



Accreditation Requirements Outline

Prepared for the Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education

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Distance Education Accrediting Commission
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DEAC's Eligibility Requirements for Initial Accreditation:

Before DEAC will officially accept an institution's initial Application for Accreditation, the institution must demonstrate that it meets the following eligibility criteria (*Accreditation Handbook*, pp. 10-11).

- a. A DEAC defines a distance education institution or training provide as "an educational institution or organization whose primary purpose is providing education or training which:
 - i. Formally enrolls students and maintains student records;
 - ii. Retains qualified faculty to service students;
 - iii. Provides educationally sound and up-to-date curricula that are supported by quality instructional materials and appropriate technology;
 - iv. Provides continuous two-way communication on student work, e.g., evaluating students' examinations, projects, and/or answering queries, with prompt feedback given to students; and
 - v. Offers courses of instruction which are studied predominantly at a distance (51% or more) from the institution or organization." That is, distance education should be the primary method of study for the majority of students, and distance education courses should comprise the majority of curricula offerings of the institution.
- b. The institution is properly licensed, authorized, exempted, or approved by the applicable state educational institutional authority (or its equivalent for non-U.S. institutions). The institution is in compliance with all applicable local, state, and federal requirements. Exemptions from state law are supported by state-issued documentation or in statutory language for that state.
- c. At the time of the initial application, the institution has been enrolling students in the current programs for two consecutive years and under the present ownership (no new programs may be added during the two year period).
- d. The institution has clearly articulated learning goals for its academic programs and has strategies for assessment in place.
- e. The institution has a permanent physical business office at a fixed geographic location that is appropriately licensed or authorized as required by local and state regulatory authorities. DEAC

does not consider a P.O. Box as a physical business office address.

- f. The applicant institution documents—through an audited or reviewed comparative financial statement that covers its two most recent fiscal years—that it is financially sound and that it can meet its financial obligations to provide instruction and service to its students. All financial statements submitted to DEAC are prepared in compliance with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP).
- g. The applicant shows that the name being used by the institution is free from any association with any activity that could damage the standing of DEAC or of the accrediting process, such as illegal actions, unethical conduct, or abuse of consumers.
- h. The institution, the institution’s owners, governing board members, officials, and administrators possess sound reputations and show a record of integrity and ethical conduct in their professional activities, business operations, and relations. The owners, governing board members, officials, and executive staff have records free from any association with any misfeasance, including, but not limited to, owning, managing or controlling any educational institutions that have entered bankruptcy or have closed with students having been disadvantaged as a result.
- i. The institution agrees that as part of the application process, its owners, officers and managers may be subject to a background check by DEAC, which may include, but not be limited to, DEAC surveys of state educational oversight agencies, federal departments and agencies, consumer protection agencies, checks on the credit history, prior bankruptcy, criminal background, debarment from federal student aid programs, the closing of educational institutions in which they were owners, managers or principals, or the loss of accreditation or state approval to operate an educational institution. The costs of such background checks will be borne by the applicant.
- j. The institution is free from any pending or final action brought by a state agency or recognized accrediting agency to suspend, revoke, withdraw, or terminate the institution’s legal authority to operate or to deny accreditation or reaccreditation.

DEAC’s Accreditation Requirements

DEAC’s accreditation standards cover eleven key components. The accreditation standards foster improvement and assure quality of distance education institutions. Accredited institutions demonstrate their commitment to delivering quality educational offerings through a culture of continuous improvement. These eleven standards guide institutions in their efforts to serve students and the public through their published mission, goals, and objectives.

- 1) Institution Mission, Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes
- 2) Institutional Effectiveness and Strategic Planning
- 3) Educational Program Objectives, Curricula, and Materials
- 4) Educational and Student Support Services
- 5) Student Achievement and Satisfaction
- 6) Academic Leadership and Faculty Qualifications
- 7) Advertising, Promotional Literature, and Recruitment Personnel
- 8) Admission Practices and Enrollment Agreements
- 9) Required Disclosures, Cancellations, and Refund Policies
- 10) Governance and Financial Responsibility
- 11) Facilities, Equipment, Supplies, and Record Protection

Key Stages in the DEAC Accreditation Process

1. **Obtain DEAC Accreditation Handbook, Complete DEAC Course, Review Application, and Begin Writing SER**
 - Institution receives the *DEAC Accreditation Handbook* and reviews it carefully
 - Key person enrolls and completes the *Preparing for DEAC Accreditation* to qualify as a Compliance Officer
 - CEO/President reviews application for accreditation
 - Compliance Officer and Staff begin writing Self-Evaluation Report (SER)
2. **Submit Initial Application and Other Required Information**
 - Institution submits application with application fee and financial statements
 - Institution submits student names, catalogs, and copy of state licensure
3. **Undergo Readiness Assessment (Initial Applications Only)**
 - Institution submits the SER within 60 days of submitting application
 - Institution undergoes Readiness Assessment
 - If deemed “ready,” institution proceeds to next step and DEAC posts name of applicant on website
4. **Submit Course Materials, DEAC Schedules On-Site Visit and Surveys Students**
 - Institution submits course materials for review (DEAC sends courses to subject specialists)
 - DEAC schedules date for on-site visit
 - DEAC surveys students and agencies
5. **Submit SER, Receive Subject Specialist Reports, and Respond to Evaluator Comments**
 - Institution submits SER
 - DEAC selects evaluators for the examining committee and invites State Observer
 - DEAC sends subject specialists reports to the institution, along with any student surveys received
 - Institution addresses any “not met” findings from subject specialists and sends response to DEAC
 - Examiners receive and review SER, subject specialists reports, Readiness Assessment Report, and student surveys
6. **Institution Undergoes On-Site Visit and Examiners Write Reports**
 - Institution undergoes on-site visit
 - Evaluators test and verify information in SER
 - Chair informs institution when to expect Chair’s Report
 - Evaluators write reports and send them to the Chair
 - Observer’s and CEO’s comments are solicited
 - Commission surveys on-site evaluators
7. **Chair Writes and Submits Report and Institution Responds**
 - Chair writes report and sends it to DEAC
 - DEAC sends Chair’s report to institution for comments
 - Institution responds to Chair’s report
8. **Commission Reviews, Takes Action, and Announces Decision**
 - Commission reviews Chair’s report, and the institution’s response to Chair’s report, and other documents
 - Commission makes decision and informs institution
 - Commission announces accreditation decision

Timeline for Accrediting Process

(Initial Applicant)

Steps	Activity	Approximate Timeframe
ONE	Review DEAC Handbook and Application	6 to 9 months
	Key person enrolls and completes <i>Preparing for DEAC Accreditation</i>	
	Begin writing the SER	
TWO	Submit Application and Required Documents	Begins accreditation process
THREE	Submit the SER	Within 60 days of submitting Application
	Undergo Readiness Assessment and receive Report	90 days of receipt of SER
FOUR	If readiness is determined, the institution will submit course materials	Immediately after receiving Readiness Assessment Report (the institution is notified in writing)
	Schedule on-site visit	Once curriculum is received
	Submit/send final SER	4-6 weeks before visit
FIVE	Receive Subject Specialists Reports	3-4 months from date of institution's submission of curriculum
	Respond to comments from Subject Specialists	Within 30 days after receiving
SIX	Have on-site visit	Spring or Fall (see below)
SEVEN	Receive Chair's Report	4-6 weeks from date of site visit
	Respond to Chair's Report	30 days after receipt
EIGHT	Commission decision	January/June each year

Spring visits must take place before April 1st to be considered at the June accreditation decision meeting. Fall visits must take place before November 1st to be considered at the January accreditation decision meeting.

*If an evaluator indicates in the Readiness Assessment Report that an institution is not ready for a full on-site visit, the process stops until the institution documents to the satisfaction of the evaluator that it has remedied the areas of concern in the Assessment Report before the courses are reviewed and a full on-site visit is scheduled.