

Accredited Institutions

A person operating an institution that is accredited by an accrediting agency recognized by the United States Department of Education has the option to obtain an approval to operate from the Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education (Bureau) by means of the institution's accreditation.

To obtain an approval to operate by means of accreditation, the person must submit an Application for Approval to Operate an Accredited Institution. The approval "by means of accreditation" process is somewhat abbreviated from the standard approval to operate process. This application process should only be used, however, when the applicant is seeking Bureau approval for exactly and only the institutional locations, educational program offerings and approval dates for which the institution has been accredited. The institution's main, branch and satellite locations must be accredited to offer the same programs at each location, have the same term of accreditation, and have the same ownership structure.

A person operating an accredited institution seeking Bureau approval to offer programs that are not accredited, or to operate a location that is not accredited, may not utilize the approval to operate by means of accreditation process. Such an institution must apply for Bureau approval to operate utilizing the Application for Approval to Operate for an Institution Non-Accredited.

A person operating an accredited institution that has not previously obtained approval by means of accreditation cannot renew as an accredited institution, but may submit an Application for Approval to Operate an Accredited Institution and subsequently renew as an accredited institution.

Please refer to the California Private Postsecondary Education Act of 2009 (CEC) and the California Code of Regulations (CCR) for more information.

Frequently Asked Questions

Does the Bureau accredit institutions?

No. The Bureau approves a person to operate an institution in California. An approval to operate signifies that an institution is in compliance with state standards as set forth in the Private Postsecondary Education Act. Only accrediting agencies can accredit an institution. Accreditation is a voluntary non-governmental review process. On the other hand, state approval is mandatory for a person operating an institution subject to the California Private Postsecondary Education Act of 2009.

Must a person operating an accredited institution obtain approval from the Bureau?

Unless an institution is exempt from the Bureau's oversight pursuant to CEC §94874 or §94874.1, a person operating an institution must obtain approval to operate in California.

If a person seeks approval for an accredited institution, must the person apply for approval to operate by means of its accreditation?

No. The institution can apply through either the non-accredited or accredited application process. This decision is left to the institution.

- Application for Approval to Operate an Accredited Institution
- Application for Approval to Operate for an Institution Non Accredited

Does every type of institutional accreditation qualify a person to apply for approval by means of accreditation?

No. A person may only use the approval by means of accreditation process if the institution holds an accreditation from an accrediting agency recognized by the United States Department of Education that accredits the institution as a whole (CEC §94813, §94890). Please refer to the following link for more information about recognized institutional accrediting agencies: <http://www.ope.ed.gov/accreditation/Index.aspx>.

What must be submitted to apply for approval by means of accreditation?

- Application for Approval to Operate an Accredited Institution
- Certified copy of a current verification of accreditation
- Fees
- Evidence of any required approval from other government agencies (CEC § 94892)

What does “certified copy of a current verification of accreditation” mean?

The Bureau looks for confirmation from the accrediting agency that the information submitted in the application is complete and consistent and provides sufficient information to adequately identify the institution, the term of accreditation and the programs that are accredited. To that end, the Bureau requires information from the accreditor that indicates at minimum the following:

- Institution’s name
 - If the institution is owned by a non-profit, the name must reflect the same name of the non-profit corporation on file with the California Secretary of State
- Main location address
- Branch location addresses (if applicable)
- Satellite location addresses (if applicable)
- Ownership structure with percentages
- Approved programs and clock/credit hours
- Term of accreditation including the renewal date
- The information provided must be current.

Can a person apply for approval by means of accreditation and offer unaccredited programs?

- No. If a person would like to offer programs that are not accredited, the institution would need to seek approval through the non-accredited application process.

For persons who obtained approval by means of accreditation, will the Bureau approve any changes before the accrediting agency does?

- No. All changes need to be authorized by the accrediting agency first (CEC §94896). If an accrediting agency will not authorize a change prior to the Bureau, the change may not be made to the institution. The licensee may choose to surrender the institution's Approval to Operate by Means of Accreditation and instead obtain full approval through the Approval to Operate for an Institution Non Accredited. On a case by case basis, the Bureau may work with an Accrediting Agency to issue a "conditional approval" to allow the Accrediting Agency to authorize the requested change.

If a person obtained approval by means of accreditation, must the accrediting agency authorize any non-substantive change (5 CCR § 71660) to the institution?

- Yes. Any change to the institution's offerings start with the accrediting agency. Once the licensee has the accrediting agency's approval (or written confirmation that the accrediting agency does not require approval for the specific change), the licensee must notify the Bureau in writing within 30 days. Submitting a copy of the institution's written request (on institution letterhead) and the written approval from the accrediting agency will expedite the process.

If a person's approval to operate was not obtained by means of accreditation, can that person apply for renewal by means of accreditation?

- No. An accredited institution that has not previously obtained approval by means of accreditation cannot renew as accredited, but may submit an Application for Approval to Operate an Accredited Institution. If the institution would like to renew their current approval, they may submit the Application for Approval to Operate for an Institution Non Accredited.

If a person obtained approval as a non-accredited institution, but is accredited, can the licensee submit substantive change applications (i.e. Change of Location, Change of Ownership, etc.) as would an institution approved by means of its accreditation?

- No. The licensee must submit applications and follow any other procedures and rules that pertain to the type of approval the institution has with the Bureau.

Does a person seeking approval by means of accreditation have to submit separate applications for each main location and each of the branch and/or satellite locations?

- The person is only required to submit one application for each institution. An institution is the main location and all branches and satellites connected with this main.

Can a person receive a refund if they submitted the wrong application?

- No. All application fees are non-refundable. (5 CCR §74000)

What can delay the processing of an application?

- Incomplete application
- Deficient letter of accreditation
- Pending approval from other government agencies
- Signatures not being original or claiming the incorrect ownership percentages
- Outstanding Student Tuition recovery Fund (STRF) Invoices
- Outstanding Annual and Delinquent Fees