



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

About DEAC Show Cause Directives

What is accreditation?

Accreditation is an independent review of the quality and integrity of an educational institution or academic program. In the United States, accreditation helps students, families, employers, government agencies, and the public determine whether an institution or program meets established standards.

Accreditation by an agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education is one of the requirements an institution must satisfy to participate in federal student-aid programs, including Pell Grants and federal student loans.

What is a show cause directive?

A show cause directive is a serious action by an accreditor indicating that the institution has not demonstrated compliance with one or more accreditation standards.

The directive identifies the standards at issue, explains DEAC's concerns, and establishes the corrective actions, reporting requirements, and deadlines the institution must meet. The institution bears the responsibility of demonstrating that it has corrected the deficiencies and complies with DEAC standards.

What are the possible outcomes of a show cause directive?

- Institution demonstrates compliance and show cause is removed.
- Institution does not demonstrate compliance; renewal of accreditation is denied or accreditation is withdrawn.
- Institution is making progress but needs more time; the show cause directive is extended and DEAC requires additional reports, reviews, or a special visit.

Does a show cause directive mean the institution will close?

No. A show cause directive does not by itself mean that the institution will close or that it has lost accreditation.

The institution remains accredited unless and until DEAC issues a final decision denying or withdrawing accreditation. However, show cause is a serious status, and students should stay informed about the institution's response, DEAC's review schedule, and available contingency plans.

How does this affect current students?

While the show cause directive is pending:

- The institution remains accredited unless and until DEAC takes final action to deny or withdraw accreditation.
- Classes may continue, provided the institution remains open and legally authorized to operate.
- Academic credits and credentials earned while the institution remains accredited continue to be issued by an accredited institution.
- Students may apply to transfer, but each receiving institution determines whether it will accept particular credits.
- A show cause directive alone does not automatically end the institution's participation in federal student-aid programs.

Does the show cause directive affect the entire institution or only specific programs?

DEAC is an institutional accreditor. It evaluates the institution as a whole, including academic quality, curricula, faculty, student services, administrative capacity, ethical practices, learning resources, governance, and financial responsibility.

Programmatic accreditors evaluate individual professional or academic programs, such as nursing, counseling, teaching, or other programs that may have profession-specific standards.

A DEAC show cause directive applies to the institution's institutional accreditation. Students should also determine whether their individual program has separate programmatic accreditation and whether that accreditation remains in good standing.

What is a teach-out plan?

A teach-out plan is a contingency plan designed to protect students if an institution or program closes or can no longer provide the education students were promised.

DEAC requires an institution placed on show cause to submit a comprehensive written teach-out plan for approval. The plan must address matters such as:

- how students could complete their education;
- which institutions offer reasonably similar programs;
- the treatment and transfer of credits;
- tuition, fees, refunds, and financial obligations;
- access to transcripts and student records; and
- how students would be notified if a teach-out became necessary.

The requirement to prepare a teach-out plan does not mean that the institution is definitely going to close. It is a student-protection measure.

What is the difference between a teach-out plan and a teach-out agreement?

A teach-out plan describes how students will be protected and given a reasonable opportunity to complete their education.

A teach-out agreement is a formal arrangement with one or more accredited institutions that is willing to accept students and provide similar programs if the original institution cannot complete the students' education. Any agreement must be approved by DEAC before it is implemented.

Can an institution correct the issues and retain its accreditation?

Yes. A show cause directive gives the institution an opportunity to demonstrate that it has corrected the identified deficiencies and complies with DEAC standards.

After reviewing the institution's response, DEAC may:

- remove or "vacate" the show cause directive and renew accreditation;
- continue the directive and request additional information, reports, or review; or
- deny or withdraw accreditation.

How long does an institution have to respond?

There is no single standard deadline for the institution's initial or final response. The show cause directive establishes the deadlines, reporting requirements, required corrective actions, and review schedule.

Under DEAC policy, the maximum remediation period may not exceed the shorter of:

- two years; or
- 150% of the length of the institution's longest program.

DEAC may grant an extension for good cause. Including any extension, the total remediation period may not exceed three years. These are maximum periods; an institution may be required to submit reports or evidence much sooner.

How will students be informed of the show cause?

DEAC requires an institution subject to a show cause directive to notify all current and prospective students within seven business days after receiving the written directive.

The institution must publish the information on its website and provide individual written notice to currently enrolled students, generally by email or mail. This notice must clearly state that it is operating under a show cause directive and describe the scope of the directive. DEAC also posts public notice of the action on its [website](#).

Where can students obtain additional information?

Students should review:

- the institution's official show cause notice and student communications;
- the [public notice](#) and [institutional listing](#) on DEAC's website;
- updates concerning the institution's response and DEAC review dates;
- the institution's teach-out plan and any approved teach-out agreement, when available;
- information from the institution's financial-aid office;
- information from any applicable state licensing agency; and
- information from a separate accreditor or professional licensing board, when relevant.

Students should request answers in writing and retain copies of transcripts, enrollment agreements, financial-aid records, billing statements, course descriptions, syllabi, and communications from the institution.