

## **Distance Education Accrediting Commission**

### **Public Notice: Denial of Initial Accreditation**

**February 25, 2019**

The DEAC Accrediting Commission will provide written notice to the U.S. Secretary of Education, the appropriate state licensing or authorizing agencies and accrediting agencies at the same time it notifies the institution that the decision to deny accreditation is final. In addition, DEAC will provide written notice to the public on its website of the decision within 24 hours of the final decision and provide a brief statement summarizing the reasons for the decision. (Section X, Policies and Procedures, DEAC Accreditation Handbook)

At its January 2019 meeting, the Commission voted to deny the following institution initial accreditation.

**George Brown College--School of Distance Education  
160 Kendal Avenue  
Toronto, ON M5R1M3**

The Commission informed George Brown College – School of Distance Education (SDE) of this decision on February 25, 2019 and afforded the institution the opportunity to provide notice of its intention to appeal the decision by March 7, 2019. The school did not elect to appeal. Therefore, the decision to deny accreditation is effective March 7, 2019. The school did not elect to provide written comments.

Summarized below is the decision to deny initial accreditation.

#### **1. Standard I.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.*

SDE needed to provide evidence that it operates independently from the Centre for Continuous Learning.

#### **2. Standard I.C: Implementation 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).*

SDE needed to provide evidence that it documents the achievement of its mission.

#### **3. Standard II.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 and analysis of data used to improve operations, educational offerings, and services.*

SDE needed to demonstrate that it uses institutional effectiveness data to support continuous improvement across all functions of SDE or establish a strategic direction for the institution.

#### **4. Standard II. B. Strategic Planning**

*The institution engages in strategic planning that aligns with and demonstrates a shared commitment to the 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 for continued growth. At a minimum, the strategic plan addresses finances, academics, technology, admissions, marketing, personnel, and sustainability. The strategic plan is reviewed and updated annually using established metrics designed to measure achievement of strategic planning activities.*

The institution's strategic plan needs to show clear timelines and financial resources.

#### **5. Standard III.H Program Outcomes, Curricula and Materials**

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

SDE must show how it measures student achievement of stated program outcomes.

#### **6. Standard IV. 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.*

SDE must describe how students enrolled in all certificate programs receive the same level and consistency of support to achieve stated program outcomes.

#### **7. Standard V.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.*

More information is needed on thresholds and targets for the various assessment activities, making expected improvements in designated areas. SDE must show how faculty are involved in the assessment data review.

#### **8. Standard VI. A. Academic Leadership**

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

Evidence is needed to show that SDE maintains transcripts for faculty in permanent HR records.

#### **9. Standard VI.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 and official transcripts on file. Faculty/instructors are carefully screened for appointment and are properly and continuously trained on institutional policies, learner needs, instructional approaches and techniques, and the use of instructional technology. The institution regularly evaluates faculty 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.*

More evidence is needed regarding the annual evaluation of administrator and faculty performance.

#### **10. Standard VII. A. Advertising and Promotional Literature**

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

#### **11. Standard VIII. 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 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 the 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 on the enrollment agreement.*

More information is needed to show that SDE disclosures comply with DEAC standards.

## **12. Standard IX. B. Cancellations**

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

1. *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 and*
  - *A one-time registration fee per program of no more than 20% of the tuition and not to exceed more than \$200.*
  - *Library services fee, if provided by a third-party service (e.g., LIRN, Westlaw, ProQuest, EBSCO)*
2. *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.*
3. *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.*

And

## **Standard IX.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.*

More information is needed regarding SDE's refund procedures.

### **13. Standard XI A Financial Practices**

*The institution shows 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. 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.*

And

### **Standard IX.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 either the most recent fiscal year end or the date specified by the Commission, the CPA's opinion letter or review report, and a letter of financial statement validation.*

More information is needed regarding SDE's financial position.