monitors continued professional development for all administrators, department heads, instructors/faculty, and staff. The institution documents procedures for hiring qualified individuals. It demonstrates a commitment and collaboration among administrators, faculty, and staff to provide quality distance education programs for continued growth. This section identifies **four (4) core components** of Standard VI.

**CORE COMPONENTS****A. ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP**

The institution demonstrates appropriate academic leadership capacity and infrastructure to support the effective distance education delivery of educational offerings. Academic leaders possess the academic credentials, background, knowledge, ethics, and experience necessary to guide the instructional activities of the institution.

B. CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER (CAO) OR EDUCATION DIRECTOR

The institution designates a chief academic officer, education director, or other similar oversight position. This individual is responsible for overall administration of the educational program(s); for the educational, editorial, and research activities within departmental subject fields; and for faculty/instructors. The individual also informs marketing decisions.

Within the context of the institution's mission:

1. The CAO or education director has appropriate academic administrative experience and competence necessary to lead and manage educational offerings in a distance education environment.

2. The CAO or education director possesses academic credentials that are appropriate for the leadership, supervision, and oversight of faculty, curriculum design, and student achievement expectations.

3. DOCTORAL DEGREES

The institution appoints a director for doctoral degree programs. The director possesses previous higher education administrative capacity and distance learning knowledge to lead doctoral programs. The director possesses the appropriate terminal degree earned from an appropriately accredited institution in a subject area relevant to the degree program being offered.

4. DISSERTATION SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE

A doctoral committee of at least three faculty members is assigned for each student. Doctoral committee members possess appropriate credentials, scholarship, experience, and practice in the field of study. At least one member of the doctoral committee is a member of the awarding institution's faculty. At least two members of the doctoral committee have earned doctoral degrees from appropriately accredited institutions other than from the awarding institution. All committee members are qualified in the subject area of the dissertation or research project topic. The institution provides final approval for students who nominate faculty to the doctoral committee.

C. 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, official transcripts, and copies of

applicable licenses or credentials 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 regularly evaluates faculty and administrator performance using clear, consistent procedures. The institution assures that faculty are appropriately involved and engaged in the curriculum and instructional aspects of the educational offerings. Faculty are assigned responsibilities based on their degree qualifications and/or area(s) of expertise.

1. HIGH SCHOOL  
The institution provides evidence that all faculty/instructors are qualified and appropriately credentialed to teach the subject and level within the high school program offered.
2. NON-DEGREE  
Instructors teaching technically- or practice-oriented courses have practical experience in the field and possess current licenses and/or certifications, as applicable.
3. OCCUPATIONAL/TECHNICAL ASSOCIATES DEGREE  
Faculty possess earned credentials awarded by appropriately accredited institutions and/or have practical experience in the field and possess current licenses and/or certifications if applicable. The institution must demonstrate the academic preparation and practical experience of each faculty member consistent with accepted postsecondary education practices.
3. 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, to include occupational/technical associates degrees, 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.
4. MASTER'S DEGREES  
Faculty teaching graduate-level courses in a master's degree program must possess, at a minimum, a doctoral/terminal degree earned at an appropriately accredited institution in the subject field of the discipline and demonstrate familiarity with practical applications of the field.
5. FACULTY QUALIFICATION EQUIVALENCY  
In limited and exceptional cases institutions may demonstrate that faculty are qualified to teach at the undergraduate and master's levels through faculty qualification equivalency. Such equivalency is demonstrated by evidence of

substantial breadth and depth of experiences and knowledge that are relevant to the discipline in which the faculty is teaching. An institution that intends to substitute faculty qualification equivalency for the degree qualifications set forth in Standards VI.C.4 and VI.C.5 must have:

- a. Well-defined policies, procedures and documentation that demonstrates how experience and knowledge are sufficient to determine that the faculty member has the expertise necessary to teach students in that discipline; and
- b. Procedures that ensure adequate oversight of teaching and learning is provided by individuals who possess degree qualifications in accordance with Standards VI.C.4 and VI.C.5.

6. 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, consistent with educational practices of other similar programs.

7. 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. Prior to enrolling students, the institution has in place a dedicated dean, director, or other academic officer with credentials appropriate to the degree(s) being offered.

D. PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

The institution demonstrates a commitment to faculty and staff professional development. The institution encourages faculty and staff 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. The institution provides faculty and administrators with access to a collection of professional educational materials to keep abreast of current trends, developments, techniques, research, and experimentation.

IMPACT STATEMENT

A DEAC-accredited institution has policies and procedures for delineating the roles and responsibilities for academic leadership and faculty for short- and long-term stability of academic leadership. The institution employs appropriately qualified academic personnel to oversee the delivery of educational offerings. Academic officers and department heads maintain responsibility for the accuracy of statements made regarding all academic matters. Faculty are sufficient in number and appropriately credentialed to guide enrolled students through all phases of the learning process. The institution maintains timely and accurate records of the qualifications of all academic personnel, including documentation of initial



and ongoing professional development. The institution documents the success of academic personnel through clear, consistent procedures to evaluate performance.

## VII. **ADVERTISING, PROMOTIONAL LITERATURE, AND RECRUITMENT PERSONNEL**

### INTRODUCTION

All of the institution's advertising and promotion is current, ethical, and accurately presents information that allows prospective students to make informed decisions without undue pressure. The institution's recruitment efforts focus on those prospective students who are likely to be successful and meet their academic goals through the educational offerings of the institution. Recruitment involves any institutional personnel who engage in activities to attract or enroll 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 content, and promotional literature are truthful, accurate, clear, and readily accessible to the public; proactively states that programs are offered via distance education; and appropriately discloses occupational opportunities ~~that may be available to graduates~~ 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. Web-based advertisements and social media platforms provide a link to the institution's web address and physical address. The institution complies with the DEAC's Catalog Disclosures Check List Website Disclosures Check List.

1. All advertisements and promotional materials accurately reflect the programs and services offered by the institution. The word "guarantee" is never used in advertisements. Under limited and exceptional circumstances, institutions may use the word "free" when it is appropriate to the mission and purpose of the institution.
  - a. IN-RESIDENCE PROGRAM COMPONENT  
All required in-residence components and additional associated costs are disclosed on the institution's websites, advertisements, and promotional materials.
2. The institution's website testimonials and endorsements are truthful and less than four years old. The institution maintains signed student consent forms for each published testimonial. The institution's website discloses all program requirements, course descriptions, tuition and related costs, program schedules, method of delivery, 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.

3. The institution discloses on its catalog, website, and enrollment agreements that the acceptance of earned transfer credits is determined by the receiving institution.
4. The institution adheres to applicable catalog, website, and enrollment agreement disclosures check lists, based on educational offerings. The institution publishes student consumer information as required by federal and state statutes and regulations.
5. Any incentives offered to prospective and current students to enroll do not exceed a nominal value of \$100 annually.
6. The institution permanently archives its catalogs.

**B. INSTITUTION AND COURSE ACCREDITED-STATUS RECOGNITION**

The institution accurately reflects its accredited status and uses the official DEAC accreditation logo and/or statement of accreditation when publishing its accreditation status in advertisements, promotional materials on its website, and in social media. DEAC's name, address, telephone number, and web address are published in the institution's catalog.

1. The institution publishes a statement of accreditation only as follows:
  - Accredited by the Distance Education Accrediting Commission
  - DEAC Accredited
2. The institution refers to DEAC's recognition by the U.S. Department of Education only as follows: "The Distance Education Accrediting Commission is listed by the U.S. Department of Education as a recognized accrediting agency."
3. The institution refers to DEAC's recognition by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) only as follows: "The Distance Education Accrediting Commission is recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA)."
4. 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.

5. All courses and programs of the institution are approved by DEAC before the institution advertises them or enrolls students in them.
6. The institution uses the term “College” only if it offers at least one academic degree program and when such use is approved by the appropriate state authorities.
7. The institution uses the term “University” in its name ~~only if it offers academic degree programs~~ when such use is approved by the appropriate state authorities and
  - a. at least two bachelor-level degree programs in different disciplines are offered; or
  - b. at least one graduate-level degree program is offered.

C. STUDENT RECRUITMENT

The institution demonstrates that ethical processes and procedures are followed throughout the recruitment of prospective students by any individual who is authorized by the institution to participate in the enrollment process with prospective students. Minimum ethical practices and procedures are identified below.

1. The institution takes full responsibility for the actions, statements, and conduct of its authorized recruitment personnel. The institution maintains appropriate records, licensures, registrations, signed employment contracts, and signed 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. All authorized recruitment personnel are provided with appropriate materials covering applicable procedures, policies, and presentations. The institution demonstrates that it routinely monitors its student recruitment personnel or independent organizations that provide prospective applicant names to assure they are in compliance with all state, federal, and DEAC recruitment practices.
2. All student recruitment personnel, including telemarketing staff, conform to applicable federal, state and international laws. Student recruitment personnel may not be given and may not use any title that indicates special qualifications for career guidance, advising, or registration, nor may they publish advertisements without written authorization from the institution.
3. If an institution provides incentives for making referrals, the incentive must not exceed a value of \$100 a year.

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 to enroll or make financial commitments at any time during the recruitment process. Students are provided with and have access to accurate and current information to make appropriate educational decisions that meet their academic goals. The institution appropriately represents its mission, educational offerings, and accreditation through accurate and consistent publications.

## VIII. **ADMISSION PRACTICES AND ENROLLMENT AGREEMENTS**

### INTRODUCTION

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

### CORE COMPONENTS

#### A. ADMISSIONS DISCLOSURES

Admissions policies and procedures are designed to assure that the institution enrolls only those students who are reasonably capable of successfully completing and benefiting from the educational offering.

1. 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. Prior to completing the enrollment process, the institution requires students to affirm access to the catalog and other institutional documents disclosing the rights, responsibilities, and obligations of both the student and the institution.
2. The institution admits students regardless of race, color, national origin, disability, sex, or age. Institutions reasonably accommodate applicants and students with disabilities to the extent required by applicable laws.
3. Official transcripts, if required for admission, are received within one enrollment period not to exceed 12 semester credit hours, or the student is withdrawn from the program.

#### B. STUDENT IDENTITY VERIFICATION

Student identity verification is initiated during the admissions process to verify that the admitted student who participates in and completes coursework and assessments is the same student who is awarded credit.

C. COMPULSORY AGE STUDENTS

An institution enrolling students under the compulsory school age obtains permission from responsible parties to assure that the pursuit of the educational offerings is not detrimental to any compulsory schooling.

D. ADMISSIONS CRITERIA

The institution's admissions criteria align with its mission and student population served. The institution establishes qualifications that an applicant must possess prior to enrollment in order to successfully complete and the stated 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 reason(s) for the exception to the admissions criteria.

1. 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. Evaluators possess expertise in the educational practices of the country of origin and include an English translation of the review.
2. The institution's admissions criteria disclose 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 guidance on English Language Proficiency Assessment.
3. NON-DEGREE PROGRAMS  
As appropriate for the students served and educational programs offered, the institution obtains official documentation (e.g., high school diploma, general educational development tests [GED], or self-certification statement) that applicants possess a high school diploma or its recognized equivalent at the time of admission.

Institutions that implement self-certification procedures must:

- Obtain a signed statement from the applicant attesting to a high school diploma or its recognized equivalent;
- Require applicants to provide the institution name, city, state, and year of graduation on the self-certification statement;
- Develop and follow procedures to evaluate the validity of high school completion, or its equivalent, if the institution has reason to believe that the documentation was not obtained from an entity that provides secondary school education (e.g., general educational development tests or GED); and

- Document that such practices are necessary to be consistent with the institution's mission.

4. UNDERGRADUATE DEGREES

The institution obtains official documentation (e.g., high school diploma or general educational development tests [GED]) that applicants possess a high school diploma or its recognized equivalent at the time of admission. Institutions may implement self-certification in accordance with VIII(D)(3).

5. MASTER'S DEGREES

At the time of admission, the institution obtains official documentation that applicants possess a bachelor's degree earned from an appropriately accredited institution.

6. FIRST PROFESSIONAL DEGREES

At the time of admission, the institution obtains documentation that applicants possess a bachelor's or master's degree earned from an appropriately accredited institution.

7. PROFESSIONAL DOCTORAL DEGREES

At the time of admission, 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 a minimum, the institution verifies applicants have completed 30 graduate-level credit hours prior to admission.

E. ADMISSION ACCEPTANCE AND DENIAL

The institution informs applicants they have been accepted for admission. 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 using published procedures. Transfer credit requests are not denied based solely on the source of accreditation of the credit-granting institution.

Credit awarded for experiential or equivalent learning, including challenge and test-out credits, cannot exceed 25 percent of the credits required for an undergraduate degree. Institutions maintain official documentation of the bases for decisions to award credit for experiential or equivalent learning.

An institution seeking to offer credit for prior learning assessment publishes and follows evaluation standards consistent with CAEL's Ten Standards for Assessing

Learning. Prior learning assessment is performed by qualified individuals with experience in the evaluation of prior learning.

In instances where a student seeks to transfer more than the maximum allowable percentage of required credit hours specified in the relevant degree category listed in subsection F.1 and F.2 below, the institution must conduct a comprehensive assessment of the student's credits earned and document how the credit aligns with their program outcomes. In such cases transfer credit allowances may not exceed the lesser of any applicable state requirements or 90 percent of the credits required for undergraduate degrees.

1. HIGH SCHOOL

The institution may award a maximum of 75 percent of the credits required for a high school program.

2. UNDERGRADUATE DEGREES

The institution may award a maximum of 75 percent of the credits required for a degree program, 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 25 percent of the credits required for a degree.

3. MASTER'S DEGREES

The institution may award a maximum of 50 percent of the credits required for a master's degree program through transfer credit. 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 25 percent of the credits required for a master's degree.

4. FIRST PROFESSIONAL DEGREES

The institution may award a maximum of 50 percent of the credits required for a first professional degree program through transfer credit. Courses accepted for transfer credit are relevant to the program of study and equivalent in both content and degree level.

5. PROFESSIONAL DOCTORAL DEGREES

The institution may award a maximum of 15 percent of the credits required for a professional doctoral degree program (or nine semester credit hours for a 60 semester credit hour degree program) through transfer credit. Courses accepted for transfer credit are relevant to the program of study and equivalent in both content and degree level.

G. ENROLLMENT AGREEMENTS

The institution's enrollment agreements/documents clearly identify the educational offering and assure that each applicant is fully informed of the rights, responsibilities, and obligations of both the student and the institution prior to applicant signature. The institution complies with the DEAC Enrollment Agreements Disclosures Check List.

1. The institution requires that, prior to accepting the enrollment agreement, students affirm and accept the tuition refund policy and the rights, responsibilities, and obligations of both the student and the institution. The terms of the tuition refund policy are published on the institution's enrollment agreement, catalog, and website.
2. An enrollment agreement is 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.
3. The institution complies with all applicable Truth In Lending Act (TILA) requirements, including those under Regulation Z, and state requirements for retail installment agreements.
4. All required state and Truth In Lending Act disclosures are included on the enrollment agreement. Requirements for type size, notice to buyer, and computations examples, as applicable, are observed.
5. If there is a separate payment contract, the contract is incorporated by reference on enrollment agreement.

#### IMPACT STATEMENT

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

## **IX. FINANCIAL DISCLOSURES, CANCELLATIONS, AND REFUND POLICIES**

### INTRODUCTION

The institution establishes fair and equitable tuition, cancellation, refund, and collection policies and procedures. Information about a tuition costs and instructional fees, including textbooks, are readily accessible to students. Tuition and refund policies are disclosed on all enrollment agreements. Collection procedures are conducted ethically. The institution's



tuition, refund, and collection policies are administered consistently and fairly. This section identifies **five (5) core components** of Standard IX.

#### CORE COMPONENTS

##### A. FINANCIAL 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, as well as fees for required services such as student authentication, proctoring, technology access, and library services.

1. The costs for optional services, such as expedited shipment of materials, experiential portfolio assessment, or for 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.
2. 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.

##### B. CANCELLATIONS

1. Institutions must maintain, publish, and apply fair and equitable cancellation and withdrawal policies. A student's notification of cancellation may be conveyed to the institution in any manner the institution deems appropriate so long as
  - a. the method or methods chosen are in compliance with applicable federal and state requirements and
  - b. do not create unreasonably difficult requirements for the student to satisfy.Institutions must designate the manner in which students submit cancellation or withdrawal notification and the individual, office, or offices to whom students may submit notice of official cancellation or withdrawal.
2. 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.
3. A student requesting cancellation more than five 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;
  - A one-time registration fee per program of no more than 20 percent of the tuition and not to exceed more than \$200; and
  - Library service fees, if provided by a third party service (e.g., LIRN, Westlaw, ProQuest, EBSCO).
4. 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.
  5. 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.

### 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 of whether materials have been returned.

#### 1. FLEXIBLE TIME SCHEDULE REFUND POLICY

An institution that implements the flexible time schedule refund policy must clearly disclose the curriculum benchmarks in terms of assignments submitted for grading that indicate completion at 10 percent, 25 percent, and 50 percent intervals.

When a student cancels after completing at least one lesson assignment but less than 50 percent of the graded assignments, the institution may retain the application fee and one-time registration fee of no more than 20 percent of the tuition not to exceed \$200, library service fees, 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
Up to 10 %	90%	10%
>10% - 25%	75%	25%
>25% - 50%	50%	50%
>50% - 100%	0%	100%

#### 2. TIME-BASED TERM REFUND POLICY

A time-based term lasts no more than 16 weeks.

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 percent 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 percent of the tuition not to exceed \$200, library service fees, 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%

### 3. 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 Section IX(C)(1) or Section IX(C)(2) above. If the mandatory in-residence portion of the course/program is more than six weeks, the institution may use the time-based refund policy in Section IX(C)(2) If the in-residence portion is less than 6 weeks, the institution may use the flexible time schedule refund policy in IX(C)(1).

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 percent of the tuition not to exceed \$200, library service fees, plus a percentage of tuition paid by the student in accordance with the following refund 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
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.

#### 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. An institution offering discounts must calculate refunds based on discounted costs.

An institution that offers 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 those offered to 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. Tuition collection practices and procedures are fair, encourage students' progress, and seek to retain their good will. Collection practices consider the rights and interests of the students and the institution.

IMPACT STATEMENT

A DEAC-accredited institution discloses its tuition, cancellation, refund, and collection policies and procedures prior to student enrollment. All cancellations 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 that students are aware of the responsibilities and obligations of both the institution and student.

X. **INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE**

INTRODUCTION

The governance structure of the institution provides sufficient administrative oversight, capability, and stability in the efficient and effective use of institutional resources. The institution demonstrates adequate management, administrative capacity, and succession and business continuity planning to provide assurances it can accomplish its mission in a manner consistent with its values while fulfilling its obligations to students. This section identifies **three (3) core components** of Standard X.

CORE COMPONENTS

A. OWNERS, GOVERNING BOARD MEMBERS, OFFICIALS, AND ADMINISTRATORS

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

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.

C. SUCCESSION PLAN

The institution has written plans that describes the process that it follows in the event that 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 the institution can implement immediately. The institution reviews and revises the plan on an annual basis.

#### IMPACT STATEMENT

A DEAC-accredited institution's governance assures ethical decision-making processes in the efficient and effective use of institutional resources, enabling the achievement of strategic initiatives. The members of the institution's governance structure are appropriately qualified and possess the experience necessary to support the mission, values, and future of the institution. They support the mission and values through the implementation of collaborative and oversight for the continuous delivery of high-quality distance education. The members of the institution's governance structure demonstrate a commitment to all stakeholders by developing a succession and continuity plan that is reviewed annually to assure ongoing institutional operations.

## XI. FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

#### INTRODUCTION

The institution demonstrates financial capability and stability to meet accreditation standards on a continuous basis. The institution possesses adequate financial resources in order to meet its mission and values while delivering high quality educational offerings. The institution retains qualified and knowledgeable financial leadership to assure continued financial sustainability. This section identifies **five (5) core components** of Standard XI.

#### CORE COMPONENTS

##### A. FINANCIAL PRACTICES

The institution shows that it is financially responsible by providing complete, comparative financial statements covering its two most recent fiscal years and by demonstrating that 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 or International Financial Reporting Standards. 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.

##### B. 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 on-site financial information.

C. FINANCIAL STABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

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, audited or reviewed financial statements are provided by the supporting entity to demonstrate that the supporting entity possesses sufficient financial resources to provide the institution continued financial sustainability, as well as the commitment to do so. If the institution's financial performance is included within the parent corporation's statements, a supplemental schedule for the individual institution is appended to the parent statement.

D. 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. An independent certified public accountant (CPA) audit or review report accompanies these statements.

1. The institution's financial statements reflect sufficient liquid assets to provide for a staff and faculty.
2. Annually, the institution has the option of submitting one of these two types of financial statements, unless the Commission directs the institution to submit audited financial statements.
  - Audited comparative financial statements containing an audit opinion by an independent certified public accountant in accordance with standards established by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, or
  - Reviewed comparative financial statements containing a review report by an independent certified public accountant in accordance with standards established by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants.
3. Financial statements submitted must include the institution's fiscal statement for the two most recent fiscal years prepared on a comparative basis or a date specified by the Commission, the CPA's opinion letter or review report, and a letter of financial statement validation.

E. DEMONSTRATED OPERATIONS

In all respects, the institution documents continuous sound and ethical operations, including the necessary resources to accommodate demand and assure all learners receive a quality educational experience. 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.

### IMPACT STATEMENT

A DEAC-accredited institution employs qualified and experienced financial leadership who possess the capacity to meet accreditation standards. The institution exhibits effective business practices through fiscally responsible policies and procedures designed to assure ongoing stability. The institution follows generally accepted accounting principles that guide all financial and reporting practices. The institution demonstrates adequate financial management that promotes financial sustainability.

## **XII. FACILITIES, EQUIPMENT, SUPPLIES, RECORD PROTECTION AND RETENTION**

### INTRODUCTION

The institution maintains facilities, equipment, and supplies that promote and support its mission and values. The institution's procedures for determining budgets assure that financial resources are adequate to support continued growth and provide a safe work environment for faculty and staff. Institutions demonstrate adequate protection for all records and implement appropriate retention policies as required by applicable federal and state laws and authorization rules. Institutional facilities, equipment, supplies, record protection and retention procedures meet accepted educational, administrative, business, and legal practices. This section identifies **three (3) core components** of Standard XII.

### CORE COMPONENTS

#### A. FACILITIES, EQUIPMENT, AND SUPPLIES

The institution maintains sufficient facilities, equipment, and supplies to achieve its mission and values and support its educational offerings for future operations written plan outlines the maintenance and upgrade of facilities, equipment, and supplies and includes a disaster response and recovery plan. 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 appropriately equipped to handle the educational program(s) of the institution.

#### B. IN-RESIDENCE PROGRAM COMPONENT

The institution provides appropriate training facilities for students participating in in-residence training and information on housing, as applicable. The facilities are in compliance with all state and federal requirements. The institution maintains adequate insurance to protect students, faculty, and staff while participating in in-residence training.

#### C. RECORD PROTECTION

The institution's financial, administrative, and student educational records are maintained in a reasonably accessible place and are adequately protected in accordance with applicable federal and state laws.

1. If maintaining documents electronically, the institution provides audit records



to verify the images were properly created and validated.

2. 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.

D. RECORD RETENTION

The institution's financial, administrative, and student educational records are retained in accordance with applicable federal and state laws. The institution implements a comprehensive document retention policy.

E. STATE AUTHORIZATION

- a. The institution is properly licensed, authorized, exempted or approved by all applicable state education institutional authorization (or their equivalent for non-U.S. institutions).
- b. Exemptions from state law are supported by state issued documentation or in statutory language for that state.

IMPACT STATEMENT

A DEAC-accredited institution maintains sufficient physical and fiscal resources and support systems to deliver quality distance education programs that enable 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 qualified by education and experience to develop written facilities and emergency action plans to support the mission, growth, and sustainability of the institution. The institution demonstrates a commitment to ethical business practices by maintaining institutional records, student records, and student privacy in accordance with applicable federal and state laws.